# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

**SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 227**

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

**SESSION 1992-93**

COMPRISING PERIOD
21 June—2 July 1993

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## OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

**SIXTH SERIES** **VOLUME 227**

**TWENTY-FIRST VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93**


# House of Commons

*Monday 21 June 1993*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## WALES

### Labour Statistics

1. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest figure for the number of long-term unemployed in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood):** The long-term unemployment figure in the April 1993 quarter was 46,690. This is a big decline of over 40 per cent. since the peak of January 1986. I hope that Opposition Members will welcome that decline.

**Mr. Spellar:** Half that total of long-term unemployed is 23,000. Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to condemn and repudiate the statement made in this Chamber by the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), that half the long-term unemployed had no intention of working again and could be termed layabouts? Will the Secretary of State condemn and repudiate that statement now?

**Mr. Redwood:** I want to see as many people as possible back to work as quickly as possible. For that reason, the Welsh Office has strong training programmes and many other routes that are designed to help people back to prosperity and employment. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that all will be done to ensure that all those who seek jobs are given help to find them.

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** Has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity to see the manpower survey that was published today in the *Western Mail?* Sadly, it was tucked far behind the gloom that we hear from those who sit on the Opposition Benches. It describes Wales as the region that is most optimistic in terms of new job opportunities.

Does my right hon. Friend share my view that it is particularly pleasing to see that the areas where there are likely to be the greatest job opportunities are the manufacturing areas? Does that not show that Wales, under this Conservative Government, is leading the way out of recession, not only in the United Kingdom but throughout the whole of Europe?

**Mr. Redwood:** My hon. Friend is right. Wales is leading the way. I wish Opposition Members would get behind Wales when it is leading the way, instead of Opposition Front-Bench Members laughing, as if to say they do not believe it. The trouble is that Labour is whingeing for Wales, while the Government are busily winning for Wales. That is what we intend to go on doing. Opposition Members might like to read a few more of the headlines in the *Western Mail.*

"Jobs—Welsh area most optimistic."

"CBI praise for Welsh lead."

"Wales at the top."

Quite right, Madam Speaker, and more of it.

**Mr. Wigley:** Is the Secretary of State aware that the implications of his remarks in Llangollen—that the development of new jobs in Wales has been prejudiced by hostility towards incomers and by an all-protective attitude towards the environment—has caused considerable dismay in Wales? Is the Secretary of State also aware that, over the years, industry in Wales has grown, with people coming to Wales from all parts of the world?

Is the Secretary of State further aware that a new company in Llanberis in my constituency that went there last year is exporting 96 per cent. of its products, and that one of its employees, who went to that company from

Oxford, has said that there is less racism in Gwynedd than was evident in Oxford? Will the Secretary of State reconsider his remarks and not base his policies on the prejudices of the Tory party conference?

**Mr. Redwood:** I suggest that the hon. Gentleman reads the speech, which made it very clear that it is the job of Government to balance the different pressures. The speech said that there are important things in the Welsh landscape, language and history that need to be protected. It also said that there needs to be more investment, more jobs and more activity. The speech did not say that I thought that attitudes in the past had been too restrictive. It said that, in my job, I have an important role to play in achieving the right balance between protection and conservation on the one hand and new jobs and a new spirit on the other.

**Mr. Richards:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that, on these occasions in the past, his predecessor had some good news to impart to the House and to the people of Wales? Does he intend to continue in that vein? Does he have some good news for us today—perhaps something to do with inward investment?

**Mr. Redwood:** These unscripted questions are always dangerous, but it so happens that I do have something that my hon. Friend might welcome. I hope that the Opposition will welcome it, too. Aiwa Japan is going to announce today a £27 million expansion of the Penyfan industrial estate at Crumlin in Gwent.

Where are the cries of support now from Opposition Members? That represents 480 possible new jobs by 1996. The Welsh Development Agency will be helping by providing a custom-built factory extension. Let us have some support for that, for it means more manufacturing jobs in Wales and better hi-fis and compact disc systems for customers.

**Mr. Rowlands:** But does the right hon. Gentleman realise that last Friday's premature closure of Taff Merthyr colliery wiped out fourfold all the new jobs that we have managed to create in our community in the past 12 or 18 months? In addition, 20 per cent. of men are out of work and 20 per cent. of men are economically inactive in our society. What new initiatives will he take to create new jobs for men in communities like mine, instead of penalising poor people and invalids?

**Mr. Redwood:** I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take a more positive attitude. All our policies are geared to encouraging prosperity and more jobs. I have already instanced some manufacturing jobs that are going to a hard-pressed area of Wales as a result of another initiative. We need more, and I promise to do more because it is extremely sad to see the loss of jobs with more pits closing and I hope that some people can look to see whether there is any way of rescuing some of the pits that have been scheduled for closure.

## Regional Development Policy

2. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of Welsh local authorities to discuss regional development policy.

**The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts):** My right hon. Friend has met a number of local authorities since taking office and looks forward to continuing the close dialogue that was maintained by his predecessor.

**Mr. Llwyd:** I commend to the Minister the report of the Institute of Welsh Affairs, "Wales 2010", and remind him that one of the key reasons why inward investment has been attracted to Wales is assisted area status. I urge the Secretary of State and his colleagues to acknowledge that we need to preserve those areas in Wales. I also urge him to prioritise the Aberconwy case for objective 5b status, not least because it qualified last time. It has a stronger case now and it will experience a knock-on effect from the fact that neighbouring Merseyside has had objective 1 status.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** Of course, assisted area status can be very important in attracting inward investment, but its importance should not be exaggerated. Although assisted area status may assist companies in establishing themselves initially, they must be successful to perpetuate themselves and to expand, in the way that Aiwa is doing, as my right hon. Friend has just announced.

The hon. Gentleman will know that we went out to consultation on the assisted area map, and on 15 June it was submitted to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, whom I am sure we all wish a quick recovery. Once it has returned from the Commission, we hope to announce our proposals before the summer recess. The status of Aberconwy will be considered.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Diolch Yn Fawr, Minister. Is my hon. Friend aware that members of the Conservative group in the European Parliament are pressing very hard to enable tourist areas to receive assistance, even though they are not in objectives 1, 2 or 5b? If they succeed, the coastal areas of Wales, despite not being assisted, may be able, like Morecambe and Blackpool, to avail themselves of this facility.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Of course, tourism is very important to us in Wales and we can assist it through section 4 grant. Obviously, European assistance would be very welcome.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** There appears to be some confusion between the view now being expressed by the Minister of State and that expressed previously by the Secretary of State. Does the Minister of State endorse the views expressed by his Secretary of State in the Llangollen speech, which I have read and which I found profoundly depressing? It seems that the view of the Secretary of State is that all we have to be prepared to do is to sacrifice our environment and leave it, in his words,

"to settlers with strange accents"

to take the necessary steps to regenerate our economy.

Since there is now widespread dissatisfaction with the lack of coherence in the Government's policy, will the Minister of State join me in pressing the Secretary of State to convene an early and urgent meeting of the Welsh Grand Committee so that we can discuss the economy of Wales?

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** I wish that the hon. Gentleman had been at the Welsh Conservative party conference in Llangollen to hear the speech; it is clear that he has not read it in any detail. My right hon. Friend rightly said

—and, if he will forgive me for saying so, there was nothing new in it—that conflict can of course arise between economic development and environmental considerations, and a balance must be struck between

### Labour Statistics

3. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were in (i) part-time and (ii) full-time employment in 1979 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

**Mr. Redwood:** In September 1981, there were 521,000 full-time and 26,000 part-time male employees and 231,000 full-time and 158,000 part-time female employees. Part-time male employment was not separately identified in 1979.

In March 1993, it is estimated that there were 415,000 full-time and 59,000 part-time male employees, and 237,000 full-time and 224,000 part-time female employees.

**Mr. Hain:** Those figures show that there has been a massive haemorrhage of well-paid, skilled full-time jobs into part-time work, as Wales is transformed into a low-skill, low-pay, casualised economy. Is not that another reason why areas of Wales should have their assisted area status protected by the Secretary of State?

Will the right hon. Gentleman take into account the economically inactive totals, because Wales has higher figures for economic inactivity than anywhere else in the United Kingdom? For example, in the south Wales valleys, is it not the case that four out of 10 adult men are out of work if one takes into account not only those on the official register but the economically inactive totals?

**Mr. Redwood:** Of course we want more male employment, and that is one of the targets I have identified for the Welsh Office under my leadership, as it had been identified under that of my predecessor.

Why does the hon. Gentleman not tell the House that, in his constituency of Neath, unemployment in 1986 stood at 19·1 per cent., whereas it is now 9·9 per cent.—it has almost halved. Surely that is something of which we should be proud. Does he not recognise that many of the jobs that have been created are skilled jobs in manufacturing in which people are making things and adding value to the process? Why does he not welcome the Lucas investment, which has created more than 150 jobs since November 1992 to make parts for the Rover 200 and 400? I hope that he is proud of those vehicles and wants more sold throughout Britain.

**Mr. Sweeney:** May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his first appearance at Welsh questions in his new post, and wish him every success in promoting the interests of Wales? Instead of Opposition Members selecting figures, as the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) has done, is it not time that we heard figures which will sell Wales positively, such as those which my right hon. Friend has given? Is not that the way to promote Wales and further Welsh interests?

**Mr. Redwood:** I agree with my hon. Friend. We must be positive; much is going right in Wales. Policies are in place which will improve matters further, and I look forward to support from all sides and from all the people of good will in order to attract the investment and create the jobs.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** I am sorry that I could not make the conference in Llangollen, but I did not receive an invitation—perhaps next time.

The Secretary of State cannot have much confidence in his policies, as he is running away from defending them in the Welsh Grant Committee. Will he at least guarantee that he will fight in the Cabinet to retain development area status for the areas in south Wales and Deeside which are currently threatened? Will he also guarantee that, when a decision is taken, he will come to the House to defend it before Welsh Members of Parliament?

**Mr. Redwood:** Of course I give a guarantee that I shall speak up for Welsh interests in the Cabinet. That is my job, and I would do no less. There will be proper opportunities to debate the proposals in Parliament after they have been viewed by the European Community and when we have the Commission's decision. They are a legitimate matter for debate, and, one way or another, I am sure that they will be debated. I am happy to discuss with the hon. Gentleman through the usual channels the future business and sittings of the Welsh Grand Committee.

### Agri-environmental Policy

4. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning agri-environmental policy in Wales.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** We have received 54 responses to the consultation papers entitled "Agriculture and Wales's Environment".

**Mr. Dafis:** I am sure that the Minister recognises that an agri-environmental programme supports agriculture at reduced costs, provides more jobs and strengthens the rural economy. But if that is to be brought about, we need to move away from the kind of non-zonal approach advocated by the Welsh Office to the type of integration of the programmes that we have under the ESA and the Tir Cymen approach. That must be on an all-Wales basis, rather than available to some parts of Wales only.

Does the Minister agree that we do not want the privatisation of Forest Enterprise, which would threaten the valuable environmental work that is being done and public access to the countryside of Wales?

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman understands our policy on agri-environmental developments. We intend to work through the environmentally sensitive areas, and the hon. Gentleman may know that Ynys Môn and Radnor have been declared ESAs. New ESAs, at preseli and the Clywdian range, will be designated in August, and other measures will be announced before the end of the year. We are already working along the lines that the hon. Gentleman suggests.

### Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the level of male unemployment in Newport, Gwent and Wales at the latest available date.

**Mr. Redwood:** The unadjusted numbers of male unemployed claimants for the borough of Newport, Gwent and Wales for May are 6,084, 16,978 and 102,056 respectively.

**Mr. Hughes:** Does the Secretary of State appreciate that many people in Newport seek employment outside the borough? Many of them were employed at the Parke-Davis pharmaceutical concern at Mamhilad, Pontypool, but recently the concern has suffered massive redundancies. Those were due, apparently, to the Government's policy of promoting generic drugs which has benefited Germany and France. Can the right hon. Gentleman look into that matter, because we cannot afford to lose such a valuable employer in Gwent?

**Mr. Redwood:** Of course I will look into the matter, and I am sorry about the job losses that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. But is he aware that 18,000 people came off the unemployment register in May? A total of 14,000 joined the register, leaving a net gain of 4,000 job losses. I would have thought that Opposition Members would welcome that. Does the hon. Gentleman welcome the fact that there are 9,000 vacancies available? I hope that some of those can be taken up by his constituents.

Will Opposition Members welcome the major new jobs announced by a number of companies recently, including 320 jobs at Boots Properties at Caerphilly, 38 at Wrexham Wire, 70 at Grayman Tooling, 150 at Delta Dairy Food in Wrexham and 60 at the Friendly hotel in Cardiff. I could go on, Madam Speaker, but I know that you would get impatient if I did.

**Mr. John Marshall:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the level of unemployment in Wales has benefited from inward investment? Does he think that inward investment would be encouraged by the adoption of the social chapter or by a national minimum wage?

**Mr. Redwood:** No, I do not, and that is one of the reasons why this country and Wales are going ahead while other members of the European Community are not. People thinking of investing in the European Community know that here in Britain—here in Wales—they will find both opportunities and protection from the more absurd elements of the EC's job destruction programme, which socialists in the Community seem to favour. I am glad that my hon. Friend has drawn attention to one of the reasons why Welsh unemployment is now below the national average and why we can be proud of the Welsh efforts to attract inward investment.

**Mr. Barry Jones:** May I tell the right hon. Gentleman that the remarks of the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) about the long-term unemployed have been received with anger and scorn in my constituency, where there are some 820 people so described, all of whom would like a job? So that more of my constituents may be employed, may I urge the right hon. Gentleman to begin the urgent building of the new River Dee crossing? If he did that, he would end the traffic agony and blight that have existed for a generation. Does he accept that that traffic problem is unrivalled elsewhere in Wales and that, if he tackled it urgently by building the new River Dee crossing, he would also make inroads into the widespread unemployment in north-east Wales?

**Mr. Redwood:** The hon. Gentleman offers me good advice. It is a county project; the Government are happy to support it for the reasons that the hon. Gentleman has identified.

**Mr. Murphy:** When the Secretary of State refers to 150 jobs having been gained in Lucas in south Wales, does he not realise that 150 jobs were lost in the same company in my constituency last year? When he talks about 500 new jobs coming to Aiwa in Gwent, does he not realise that 500 jobs have been lost in Parke-Davis, also in my constituency? Does he not accept that the loss of those jobs was due largely to the Government's policy on limited prescription drugs? The right hon. Gentleman is the Health Secretary as well as the Economy Minister for Wales. What does he intend to do to safeguard the remaining jobs in the pharmaceutical industry in the Principality?

**Mr. Redwood:** I know that I can always rely on the Opposition to give us the bad news. It is my job to give the good news and the positive face of Wales, and to point out to the House that unemployment has been falling for several months, which we welcome, and that many investors are coming in and creating jobs, which the Opposition should welcome, as we do. I have already answered the other part of the question. I told the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) that I would look into the question of the pharmaceutical company.

## Canada (Trade)

7. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he is taking to improve bilateral trade between businesses based in Wales and those in Canada.

**Mr. Redwood:** My right hon. Friend the Minister of State will lead a trade mission to north America from 14 to 28 September, when he will visit Vancouver and Toronto in Canada.

**Mr. Fabricant:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that a bilateral trade agreement exists between the United Kingdom and Ontario? Is that not especially appropriate, given the many Canadian companies that invest in Wales? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that investment is not only because of our non-signing of the social chapter, and not only because of our low inflation, our low interest rates and our low taxes, but because of excellent industrial relations in Wales and because of the very special skills in Wales in audio-electronics?

**Mr. Redwood:** My hon. Friend has been a more eloquent advocate of Wales than Opposition Members have been today. That is a great pity; we should like to hear more from them in defence of Wales as a place for investment. My hon. Friend is right. There is a trade agreement, and we think that it is important to develop ever better relationships with Canada, not least because there are 2,500 employees in 12 companies from Ontario that already operate in Wales.

## Regional Development

8. **Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to meet Commissioner Millan in the near future to discuss regional development assistance for Wales.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones):** The former Secretary of State met Mr. Millan in Brussels on 15 March and invited him to

south Wales. My right hon. Friend intends to pursue that application and to meet other Commissioners when he visits Brussels later this year.

**Mr. Davies:** Since the ultimate power and authority in granting regional development aid now reside with the Commission and not with the United Kingdom Cabinet, is it not remiss of the Secretary of State still not to have been to Brussels to see his paymaster, Mr. Bruce Millan?

Will the Under-Secretary tell the Secretary of State that when he goes to Brussels and meets Mr. Millan, he should leave the propaganda behind in the Welsh Office and tell him that Wales is the poorest area in Britain, with the lowest income per head, and that it is the lowest economically active area—indeed, lower than many areas in Europe with objective 1 status? If he tells Mr. Millan the truth, perhaps the European Commission will not agree with the British Government, and will not devalue the assisted area status of Wales.

**Mr. Jones:** I will certainly leave the right hon. Gentleman behind to keep on peddling all his negative propaganda about the Principality. I have already told him that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will see Mr. Millan shortly, and the right hon. Gentleman can be assured that my right hon. Friend will fully and properly represent the interests of Wales.

**Mr. Alan Williams:** Does the Minister realise that the Secretary of State will not be readily forgiven in Wales because of the nonsensical, bombastic claims that Wales is leading Britain out of the recession? As a result of those claims, we lose all our regional aid. Is he aware that we have already lost regional development grants, that the special development areas have been abolished, and that those areas that still receive regional aid receive a much reduced sum? The Secretary of State is leading us into further trouble, not salvation.

**Mr. Jones:** That is not my claim or the claim of my right hon. Friend. It is the claim made by the CBI and the National Westminster bank. A variety of independent and expert commentators are pointing out that Wales is leading Britain and Europe out of recession. The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) would do far better for Wales if he welcomed that.

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** When does my hon. Friend the Minister expect to hear from the European Commission the results of our application for assisted area status? Can he confirm that that scheme is beset by many rules and that the more successful regions, which have succeeded under regional development in the past, are quite likely to lose their assisted area status, not because of anything that Her Majesty's Government have done, but simply because they have succeeded in improving those areas and their relative position within the United Kingdom?

**Mr. Jones:** It would be premature to speculate on the outcome of to indicate the likely date. However, I can reassure my hon. Friend and the House that my right hon. Friend has built on the work of his predecessor as Secretary of State in fighting hard for the interests of Wales in this matter.

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** Will the Minister comment on reports that circulated at the weekend that the map that was submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on behalf of the United Kingdom on assisted area status has been sent back to the United Kingdom because the Commission in Brussels would not accept the redrawing of that map in favour of the south-east of England? When the map is sent back, will he ensure that Wales is not sold down the river this time?

**Mr. Jones:** The hon. Gentleman must content himself and be patient a little longer. He can be assured that my right hon. Friend has lost no opportunities to fight Wales's corner in this matter.

**Mr. Morgan:** Will the hon. Gentleman tell the Secretary of State for Wales that he is not doing Wales any good by simply trumpeting regional development successes without balancing that with the news about pit closures and factory rundowns which would produce the true, balanced picture? Will he tell him that he must not confuse his hwyl with his hype and that he does Wales no good, and will send all the wrong signals to the European Community's regional development people, if he tells them that everything is going well in Wales? There is still a long way to go and he must not expect the Commission to come in and keep regional development status in certain areas if this Government abandon areas like south-east and north-east Wales.

**Mr. Jones:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already anticipated that question by pointing out that we hear all the bad news from the Opposition Benches and that my right hon. Friend brings the good news. Quite frankly, if overseas investors listened only to the news from the Opposition Benches, they would never consider investing in Wales.

## Environment

9. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his environmental priorities for the remainder of 1993.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The environmental priorities for the Welsh Office are set out in chapter 7 of its departmental report, published in February 1993. Action is being taken on many fronts with particular emphasis on the removal of dereliction, on urban improvement and on a range of environmental protection measures—all designed to protect and enhance the environment of Wales.

**Mr. Hughes:** Given the at least worryingly ambiguous words of the Secretary of State in his Llangollen speech, will the Minister assure us that his Department's priorities in the remaining six months will be to ensure that no road schemes are approved which do not have acceptable status in the communities through which they pass and that no mineral extraction schemes are approved around the coast which are unacceptable to the communities living on the land adjoining those proposed developments? Above all, given the recent flooding once again in north Wales, will he assure us that protection against flood damage, particularly on the coast and also in the valleys, is given a high priority in both north and south Wales in the remaining six months of this year?

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made his point very clearly. It is quite possible that economic development can lead to pressures on the environment, but we are accustomed to dealing with that in Wales. It is a matter of achieving a proper balance.

As for the various developments to which the hon. Gentleman referred, of course they are always considered from an environmental viewpoint as well as from the point of view of their economic benefit. If necessary, inquiries are held, assessments are made and regulations are called into play. As for coast protection, the hon. Gentleman will know that it always has priority in our allocation of funds.

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is important that we continually reassess our priorities in relation to environmental policy? Will my right hon. Friend consider reassessing his priorities and, if necessary, find extra resources for the railway lines which were recently affected by flooding in north Wales, so that the burden of such work as is necessary does not entirely fall on regional railways? Just how much is the Welsh Office spending this year on its environmental policy?

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** To begin with the last part of my hon. Friend's question, our current action on the environment is backed by resources of £198 million this year in our environmental services programmes. That comprises £66 million spent by the Welsh Development Agency on land reclamation and urban renewal, £34 million spent under the urban programme and urban investment grant, and £122 million spent by Housing for Wales. I should add that our agri-environmental programmes will consume twice as much in terms of resources, at £12·6 million in 1995-96, than they consume in the current year.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** With respect to environmental considerations and road building, did the Minister see reports over the weekend that people in the town of Builth Wells do not want the bypass to desecrate the countryside around them? Will the right hon. Gentleman transfer the money set aside for that project to the cross-valley link in Bridgend? That would enable a new, badly needed road to be built, and it would give the county and the borough councils the opportunity to consider the challenge of redeveloping an area of dereliction around the town centre in Bridgend.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** There is hardly a road scheme in Wales that does not attract some environmental criticism, but I doubt whether the majority of people of Builth Wells would support the view that was reported over the weekend that no bypass is needed. The Welsh Office would not be proposing a bypass were it not to be needed in future. I regret to say to the hon. Gentleman that it is most unlikely that we shall transfer the money destined for the Builth Wells bypass to his part of the world, although, of course, we always give considerable attention and priority to developments that will lead to the economic revival of the valleys.

## Local Government (White Paper)

10. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his proposed timetable for legislation to implement the White Paper on local government in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** My right hon. Friend intends to introduce legislation allowing elections to the new authorities to be held in 1994 and for them to assume responsibility for their services in April 1995.

**Mr. Hanson:** Does the Secretary of State accept that in my constituency and in those of many other hon. Members there remains concern about boundaries in particular? Equally, grave concern is growing daily throughout Wales about the general thrust of the White Paper on the proposed legislation, in terms of privatisation, reduced democracy and the lack of a Welsh assembly. Would it not be better if the Secretary of State and the Minister withdrew the proposals and included a further period of consultation, when he can get it right and achieve consensus rather than what he has at the moment, which is opposition?

**Mr. Jones:** There the hon. Gentleman points to it. He would take powers away from local government and give them to a remote quango of a regional assembly for Wales. We want to make local government more direct to the people of Wales. That is why our unitary authorities have been widely welcomed.

There are opportunities for consultation. We have asked for all consultations to be in by 30 June. I know that the hon. Gentleman has already seen my right hon. Friend. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that his representations and all of the others will be taken into account before we introduce legislation in the next Session.

## Morriston Hospital, Swansea (Cardiac Unit)

11. **Mr. Donald Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to announce his decision on a possible cardiac unit at Morriston hospital, Swansea.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Following an extensive option appraisal, I am pleased to announce that a second cardiac centre is to be developed at Morriston hospital in Swansea. I have also endorsed the consultants' recommendations that the existing planning objective of 1,200 adult open-heart operations per annum should be increased to 1,400 in the light of the latest estimates of need and the prevalence of the disease in south Wales. I am, therefore, inviting proposals to develop the centre.

**Mr. Anderson:** I assure the Minister that this long-awaited decision will be eagerly greeted at Morriston and the staff there will be ready to co-operate with the Welsh Office in its implementation. Is the Minister able to give an assurance to the House that the full revenue and capital costs of the decision are secure?

**Mr. Jones:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his welcome and assurance on behalf of the staff. I already know that they are looking forward to taking the decision forward. We have considered the proposal most carefully, not least the financial implications involved. I am anxious that the centre should come on stream as quickly as possible and I am urging the West Glamorgan health authority, the management of Morriston hospital and the Welsh Health Common Services Authority to initiate the proposals without delay.

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** I very much welcome what the Minister has said, but I wish to check three things with him. First, can he confirm that the same situation will not be repeated at Morriston as happened at University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff, when evidence given to the Select Committee at the time he was a member showed that patients were dying on the wards because there were no dedicated intensive care beds? Will he ensure that those beds are in place? Secondly——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Time is short—quickly.

**Mr. Wardell:** Will the Minister confirm that the management and funding of the second cardiac unit will be fully under the NHS?

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** We have already made arrangements to expand the activities of the University Hospital of Wales to 800 from April this year. I am fully satisfied that all that is necessary to do that has been put in place. In turn, we shall be working out the arrangements. I have invited the proposal to be submitted as quickly as possible. This will be a tremendous advance for the national health service in Wales. It will be a new facility for the NHS treating NHS patients in Wales and I am especially grateful that the hon. Gentleman welcomes it.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Crown Prosecution Service

25. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will set out the aims of the Crown Prosecution Service.

**The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell):** The aim of the Crown Prosecution Service is to undertake a fair and independent review of the evidence in criminal cases and, if proceedings are justified, to prosecute them effectively and efficiently.

**Mr. Richards:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is absolutely outrageous that Mr. Tony Evans, an elderly householder who had his home broken into on more than eight occasions and eventually resorted to defending himself and his property with a shotgun, was arrested and faces the possibility of being prosecuted for attempted murder?

**The Attorney-General:** I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that that is not the case. Any shooting incident must be carefully investigated. It is not for people to take the law into their own hands. The case of Mr. Evans showed the system working exactly as it should. There was a prompt review of the evidence by the Crown Prosecution Service, acting in close consultation with the police, which showed that Mr. Evans had acted only in self defence. The Crown Prosecution Service advised properly and correctly that no charge was appropriate.

**Mr. Skinner:** Is it one of the aims of the Crown Prosecution Service to ensure that, when people such as Asil Nadir, who have connections with the Tory party and who are likely to spill the beans if taken to court, somehow or other manage to get away from Britain to northern Cyprus—almost certainly with help from people in the Establishment—they receive a visit from the Lord Chancellor, who went straight off the Woolsack to see a man who had fled bail? Was the President of the Board of Trade in Venice to meet the ex-treasurer of the Tory party McAlpine?

**The Attorney-General:** The hon. Gentleman is wandering even more curiously than usual into the realms of fantasy. The notion that my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor went to visit Asil Nadir is ridiculous. As I have said to the hon. Gentleman before, if he has the slightest evidence of criminality in relation to this matter against any person, he should tell the police.

**Mr. Thurnham:** Will my right hon. and learned Friend review the amount of time that the police have to spend on paperwork for the Crown Prosecution Service, especially in the case of guilty pleas, so that the police can spend their time out on the beat instead of stuck behind their desks?

**The Attorney-General:** My hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General will answer a question about that matter a little later. But I can tell my hon. Friend that the amount of paperwork was agreed between the police and the CPS when pre-trial issues were considered recently.

**Mr. Fraser:** As head of the Crown Prosecution Service, can the Attorney-General confirm that he has received up to about nine representations about Mr. Asil Nadir from Members of Parliament and from Ministers? Does not that demonstrate that there is one course of advocacy for those who are rich and donate to the Tory party and another course of conduct for others? I should like the Attorney-General to answer two questions. First, how many of the representations that he received contained declarations of interest in accordance with the practices of the House? Secondly, what advice does he have for Members of Parliament so that when representations are made on such matters they should be entirely above reproach?

**The Attorney-General:** I receive a large number of representations, sometimes made public and sometimes made in private, from right hon. and hon. Members or members of the public about many prosecutions from time to time. I have no reason to believe that any representations made to me about the case of Mr. Nadir were improperly made. I shall repeat for the hon. Gentleman what I have said many times. If any representation is made to me it will be carefully and dispassionately examined in the appropriate quarters. It is not my policy to publish, where the individual has chosen not to publish, the nature of the representations made.

### Prosecutions

26. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Attorney-General to what extent the Crown Prosecution Service takes into account the interests of the victim when deciding to institute proceedings.

**The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer):** When the Crown Prosecution Service is deciding whether to continue proceedings, the interests of the victim are an important factor in determining the balance of the public interest.

**Mr. Booth:** In view of the complaints that have been aired in the press this morning about the Government's help for victims, will my hon. and learned Friend tell the House what help has been given to victims and especially to victim support schemes in the past five to 10 years? Is my hon. and learned Friend open to new policy suggestions that will also help victims?

**The Solicitor-General:** The Government are strongly committed to helping victims of crime. As my hon. Friend will know, the Government published their victims charter in 1990. Although it is a matter for the Home Office, I can tell my hon. Friend that funding for victim support has increased by 46 per cent. in the past two years, from £5·7 million to £8·4 million this year.

On my hon. Friend's more specific point about initiatives that the Crown Prosecution Service has under way, it is at present formulating a national operational service standard for victims and witnesses on which the views of victim support are being sought. In the near future the results of those consultations will be made public.

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** Is the Minister aware that the increase in the amount of money offered to victim support schemes is nothing like the increase in the number of crimes with which they have to deal? His Department could not only make life a great deal simpler by giving schemes sufficient money to fulfil the task that they have been given, but could examine the habit of not informing victims of any particular action taken and the timing of any action. That lack of information contributes to the feeling of great unease and, indeed, of neglect.

**The Solicitor-General:** I understand what the hon. Lady says. We sympathise with those victims who feel that they are not kept abreast of developments in their cases. It is, principally, a matter for the police to inform victims of the progress of their cases. It is not every victim who requires financial support, but the hon. Lady will be aware of the change that we made to the law in 1988, as a result of which, in appropriate cases, the CPS makes application to the court for compensation to be paid by defendants to victims. That is a welcome reform.

**Mr. Brazier:** Will my hon. and learned Friend accept from me that one way in which to release extra funds to victims would be by saving money on the scope and size of the CPS, which is involved in almost all criminal cases that the police handle? Since the CPS came into being, it has increased costs and delays and reduced the proportion of cases coming to court. The conviction rate of contested cases in Crown courts has also reduced.

**The Solicitor-General:** I always listen with interest to contributions from my hon. Friend on the subject of law and order, but I disagree with every statement of fact that he has just made. It is significant that one of the main ways in which the CPS is able to help victims results from a new form that it has introduced, which contains details of a victim's loss. That can be given to counsel in court to ensure that an application is made to the court for compensation. That surely is progress.

### Serious Fraud

27. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Attorney-General how many cases are currently under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office.

**The Attorney-General:** The Serious Fraud Office has 57 active cases, of which 27 are at the investigation stage.

**Mr. Hutton:** Given the great interest in one of those cases—that against Mr. Asil Nadir—will the right hon. and learned Gentleman reconsider his decision not to reveal the identity of hon. Members who have made representations to him about that case? Does he further agree that the transparently politically motivated lobbying on behalf of Mr. Nadir has compromised the integrity and independence of the Serious Fraud Office?

**The Attorney-General:** No, I would not agree with the hon. Gentleman either in his premise or on the alleged facts which formed the latter part of his question.

In my view, it is an important part of our criminal justice system that it should be possible for people, whether in the House or elsewhere, to make representations to the Law Officers, in private if they think it appropriate, so that matters can be carefully and dispassionately examined. I have no reason to believe that any impropriety has been committed in relation to the case of Mr. Nadir; nor can I think of any impropriety in relation to other cases. They are all carefully and properly reviewed.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Aid Co-ordination

33. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have been held in the Development Council of the European Community on co-ordination procedures with other multilateral and bilateral donors.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd):** The European Community Development Council on 25 May 1993 discussed the co-ordination of development policies between the Community and its member states.

**Mr. Enright:** The Minister will be aware that, despite pious promises, there continue to be discrepancies, even in Lomé countries, where there is a real opportunity for complementarity. Will he therefore examine urgently how the council, alongside the United Nations Development Programme, can achieve more successful co-ordination? In particular, will he consider the poorest countries which simply do not have the administration to cope with the vagaries of different administrations? I would also include in that non-governmental organisations.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** It is early days. The new system must develop properly, but the hon. Gentleman, whose considerable expertise in this matter I recognise, should accept that there has been some progress. A resolution on family planning was passed at the meeting of the Development Council in November under our presidency. That has been taken forward in terms of co-ordination through regular expert meetings and meetings at the margins of other international conferences. Co-ordination has begun to develop.

34. **Mr. Merchant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the United Kingdom overseas aid budget is administered through multilateral channels.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Around 45 per cent. of total overseas aid is administered through multilateral channels, including the EC, the World bank, and UN agencies. This proportion is growing.

**Mr. Merchant:** In view of the increasing proportion of British aid channelled through multilateral sources, is it not increasingly important for Britain to work closely with those agencies to ensure that our aid is given through the most effective means possible?

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Yes, my hon. Friend must be right. I have just answered a question on co-ordination in the European Community of that element of our multilateral aid programme, so it must apply to the other elements of that programme. We maintain close liaison with the international financial institutions and with the World bank, particularly with regard to its special programme of assistance for sub-Saharan Africa. That has been an invaluable mechanism for the support of economic reform programmes.

### World Development Movement

35. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet representatives of the World Development Movement to discuss overseas aid provision for non-governmental organisations; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has regular meetings with NGOs, including the World Development Movement.

**Mr. O'Brien:** Will the Minister assure the House that, next time his colleague meets the World Development Movement, she will ensure that the Government's contribution towards the cessation of dumping of toxic waste and other materials in the developing countries and of using dangerous chemicals is maintained and that the Government will not reduce their contribution to protecting and helping the environment in developing countries?

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister has regular meetings with a whole range of NGOs, including the one on whose behalf he has asked the question. He will be aware that the ODA has published a manual of environmental appraisal, a copy of which is in the House. It was published in 1989 and has been regularly revised and updated. More than 1,800 copies of it are distributed to a wide range of organisations and to all ODA staff, who have also been given environmental training.

**Mr. Garnier:** Could not British business gain a tremendous amount from British donations to multilateral agencies and, further, from donations made by other unilateral donors to the third world?

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Yes, both our bilateral and multilateral aid programmes have considerable benefit for British industry. We estimate that the total identifiable spending in Britain from aid has approached about £2 billion a year in recent years and about three quarters of that derives directly from the British aid programme.

### Bosnia

36. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what impact he expects the recent Washington agreement to have on humanitarian aid provision to Bosnia.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The parties to the joint action programme in Washington on 22 May 1993 agreed to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Bosnia and to insist that all parties should allow humanitarian aid to pass without hindrance.

**Mr. Watson:** As that is clearly not happening, does not the shameful Washington agreement effectively represent a final sell-out of the Bosnian people by the United Nations? It is effectively impotent in the face of the Serbian advances through eastern Bosnia, and once Gorazde falls, as it seems that it soon must, what possibility will there be of delivering humanitarian aid to the Muslims of eastern Bosnia? Is it not time that the Minister put pressure on the Foreign Secretary and that he, in turn, put pressure on the other United Nations Security Council members to ensure that attempts are made to bring about peace by bringing direct pressure to bear on Serbia—and if that involves some form of military action, is that not what is now necessary to ensure that humanitarian aid can effectively be delivered?

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** These are aid questions, and we have discussed Bosnia at Foreign and Commonwealth Office Question Time on many occasions. I pay tribute to the dedication and bravery of all the civilian aid workers in Bosnia, many of whom are British, and to our armed forces for their tremendous achievements. I am delighted to see that those considerable efforts were reflected in the recent honours list.

The hon. Member makes a political point, and it is not for me, in this Question Time, to answer that. He is aware that Bosnia features high on the agenda at the European Council meeting taking place in Copenhagen. Lord Owen met Foreign Ministers yesterday. There will be Foreign Ministers' discussion about the various political matters and the way in which they could be concluded.

**Mr. Meacher:** Is not the Minister ashamed that the British Government have signed the Washington agreement, which is a despicable betrayal of the largest population group in Bosnia, the Muslims, who are now being denied both the arms to defend themselves and adequate United Nations protection to guarantee the delivery of humanitarian relief and safe havens?

Is not the hon. Gentleman also ashamed that nothing is being done to provide for the 2 million refugees who have been driven out of their homes, that atrocities continue at Gorazde and that the delivery of humanitarian relief is dependent on the consent of the Serbs, who are guilty of genocide? If Vance-Owen is now dead, will the Government at least press for the creation of a United Nations transitional authority as the only political framework that may still save the victims of that terrible war from complete annihilation?

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The hon. Gentleman, like the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who leads for the Opposition on foreign affairs, says that something must be done, but does not specify whether he wants British troops to be more at risk than they are. He should recognise that more than 2·3 million people in Bosnia depend on the international relief effort, under the co-ordination of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and that we have made a substantial contribution to that effort.

**Mr. Cormack:** Does my hon. Friend accept that no one would challenge the tributes that he has paid to the aid

workers and the British troops? Indeed, we all echo them. Will he confirm that neither extra aid nor extra protection will be afforded by the Washington agreement?

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Those matters are under discussion at this moment in Copenhagen.

## Points of Order

3.32 pm

**Mr. Derek Enright** (Hemsworth): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that some time ago the House was given solemn assurances by the Department of Trade and Industry about which pits would remain open. This weekend I discovered that Frickley, which is in my constituency, if being referred to as though it is to be thrown on the scrap heap. In view of the disgraceful way in which this matter is now being handled, may I ask whether you have had a request from the DTI for one of its Ministers to come to the House to explain why we have been misled?

**Mr. Martin Redmond** (Don Valley): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I accept that it is not your job to do ministerial work, but could you advise us on how we can get answers from Ministers? They all have the power and the glory, but apparently no responsibility. How can we get answers to very important questions? Rossington colliery, in my constituency, is now in mothballs and British Coal intends to dismantle the face, making it unsaleable to the private sector. As Ministers are refusing to answer our questions, how would you advise me to go about getting some?

**Madam Speaker:** On the first point of order, I have not been informed that a DTI Minister wishes to come to the House to make a statement today. On the second, I think that the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) is as ingenious as I am in these matters. He will know that DTI Ministers will be replying to questions later this week, so he must try his luck then.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I hope that this is a matter for you——

**Madam Speaker:** So do I.

**Mr. Winnick:** I have tabled a series of questions to the Attorney-General about people who have made representations to him about the Nadir case. Originally, the reply to my question was that nine—no, seven—Conservative Members made such representations. I then tabled further questions asking for further information, but not asking for the identity of those concerned. The Attorney-General replied:

"I do not intend to expand on my answer".—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1993; Vol. 226, c. 668.]

You are not responsible for ministerial answers, Madam Speaker, but the Attorney-General's reply means that neither I nor any other hon. Member can table questions seeking further information about the representations made by Conservative Members to the Attorney-General about the Nadir case. Our job as an Opposition is being eroded and undermined because the Table Office will say that, arising from the answer given to me, the blocking mechanism is in place and that neither I nor any other right hon. or hon. Member can table a further question.

The Attorney-General has not only refused to give me any information but has made it virtually impossible to go to the Table Office to put further questions on Asil Nadir. They are hiding something, and it is disgraceful that the Attorney-General should be a party to this.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman prefaced his point of order with the remark that answers to questions are not for me. Ministers are responsible for the comments they make. If the hon. Gentleman is claiming that the Table Office has refused to accept a question, he should not raise that on the Floor of the House—as he knows as a member of the Committee on Procedure. The hon. Gentleman knows the procedures of the House. If there is a refusal, he should come and see me. I should be glad to give him some minutes of my time, to try to be as helpful as I can.

**Mr. Winnick** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. Winnick) clearly stated that the Table Office is refusing his questions. If that is the case, he must come to see me.

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): Today's Order Paper states:

"Questions to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs relating to Overseas Development will begin not later than 3.20 pm."

Today, they started at 3.22 pm, and the clock had moved to 3.23 pm as the first question was asked. You, Madam Speaker, stopped questions at 3.31 pm. In other words, we lost at least two minutes of Overseas Development Questions. I have a vested interest, in that my question was not answered. I look to you, Madam Speaker, for some redress—either a good selection next time, or at least an opportunity to ask my question on the plight of refugees from western Sahara.

**Madam Speaker:** I tried to redress the balance of questions, as the hon. Gentleman will realise, although he was not in the Chamber earlier, when hon. Members representing one region of the country asked questions and who are often inclined, if I may say so, to be rather long winded. Therefore, they ran over their time by about 50 seconds, and I had to juggle the other questions to be helpful to the whole House. However, I note the hon. Gentleman's comments.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I shall be very brief, and I am not on the Procedure Committee.

**Lady Olga Maitland** (Sutton and Cheam): But the hon. Gentleman is long winded.

**Mr. Skinner:** And I am not Welsh.

Personal statements are to some extent a matter for yourself, Madam Speaker. You will agree that they are not always made in the event of a resignation or sacking, or both. Right hon. and hon. Members can make statements on different subjects, with your agreement, Madam Speaker. As we are having trouble getting those nine Tory Members of Parliament to make a statement about their connection with Asil Nadir, will you, Madam Speaker, give each and every one of them, as and when they are available, an opportunity to make a personal statement to the House about their connection?

**Madam Speaker:** If any applications are made to me, I always consider them very seriously.

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

PARALYTIC SHELLFISH POISONING

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) (No. 5) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1515) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

*Question agreed to.*

# Orders of the Day

## Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [17 June],*

That this House approves the statement on the Defence Estimates 1992 contained in Cm 1981.—*[Mr. Rifkind.]*

*Question again proposed.*

*[Relevant documents: Defence Committee report on the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992, First Report of Session 1992-93, HC 218; Fifth Report from the Defence Committee on Army Commitments and Resources: the Government's Response and Army Manpower Statement of 3rd February 1993, HC 731 of Session 1992-93.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Before I call the Minister, I must announce that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. Also, although I have not imposed a 10-minute limit on speeches today, I ask right hon. and hon. Members voluntarily to restrict the length of time that they speak.

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You stated that you chose the amendment in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition and of others of my right hon. and hon. Friends. I tabled an amendment before last Thursday's debate, which unfortunately you were unable to select last Thursday. What consideration have you given to the selection of that amendment, to allow the House the opportunity to express a clear view on the future holding by this country of weapons of mass destruction—nuclear weapons?

**Madam Speaker:** I always take seriously into consideration any amendment that is submitted to my office, as I did with the amendment in the name of the hon. Gentleman. As he will appreciate, I find it wise not to give reasons for my selection.

3.39 pm

**The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken):** This is the second day of our debate on the 1992 "Statement on the Defence Estimates". Since it began last Thursday, there have been two historic developments. The Opposition have unexpectedly given birth to their long-awaited defence policy, which appears in the shape of a remarkable amendment to the main motion and can be found on page 5990 of the Order Paper. The amendment entered into the world in a somewhat furtive and surreptitious manner in the doldrums of a Friday afternoon, long after we had concluded the first day of the debate and the usual parliamentary midwives had gone home for the weekend. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members cannot say it has anything to do with what the Secretary of State said, because there is no reference to the important points that he made. It was an attempt to heal Labour's wounds, exposed by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) this afternoon.

The birth of the amendment was a difficult one, which probably gave a new meaning to the phrase "in labour". It is unusual for a policy-making Opposition amendment to be tabled in the middle of a major parliamentary debate. The Government should perhaps take credit for goading Labour into unveiling its policy. My theory is that Labour

rushed into mid-debate print because of its obsession with market testing. Labour must have carried out a market test between its two defence factions and then decided that the amendment tabled by one section of the party needed some competition from another in-House bid by Friday.

I do not want to keep intruding into this unlevel playing field, but at least both wings of the Opposition have now unveiled their contradictory defence policies. As Cromwell's Ironside used to say, "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition." There is plenty of ammunition around; inevitably, the official Opposition present an easy target. The Opposition amendment is the familiar old ragbag of demands for quangos and disarmament. But there is one remarkable new demand, and that is that our conventional forces should be negotiated away. I do not know how this can possibly be squared with the Opposition's familiar cry in debate after debate that our forces are already far too overstretched. Perhaps the Opposition will later enlarge on that credibility gap. The Government categorically reject the Opposition amendment, and have no intention of negotiating away our conventional armed forces.

As I said on Thursday, this debate offers a good opportunity to explore in some breadth and depth matters such as our contribution to United Nations operations and our nuclear, naval and air equipment programmes.

**Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody** (Crewe and Nantwich): If it is true that the Government have this great commitment to conventional British forces, will the Minister tell us how he can square the commitments that we will continue to have to Belize with the Government's obvious intention to withdraw British troops from that country and, as far as we can see, deploy them in the former Yugoslavia?

**Mr. Aitken:** The hon. Lady probably missed Thursday's debate. If she had been here, she would have heard this matter presented in a fairer perspective. We are retaining a training presence in Belize, and there is no question of a total severance of our links.

The theme of what I have to say this afternoon might be called "centres of excellence". I use that phrase deliberately because, in the present climate of reassessment of the role and size of our armed forces, it is important to make it clear that the Government have every intention of maintaining our centres of excellence and of playing to our strengths, which are formidable.

If there is one enduring message that I have taken to heart after 15 months as a Defence Minister it is that Britain is a fortunate nation to have such dedicated, highly skilled and totally professional armed forces. Defence ultimately depends on people. Britain excels in the premier world league of fighting and peacekeeping forces because our people—our service men and women—are just about the best in the world at getting their difficult and dangerous jobs done.

The contribution of the British forces to the UN in Bosnia is an example of this excellence. The Cheshires and the Prince of Wales Regiment, and the many other units involved, can take justified pride—as the House does—in the vital work they have done and the businesslike way in which they have gone about it.

When the Cheshires deployed last November with a squadron of 9th/12th Royal Lancers, 35th Royal Engineers Regiment, 5th Ordnance battalion and other units, they faced the difficult task of translating the United Nations mandate into reality on the ground, in a country whose devastated infrastructure made self-sufficiency essential.

The first need was to ensure that the roads were passable for heavy civilian lorries. The Royal Engineers had to open up and maintain tracks over a distance of nearly 400 km, from Split on the Dalmatian coast to Tuzla in north-east Bosnia, in mountainous and muddy terrain and often in severe weather. They also had to provide accommodation for our troops and provide essential power, lighting, heating, water and protection.

The Cheshires concluded that the maximum amount of aid could be delivered to those in need only if transit areas were established. That meant that there was need for a tremendous effort in meeting and negotiating with local leaders and for intensive and high-profile patrolling in Warrior and Scimitar vehicles, which have performed so well. As the House knows, the Cheshires also provided close escorts for convoys when that was necessary. In total, they escorted 562 convoys during their six-month tour and delivered 35,690 tonnes of aid, often operating in difficult and dangerous circumstances.

In mid-May the Prince of Wales Own Regiment of Yorkshire, supported by a squadron of the Light Dragoons, a squadron of the 21st Engineers Regiment, the Royal Logistic Corps and other units, relieved the Cheshire battalion group. They are continuing to escort United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees convoys to north-east Bosnia. They have inherited many of the same problems as their predecessors faced. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has told the House, the recent fighting between Muslims and Croats in central Bosnia gives some cause for concern, so we continue to monitor the position closely. However, in its first month on duty, the battalion group has already been able to escort 209 convoys, delivering more than 6,000 tonnes of aid.

Taken in the round, the British contribution to the humanitarian relief effort in Bosnia must have saved tens of thousands of lives this winter in that unhappy country, and the skill and professionalism with which that job has been done have rightly won widespread international acclaim and appreciation, which I know is echoed by the whole House.

Although I have singled out the Army units in the former Yugoslavia for special praise, I am sure that the House would also like to hear a word of commendation for the naval personnel who have played an important role in the task group in the Adriatic and for the Royal Air Force personnel who have faced very real risks in the humanitarian airlift to Sarajevo.

In such roles, which incidentally are being performed elsewhere in the world—such as Cambodia, where Royal Navy personnel are deployed on United Nations operations—our service men and women are strengthening the United Nations and responding to the humanitarian efforts of the international community, and are doing so with that special British military excellence which is so much a part of our national pride and heritage.

The House will not have been surprised to hear me pay those tributes to the quality of our armed forces, but in that context I would like to mention another centre of excellence whose praises are relatively rarely sung—the Ministry of Defence's civilian staff. The Ministry employs about 155,000 civilian men and women in this country and abroad. Their skills and experience are diverse. We have

*[Mr. Aitken]*

teachers, fire officers, hydrographers, scientists, doctors, engineers and a host of other professions within the Ministry. The jobs carried out by civilians range from the provision of vital stores and equipment, to the repair and servicing of equipment and to policy and administrative functions inside the Ministry.

**Mr. Tim Devlin** (Stockton, South): I am grateful for my hon. Friend's kind words about Ministry of Defence civilian staff. As he knows, the Royal Navy spare parts department has a large facility in my constituency, but the managerial staff may be moved to the new naval support command, which will be based in Bath. The department will be moving from a brand new office block in my constituency, which will shortly be left empty. I fully understand what my hon. Friend says about preserving excellence in our armed forces and their back-up services. Would it not therefore be far more appropriate to keep together a unit that has served the nation and the Navy extremely well and, if a new naval support command is to be formed, to form it around the basis that already exists in my constituency?

**Mr. Aitken:** My hon. Friend's argument is persuasive on behalf of his constituents, but I know from experience that one needs to look carefully at all sides of the case when an evaluation of this kind has to be made. I shall certainly respond to my hon. Friend's point, perhaps in writing, and see whether there is anything that we can do to meet the argument that he has put forward.

My hon. Friend's general point, however, is that civilians in his constituency, and elsewhere, play an essential role, in terms of the Department, in support of our troops, sometimes even in the front line. They are integral to our defence, at all levels. We could not do without them. Since 1979, the number of civilians has been reduced by about 40 per cent., and will continue to be reduced, in line with the reductions in our armed forces.

May I now move from defence people of excellence to defence programmes of excellence and begin by highlighting the ultimate guarantor of our national security, the defence nuclear programme.

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** (Denton and Reddish): Can the Minister of State tell us whether the Americans intend to allow us to have any more tests and whether those tests will be for a new weapons system? If we are to have more tests for a new weapons system, will that not be in contravention of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty?

**Mr. Aitken:** The hon. Gentleman knows that we are awaiting an announcement by President Clinton in the next few days. We believe it to be imminent. I intend to say a few words about nuclear testing, but the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that we do not yet know what the American decision is.

We can be justly proud of the United Kingdom Trident programme. It remains on schedule to enter service from the mid-1990s. Since the Government's decision in 1982 to procure the Trident II weapon system, there has been no slippage in the deployment date, and there has been a decrease, in real terms, of £2·8 billion in our estimate of the procurement costs, an achievement that was warmly praised by the Select Committee.

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): While the Minister is dealing with our nuclear deterrent, may I ask him about Polaris? He knows that yesterday there was a leak at Faslane which has caused great concern in the surrounding area. There has been a number of leaks from Polaris submarines. What is being done to investigate this particular incident? Can the Minister also say why these incidents are constantly occurring and what he is doing to prevent further occurrences? There seems to be an endemic problem with Polaris submarines. Action is quickly needed.

**Mr. Aitken:** I do not accept that there is an endemic problem. Concern about this incident should be seen in a true and measured light. I am able to confirm that there was an alert at the Clyde submarine base on the morning of 20 June. A small quantity of reactor coolant was spilt on the casing of a submarine while she was alongside. The spillage was contained on the casing and did not enter loch waters. An investigation is now under way. I should add that the activation of a nuclear alert was a correct but perhaps over-cautious response by staff to what we know now was a comparatively minor incident.

**Mr. Foulkes:** Does the Minister of State accept that there have been five or six previous incidents and that there is local cause for concern about the occurrence of these incidents and fear that no long-term solution has been found? The fear is that the next time round it may not be what the Minister describes as a minor incident but a major occurrence. Although many local people accept the presence of Polaris submarines, they are understandably anxious to ensure that the highest possible safety standards are maintained.

**Mr. Aitken:** We believe that we make every effort to maintain the highest possible safety standards. It is wrong to suggest that this was the harbinger of a major incident. It was a minor incident. I have nothing to add to the fair and full reply that I have just given.

**Mr. Llew Smith** (Blaenau Gwent): Can the Minister of State explain how we can support both the Trident programme and the non-proliferation treaty?

**Mr. Aitken:** We are supporters of the non-proliferation treaty as a long-term goal; there is no argument about that. We are discussing with our allies the best way of securing it, as I shall make clear in a few moments.

The point that I wish to make to all those who believe in an independent nuclear deterrent—which is not every Opposition Member—is that all parts of the Trident programme are on schedule. The progress that has been achieved represents a tremendous achievement, both for United Kingdom industry and for our own project managers.

The first submarine, Vanguard, is now nearing completion at Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. at Barrow. It is planned to be formally accepted by the Royal Navy in the summer. The second submarine, Victorious, will be launched at around the same time. Good progress is also being made with the construction of the third and fourth boats. We need a credible independent nuclear deterrent underpinning our defence strategy because it provides the ultimate guarantee of our security. Conventional forces alone cannot ensure the prevention of war. Nuclear weapons make a unique contribution by

holding out to any aggressor the prospect of suffering unacceptable damage, outweighing any potential gain that he might believe he could otherwise make.

**Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important to have gradations of nuclear deterrence, and that merely to have an arsenal as an ultimate strategic deterrent may be inadequate, especially against threats from the third world—the Gaddafi or Saddam Hussein type of threat? Will he therefore closely consider re-equipping the Royal Air Force with a tactical stand-off nuclear missile, because free-fall weapons will not be adequate in view of the enhancement of air defences? We do not wish effectively to leave this area of sub-strategic deterrence in Europe to the French.

**Mr. Aitken:** I accept that we must carefully consider what sub-strategic weapons may be right for us in the future. I am aware of my hon. Friend's views, which he has articulated on a number of occasions.

**Mr. Corbyn:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Aitken:** I cannot give way to every intervention; I shall give way later.

In the changing strategic environment, the alliance has reduced its reliance on nuclear weapons, and we have played our part in that reduction. Many uncertainties and risks remain, such as the future of Russia's nuclear arsenal and, above all perhaps, the spread of nuclear technology and materials into unstable or unfriendly hands. Because we face an uncertain future, our deterrent must be adequate for whatever the future may bring. The Trident will fulfil that role, and nothing else can provide the same security or represent better value for money. That is the view of the Government.

**Mr. Corbyn:** The Minister has not answered the point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith). The installation of the Trident submarine system represents an increase in nuclear warheads from 192 to 512—at least a 30 per cent. increase in the killing capacity of nuclear weapons. How on earth can the Government claim to adhere to the United Nations non-proliferation treaty yet propose and encourage an enormous proliferation in Britain's nuclear warheads without saying who the enemy is or at whom these vile weapons are to be directed?

**Mr. Aitken:** The hon. Gentleman has missed the crucial point. Our nuclear deterrent is a minimum deterrent. We do not say what warheads or missiles we may use and in what form or in what number. I can assure him, as we have often told the House and the country, that it is a minimum nuclear deterrent consistent with our national security.

**Mr. Corbyn:** That does not satisfy me.

**Mr. Aitken:** I will never satisfy the hon. Gentleman, and nor could anybody who believes that Britain should have an independent nuclear deterrent. The ideological gulf between us is too wide to be bridged. That may be healthy for democracy, but more healthy for the state of Britain is that the fact that the governing party believes firmly in the necessity of an independent nuclear deterrent.

**Mr. Mark Robinson** (Somerton and Frome): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Aitken:** I must not give way every two minutes. I shall give way later, if necessary.

A discussion of our defence nuclear programme should lead us on to a word or two about nuclear testing, not least because it is vital to correct some of the false assertions that emerged in the speech of the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on Thursday. Far from being in the vanguard of those who oppose a nuclear test ban, the Government are wholly in favour of a comprehensive test ban treaty as a long-term goal. We look forward to early discussions with the American Government on whether we can move more rapidly to achieve it and how it can help our aim of discouraging nuclear proliferation.

The hon. Member for South Shields was rather naive in suggesting that there is a clear linkage between nuclear testing and nuclear proliferation. In fact, it is possible to develop and deploy a cheap and dirty nuclear device without testing. It is, on the whole, the responsible international priesthood of nuclear specialists who are most supportive of nuclear testing for reasons of safety and credibility. We in Britain do not forget that our limited programme of nuclear tests has made a significant contribution to our confidence in the continued safety of our own nuclear deterrent.

**Dr. David Clark** (South Shields): I have listened to the Minister carefully. Has he not read or seen the letter written to me by the Secretary of State and from which I quoted last Thursday in which the Secretary of State admits that, in the preparatory talks on the non-proliferation treaty, other signatories have said that they want evidence of progress on a comprehensive test ban treaty before they will sign an on-going NPT? That is not a wild allegation by me but a precise quotation of what the Secretary of State wrote to me.

**Mr. Aitken:** We too want progress and are striving towards it. We do not broadcast on the BBC or anywhere else every step in our negotiations with our friends and allies, but, as I said, we are committed to a comprehensive test ban treaty as a long-term goal.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) asked about the future of President Clinton's nuclear testing programme. Our nuclear testing programme is, to some extent, dependent on the outcome of the President's review. The House will not expect me to go into detail about the current state of our discussions with the United States Administration, but we believe that our views are well understood.

**Mr. Mark Wolfson** (Sevenoaks): My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the ability of some countries to develop, in particular, dirty nuclear weapons without testing. Will he assure the House that we give a high priority to and adequately fund the organisations under Britain's control which help us to identify such countries?

**Mr. Aitken:** Certainly; I give my hon. Friend that assurance. We do indeed make every effort in that difficult sphere.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (Fife, North-East): Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Aitken:** Yes, but I shall not do so after this time.

**Mr. Campbell:** The Minister has been very generous in giving way, and I am sure that the House would like to acknowledge that. A moment ago he said that Britain was,

*[Mr. Campbell]*

to a large extent, dependent on the United States. Of course, it is more than that—we are entirely dependent on the United States. If the United States determines that there shall be no more tests, we shall have access to no more facilities for tests. Are the three tests for which the United Kingdom is seeking authority designed to test a new weapon? While he was a Minister, the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) told the House several times last year that the moratorium had no consequences for the Trident programme. If we are seeking additional tests, does not it imply that the Government wish to develop a further device?

**Mr. Aitken:** The answer to the hon. and learned Gentleman's question is that, although the Trident programme has been well tried and tested, we nevertheless need a programme of tests for the continuing safety and credibility of all our nuclear weapons. I cannot go further than that today.

On nuclear issues, I should like to say a word about the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston and the recent "Panorama" programme about it. The fundamental point about the AWE is that it is vital to our independent nuclear deterrent. It is the intellectual industrial power house which not only ensures that our nuclear weapons meet their requirements cost-effectively but keeps them safe, effective and reliable throughout their long lives. I have no hesitation in saying that I am proud of the AWE at Aldermaston, of its splendid record of world class achievement, of its immensely skilled industrial work force and, not least, of its calm, assured and responsible attitude to safety.

I should also like to make it clear what the AWE is not. It is most certainly not the caricature institution portrayed by a recent edition of "Panorama" of unsafe buildings, shoddy procedures and mendacious Dr. Strangeloves deliberately misleading the Select Committee. In fact, when it comes to the charge of misleading the public, I hope that the director general of the BBC will take a hard, critical look at that particular edition of "Panorama" and enter a plea of guilty.

"Panorama", which is supposed to be the flagship current affairs programme of the BBC, took its AWE programme into the highly dubious territory of "faction". Actors were employed to reconstruct scenes of alarm and emergency at AWE and impersonated scientists and workers; they even pretended to be genuine interviewees answering reporters' questions. But the really serious editorial crime was that the viewers were not told that any of the scenes were theatrical reconstructions or that any of the interviewees were being played by actors.

Moreover, my Department's press office asked which of the interviewees were unacknowledged actors, which scenes were theatrical reconstructions and where, by the way, was the evidence for making the serious charge that the Select Committee was misled. The answer came back, "Sorry, we will not tell you—it is a BBC secret." That was a classic example of double standards from a programme that was critical of the Ministry of Defence for being too secretive.

**Mr. Foulkes:** I agree with the Minister about some of the unfortunate presentational aspects of the "Panorama" programme. I also agree that it would be unfortunate if the BBC were to get as secretive as the Ministry of Defence. But two people on the programme—the former director and an official of the Health and Safety Executive—made valid and sensible criticisms about safety at Aldermaston. It is clear that there are delays in the provision of some buildings.

I hope that, notwithstanding the presentational problems of the programme, the Minister will give clear assurances that those two people's criticisms will be looked into and that a report will be published so that everyone can see and know that that establishment is completely safe.

**Mr. Aitken:** I referred the small incident at AWE to the Health and Safety Executive, and I agreed with the executive that it should publish its report. There is no doubt that a responsible and measured approach to those issues will be taken. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman seems to have come off his high horse of suggesting that I should appear on the programme. I somehow missed out on doing that. Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I am not an actor and I did not want to appear. I am sure that I made the right judgment.

Let me refer to some non-nuclear equipment programme matters, which I know are potentially of interest to the House. The first is Eurofighter 2000, a project that remains the keystone of the RAF's future capability. It is good to recall that the project enjoys support from all parts of the House. That support made an important contribution to the project's success in negotiating a turbulent passage last year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, and the hon. Member for Carlisle, who wound up for the Opposition on Thursday, both raised valid questions about the cost of the programme and the delay in achieving the first flight. The cost figures are complicated but consistent. Recent press speculation concerning a 50 per cent. increase in the cost of the project is, I am glad to say, wide of the mark. The increase in real terms since the start of the EFA development in 1988 is about 10 per cent. I do not welcome that figure or view it with complacency, but such an increase—particularly as it relates to estimates—is not altogether surprising for such a complex international project at the leading edge of technology.

The hon. Member for Carlisle raised the matter of the aircraft's first flight. I share his disappointment that the aircraft did not fly at this year's Paris air show—although, on second thoughts, Paris may have been an inappropriate venue as the French opted out of the project.

Nevertheless, I am glad to have an opportunity to assure the House that the delay is not an indication of major difficulties but the consequence of a number of relatively minor, but time-consuming, technical problems that have to be resolved. Central to those is the proving and qualification of the software for the aircraft's flight control system. With an aerodynamically sophisticated computer-controlled aircraft of that type, the integration of the software is clearly critical to flight safety. There is nothing that cannot be solved here, but the work is taking longer than was originally expected. The precise timing of the first flight is a matter not for the Government but for the manufacturers to decide. I am confident that we will be seeing the aircraft make a successful first flight this year.

With the German funding problems well on the way to being solved, and an excellent spirit of co-operation now flourishing among the partners, the future of the Eurofighter 2000 project now looks in good shape.

**Mr. Mark Robinson:** A defence debate is the only occasion on which we do not hear employment mentioned by the Opposition. My hon. Friend's announcement will be welcomed by my constituents who work at Normalair-Garrett in Yeovil. I also congratulate my hon. Friend on his announcement last week that the Sonar 2054 contract would be awarded to Marconi at Templecombe, in my constituency. That is an excellent fully integrated underwater system, and the announcement is good news not just for Somerset but for those who live in Dorset and work in my constituency. It is also important for the west country, where the defence industries are so important.

**Mr. Aitken:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He reminds us, as do other hon. Members from time to time, that, although the defence requirement of the Eurofighter and other projects is the Government's predominant concern, nevertheless there are important industrial factors to consider. Eurofighter 2000 should create some 28,000 jobs in Britain and 60,000 jobs across Europe. Already some 300 companies—some of them in my hon. Friend's constituency—are working in the high-tech area of the development phase. It would be tragic if, in the military aviation business in which we have been so successful since the days of the Spitfire and the Hurricane, we were to opt out. That would be a sad day industrially for Britain.

**Dr. John Reid** (Motherwell, North): The project was supported by both sides of the House.

**Mr. Aitken:** It was accepted by all parties, as the hon. Gentleman would have heard me make clear a few moments ago, if he had been listening.

**Mr. Harry Cohen** (Leyton): Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Aitken:** No. I am trying to speak about the Royal Navy's new helicopter carrier.

The understandable sadness about the consequences of our choice of contractor for the future of Swan Hunter has rather overshadowed the importance of that vessel to the Royal Navy. We expect the LPH to enter service towards the end of the decade and to remain in service until the end of the first quarter of the 21st century.

**Mr. Stephen Byers** (Wallsend): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way on this specific point. He rightly refers to the disappointment felt on Tyneside about the loss of that order. He will also be aware of the concern that, because Swan Hunter is now in receivership, it may not be permitted to complete the contract on the three frigates that are presently in the yard. I urge the Minister to state that the Ministry of Defence wants the work to be completed on Tyneside. I urge him to reach a speedy conclusion in the current discussions between his Department and the receivers to lift the cloud of uncertainty that currently hangs over shipbuilding on the River Tyne.

**Mr. Aitken:** I am certainly sympathetic to the point made by the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members whose constituencies are in that part of the country. Those matters are under active discussion between the receiver and ourselves and we are cautiously optimistic that a satisfactory outcome may be possible, but it is too early to say that definitively. We are certainly trying to achieve what the hon. Gentleman hopes we will achieve.

I shall continue to make the obvious point about the helicopter carrier—that it will be a highly versatile ship, with spots for 12 assault helicopters and accommodation for several hundred fully armed troops. It will incorporate all the lessons on damage control learnt from the Falklands conflict. Above all, it will strengthen our armed forces' amphibious capability, which is just the type of highly flexible, mobile and sustainable capability that may be needed more than ever in the changing security environment of the 21st century.

At the beginning of my speech, I said that there had been two historic developments since the debate began on Thursday. The first was when the Opposition gave birth to their latest defence policy, and the second was also an Opposition initiative. An historic first occurred during the opening speech of the hon. Member for South Shields when he made a joke. I correct myself; he borrowed someoned else's joke—from the diary of Alan Clark—probably the Opposition's only joke book because, when the hon. Member for Carlisle wound up, he too relied on quotes and jests from Alan Clark's compendium of wit and wisdom.

**Mr. Eric Martlew** (Carlisle): I quoted from the book "The Donkeys", written 30 years ago, but the comment still applies to the Minister today.

**Mr. Aitken:** Donkeys, diaries, it all comes to much the same thing. That is the Opposition's source of speech ideas. Having discovered its source, I thought I had better catch up on this esoteric homework, so over the weekend I too dipped into Alan Clark's fascinating reminiscences of life as the Minister for Defence Procurement.

My weekend reading left me with the grim realisation that I must seem a very dull, drab, impecunious and unimaginative successor to my friend Alan Clark. Leaving aside one or two faintly envious feelings of regret on personal lifestyle matters, such as the fact that I do not regularly spin down the motorway to Kent at 140 mph in my Porsche for assignations in my medieval castle, what I found really riveting was my predecessor's work style within the Department. As he might have put it, during his days at the Ministry of Defence, the actualité was always highly mouvementé. After one has got through the paragraphs in the diaries that echo literary fantasies more commonly associated with Harold Robbins or with John le Carré than with the home life of our own dear MOD, one clear truth emerges from Alan Clark's writings on which I feel considerable empathy with and sympathy for the author.

All Ministers who have had the honour to serve in the Ministry of Defence since the destruction of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the subsequent disintegration of the Warsaw pact and of the Soviet Union have had to wrestle with one of the most difficult and testing policy judgments of 20th century politics: how do we adjust Britain's defence strategy, spending and policy to the needs of the new security environment while maintaining the standards of excellence that have kept us a premier fighting and peacekeeping force among the leading nations of the international community?

*[Mr. Aitken]*

Alan Clark had his own idiosyncratic and, at times, valuable input in the area. In his somewhat different style, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) did the state great service when he produced his measured blueprint in the shape of his "Options for Change" statement in July 1990. However, no sooner was the ink dry on "Options for Change" than we had further upheavals in the security environment, such as the continuing instability within Russia, the muscle-flexing of Iran and of North Korea and the growing evidence that the demise of the communist empire had released tectonic forces of nationalistic hatred and violence of which the Bosnia tragedy may have been only the first eruption.

Against that background, my right hon. and learned Friend the present Secretary of State for Defence has had to make further changes and adjustments to aspects of "Options for Change". Some, such as the increase in Army manpower, have already been announced. Without our Department and within the Government as a whole, we have had a rigorous intellectual and strategic debate whose conclusions will become known when my right hon. and learned Friend publishes next month what I predict will be a seminal White Paper refining and outlining Britain's defence policy, with more detailed information and explanation than has ever before been published.

Parliament too has a vital part to play in the continuing great debate. There were some valuable contributions to it last Thursday, although not, I am bound to say, from the Opposition. Indeed, looking back on Thursday's debate, the high point was surely the excellent speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) and his spirited exchange with my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster, who chairs the Select Committee on Defence with such distinction. Their exchange elegantly delineated one of the basic issues that we face in defence policy today.

My right hon. Friend the former Minister of State for the Armed Forces put most eloquently the argument that we cannot realistically expect a larger defence budget and that we must match our commitments accordingly. My hon. Friend the Chairman of the Select Committee, on the other hand, quite fairly drew attention to our responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council and to the unique contribution that our forces can make. He said that we should not allow a resource ceiling to be the controlling factor on the size of our forces. Those exchanges put into relief the classic dilemma of the defence planner today.

The reality is that one has to make a judgment. Government is all about choosing. Of course, our defence posture should not be purely resource led, nor is it, but nor should it be unconstrained by resource considerations. The harsh fact is that defence expenditure must take its place within our overall priorities for public expenditure. As I said, we have to make a judgment about the level of forces and about the quality of equipment required to meet the contingencies that are likely to arise. That will always involve an element of risk. Total security in defence would mean the total bankruptcy of the Exchequer.

The judgments that we have to make should be supported by a most rigorous analysis of our military commitments and of the forces needed to fulfil them. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has said, at the moment we have in hand precisely such an analysis. Its conclusions and the judgments that we reach based on them will be set out fully in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993" which we expect to publish in the first week of July. When they see it, I am confident that my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster and other right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken in this debate will be impressed by the careful thought that we have given the issues and that there will be far greater understanding and support for the policies set out in the White Paper.

I doubt whether the Opposition will support the forthcoming White Paper any more than they will support the White Paper that we are debating today. To judge by the Opposition amendment on this midsummer's day, they are living in a midsummer night's dream world on defence.

**Mr. Martlew:** Come on, Bottom.

**Mr. Aitken:** The hon. Gentleman calls out, "Come on, Bottom." That is just who we are missing: the actor who spends half the play wearing the head of a donkey. I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Carlisle is applying for that job.

The Opposition's amendment brays about the starry-eyed proposals of disarmament, defence conversion, quangos and negotiating away our conventional forces. The record of the Government's solid achievement, which I have tried to outline today, contrasts only too clearly with the hollow sham that passes for Opposition defence policy as reflected by their amendment. I urge the House to reject it as decisively as it deserves.

4.20 pm

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'believes that the Government's plans, sketched out in the Statement on the Defence Estimates, Cm. 1981, demonstrate its unwillingness and inability to analyse the long term security needs of the United Kingdom; calls upon the Government to undertake a full defence review which properly assesses UK defence requirements in the light of the recent and fundamental changes in the strategic situation; demands an immediate end to British nuclear testing, which would greatly assist efforts to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons; urges the inclusion of British nuclear and conventional forces in further international disarmament negotiations; and condemns the Government for its failure to provide effective assistance for defence industry diversification or the housing and employment needs of ex-service personnel.'.

I start my first speech in an estimates debate as an Opposition Defence spokesman by joining hon. Members on both sides of the House who, in Thursday's debate, sent good wishes to British troops serving overseas in Bosnia and in the other areas of conflict around the world. The confidence that we have in their courage and ability is, unfortunately, in stark contrast to the widespread lack of confidence in the Government's defence policy.

As my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) said last Thursday, we welcome this debate on the estimates White Paper. However, there are some remarkable features to the debate. First, it is remarkable that we have managed to squeeze it in just in the nick of time. As the Minister has just said, the 1993 White Paper is due to be published in only a fortnight's time. Secondly, and even more remarkably, in opening this two-day debate —what the Minister of State for Defence Procurement described to me privately as an "all-singing, all-dancing

debate"—the Secretary of State spoke for almost an hour and said almost nothing, which was unlike his normal eloquent self.

The Secretary of State began with a few comments about Bosnia and we welcome those. At the end, he launched a rather limp, personal attack on my colleagues and myself—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] We can take it and we can give it as well: just wait for it. Almost all the Secretary of State's speech was devoted to a long and detailed announcement about the Navy and Air Force reserves which incurred the slightly delayed wrath—I understand the reason for that delay—of most of his Conservative colleagues as they began fully to understand the implications.

That announcement could have been made better as an oral statement when questions could have been asked directly and perhaps answered. Many questions still remain unanswered, not least the question that both Conservative and Opposition Members raised, which relates to page 4 of the document which, the Secretary of State seemed to forget, was issued by his predecessor as Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), who is in the Chamber today and who is known to Alan Clark as TK. The document states:

"The Department should consider extending employment protection to Reserves for training endorsed by the Secretary of State when full-time training is needed for an emergency."

Important questions like that have yet to be answered. As many hon. Members said on Thursday, that is a very important issue.

However, the real purpose of Thursday's announcement was revealed in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) by the Minister of State, who admitted that the purpose of the exercise was to save £10 million. This is the latest in a series of random, salami slicing of the forces' manpower: first, the regiments; then the full-time sailors, air men and air women and now the reserves. All the cuts were dictated by the Treasury with no assessment of how they fit in with the developing defence requirements of the country.

Defence strategy formed no part of the Secretary of State's speech and neither did any of the major defence issues facing this country. The Secretary of State was a dog of war which did not bark. There was no mention of NATO, European security structures, arms control or peacekeeping, which are all covered in detail in the White Paper that we are supposed to be discussing.

What is the explanation? I am a reasonable person, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps the charitable explanation is that the Secretary of State did not want to pre-empt the 1939—*[Interruption.]*—the 1993 White Paper. It seemed like 1939. That was a very Freudian slip, perhaps it was even Adlerian. Perhaps he did not want to pre-empt the White Paper, but that has not inhibited the Secretary of State in the past. Or is it because each issue is so tricky that an ambitious Cabinet Minister—he is indeed an ambitious Cabinet Minister—wants to play it safe in the volatile world of the Cabinet of today? More likely, is it because the Government are so racked with indecision and uncertainty on defence, as on other issues, that there is no longer any coherent strategy or clear policy to expound?

It is the Secretary of State's misfortune to preside over a Department which has been forced to make major cuts in expenditure. It is his great mistake, however, to attempt to carry out such major cuts—well in excess of "Options for Change"—without anything that approaches a full strategic analysis and review. The Minister of State, in the eloquent last few paragraphs of his speech, covered those points, but, of course, the answer to his dilemma is to conduct the review for which we and even some Conservative Members have been arguing for so long. A full review is the sine qua non of defence policy in the post-cold war world. Yet again, there were calls for such a review on Thursday.

The entire Defence team has been in full-scale retreat for months. No Minister has demonstrated the decisiveness or the progressive thinking that are needed. It is small wonder that the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) chose to be airlifted out of the trenches.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement has had constant criticism from Back-Bench Conservative Members, yet he had strange support from an unexpected quarter. I hope that he read *The Independent on Sunday* in March, which quoted his old friend Baroness Thatcher singling him out for praise because of his arms sales negotiations. Perhaps she has a wee bit of a vested family interest. She described the Minister of State as one of the few Ministers doing well, adding rather wickedly

"and who would have thought that".

*[Interruption.]* It all comes back.

Much of the Minister of State's supposed success has been in securing British arms contracts in the middle east. I hate to spoil the party, but his actual record of success has been fairly patchy: reconfirmation of an old deal—Yamamah 2—the signing of the memorandum with Kuwait, and a relatively small contract for 36 tanks to Oman: only 18 definite and 18 predicted. Compare that with the 400 Leclerc tanks that the United Arab Emirates have bought from France or more than 200 Abrams tanks sold to Kuwait from the United States. In both cases, the British Challenger 2 lost out. If the Minister of State is one of the most successful Ministers, that says something for the rest of them, doesn't it?

One of the major issues that the Secretary of State did not touch on and one of the major issues in defence circles is the role of the United Nations in peacekeeping and humanitarian work, not just in Bosnia and Somalia but in general. The Opposition support the enhanced role for the United Nations in peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts, but more emphasis needs to be put on preventive peacekeeping, with diplomacy and conciliation at an early stage. We welcome United Nations resolution 795 on the deployment of a preventive peacekeeping force in Macedonia as a good example of that.

However, one of the consequences of the increased United Nations role and of Britain playing its full part in it is the emphasis on manpower and on equipment to support the fast, flexible deployment of such manpower—equipment such as the EH101. That is why the current service manpower cuts are so short-sighted. They do not recognise that new and expanding role and they are being done merely for the quickest possible savings to satisfy the Treasury.

**Mr. Peter Hardy** (Wentworth): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Hercules, which came into squadron service in the Royal Air Force in 1967, when it equipped one of our squadrons then based in Singapore and was one of the aircraft that brought Britain's resources back from east of Suez, is still in service more than 25 years later, and facing

*[Mr. Peter Hardy]*

equal, if not greater, demands and placing even more demands on the crews who are flying that aircraft in very dangerous air?

**Mr. Foulkes:** I agree fully with my hon. Friend. Indeed, I was going to mention that matter later, but I do not need to do so, as he spelt it out so eloquently. I agree with him.

A proper defence review would have identified the range of new needs, new threats, equipment such as the Hercules to which my hon. Friend referred and the manpower required to meet them and, incidentally, the systems and equipment that are no longer necessary such as the tactical air-to-surface missile or any replacement for the free-fall bomb. The review would have examined the respective roles of NATO, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Western European Union and the need to develop complementary roles and forces for every country in the framework.

The Secretary of State did not mention arms control, which is a crucial issue. As my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields said, it is essential that Britain abandons its unnecessary and unhealthy craving for more nuclear tests. How can we—this deals with what the Minister said earlier—reasonably propose, as the White Paper says, that we will suggest to the non-proliferation treaty conference in 1995 that there should be an indefinite extension of the treaty if we are still testing at the same time and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) rightly said, increasing the number of warheads on Trident from the level on Polaris?

There is a link between the non-proliferation treaty and the comprehensive test ban treaty, as the Secretary of State agreed in his letter to my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** I shall ask my hon. Friend the same question about the non-proliferation treaty that I asked the Minister, who failed to answer. How can we support that treaty and the Trident programme?

**Mr. Foulkes:** I understand the point made by my hon. Friend. It will be dealt with in great detail by my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid). [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] I hope that all hon. Members will wait until the end to hear my hon. Friend deal with it in great detail.

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind):** It is worth waiting for.

**Mr. Foulkes:** There is more to come. Nuclear weapons are not the only horrific weapons of mass destruction.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** Sometimes the trailer is better than the big picture.

**Mr. Foulkes:** The comic is even better.

The Secretary of State did not tell us when the Government will take the necessary action in the legislative programme to implement the provisions of the chemical weapons convention. That is important. Incidentally, I hope that the Government will examine the allegations that the Iranian arms supply office in London is to be reopened, and ensure that that does not happen. London is still tarred with the reputation of being the arms-dealing capital of the world.

I can understand why the Secretary of State felt shy on Thursday about mentioning the Trident refit. At the very least, he could have told the House what stage had been reached in the decision-making process and when an announcement could be expected. I hope that the Minister of State will recall that, in the Navy debate in early May, he said that it would be in a few weeks—and we are still waiting. The Government's indecision and the futher delay on the issue have been devastating.

The polarisation that has taken place between Rosyth and Devonport has deepened over the months as the delay increases. It is unfortunate that the managing director of Devonport Management Ltd. said on Scottish television that

"this is a fight to the death"

between the two yards as the Government continue to dither. Tory Members from south-west England and Scotland have been forced to raise the stakes and the two yards are pushed into what could ultimately be a destructive Dutch auction.

The Secretary of State rightly pledged a two-yard solution but that has been made increasingly difficult as the procrastination continues. Such a solution will be possible only if the yard that does not get the Trident refit gets some long-term guarantee of other naval work. The matter could have been dealt with much more quickly and with greater certainty of success if the two dockyards had still been under direct Government control instead of facing the uncertainty of contractorisation and privatisation.

If it were in the commercial interests of the company that did not win the Trident refit to reject an alternative, it would have no hesitation in doing so. The Opposition's view is that it is in the strategic and security interests, as well as the economic and employment interests, of the nation that the two dockyards should remain open. By a continuation of delay and dogma, the Government have made that increasingly less likely. I urge that the announcement should be made soon and that it should contain long-term assurances for both Rosyth and Devonport.

**Mr. Ray Whitney** (Wycombe): The hon. Gentleman referred earlier to the United Kingdom's including its nuclear deterrent in disarmament negotiations. He now seems to have left the subject of disarmament negotiations. The House would welcome hearing his party's view on the proposal set out in the amendment to include British conventional forces in international disarmament negotiations. Does the hon. Gentleman intend to touch on that important subject?

**Mr. Foulkes:** I shall certainly touch on it. I shall give a preview or a trailer, as the Secretary of State described it. My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North will pick up the subject later. I shall come to it shortly, but before I do I want to deal with the issue of arms to Iraq, another item which, understandably, the Secretary of State did not touch on.

Many of the revelations from the Scott inquiry so far have shed some light on the Government's knowledge of, and complicity in, the sending of arms-related equipment to Iraq. I shall not go into too much detail, but I wish to draw particular attention to the role played by IMS—a Government-owned arms company.

The inquiry heard how IMS built for Iraq a weapons complex to prepare Exocet missiles and applied to export

spare parts for Chieftain tanks. New Ministry of Defence documents have revealed how military advisers recommended that IMS—remember that it is the Government's own arms export company—be rebuked for trying to break the Government's guidelines. I raised the activities of IMS last year, as did some of my hon. Friends. When I met Lord Justice Scott, I asked him to examine the company as part of his inquiry.

My colleagues and I received for my trouble a vitriolic and ill-judged personal attack from the Secretary of State in a speech during last year's debate on arms to Iraq. I shall make no personal attack on him in return. After all, it is his birthday, so it would be inappropriate for me to do so and I can leave that to some of the rightwingers on his own side.

I wish to respond seriously to the Secretary of State's charge that Labour smeared British companies. I have criticised no British company. I believe that companies were led by the Government in exporting defence equipment to Iraq. The Secretary of State also accused me of using the tactics of the spiv and the trickster. He did so for the sole reason that I used information provided by people who wished to remain anonymous. I was attempting to piece together the extent to which Britain had contributed to Saddam's war machine. Surely the Secretary of State does not blame those who wish to remain anonymous and who have seen what happened to the directors of Matrix Churchill and other companies.

The spivs and tricksters are those who seek to have one policy publicly, while pursuing another privately. The Secretary of State reached some new heights of hypocrisy in seeking to divert attacks on Government policy by making personal attacks on Opposition Members.

**Mr. Corbyn:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. Does he recall that a year after the bombing with chemical weapons of Kurdish places such as Halabja by Saddam Hussein in 1988, the British Government supported the Baghdad arms fair and bankrolled British companies to take part in it and sell defence-related equipment to the Baghdad regime? They were then surprised when the whole thing developed into a war.

**Mr. Foulkes:** My hon. Friend is right. It is a continuing series of tragedies that British forces often have to go into theatres of war and face weapons supplied by previous British Governments.

I shall now deal with conventional weapons. There must be some attempt to halt the spread of conventional weapons. My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North will deal with some aspects of that.

The effect of the arms trade was put into perspective recently by a report from the organisation Saferworld—its director of communications is a former Conservative candidate for Edinburgh, South and is known to the Secretary of State and me. That report compared the level of regional arms sales with the cost of peacekeeping in those regions. It concluded that Britain, in the 10 years up to 1991, sold £3·8 billion worth of arms to areas where the United Nations is now peacekeeping and that, last year alone, Britain had to pay £250 million to finance the growing United Nations burden. British troops will take part in operations to quell conflicts fuelled by British arms. Surely that is remarkable stupidity.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement does not seem to remember that I welcomed the establishment of the United Nations arms register. It was the Prime Minister who suggested that first step towards some control of conventional arms. The scope of the register must be extended, the types of weapon included should be increased and more specific information should be given about how old or how sophisticated certain weapons are. Information about a state's domestic weapons procurement could also be included. Such an extended register would greatly increase transparency.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** The hon. Gentleman referred to the Saferworld report. Was his attention also attracted by the affirmation in that report of what many people had suspected, that the five most successful arms-selling countries in the world are the five permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations?

**Mr. Foulkes:** The hon. and learned Gentleman has made a telling point, as he did in the Navy debate.

Diversification was another subject unmentioned by the Secretary of State or the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. In view of what I am about to say, I can understand why. The rate of job losses in the defence industry is deeply worrying and has been seriously underestimated by the Ministry of Defence. The Minister of State for Defence Procurement informed the House:

"The number of lost jobs since 1990 is approximately 40,000".—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 769.]

The hon. Gentleman has since admitted that he was wrong. The MOD's estimate of the number of job losses was at least 25 per cent. too low. According to the Library, the true figure of defence-related job losses since June 1990, including redundancies from the armed forces, is approximately 81,000.

If we apply the MOD's calculation to subcontractors, it reveals that, for each job lost in a primary supplier, 0·87 jobs have been lost from subcontracting firms. The overall total number of job losses since "Options for Change" was published is three times greater than the Minister of State was prepared to admit. If the Government do not even know the scale of job losses, how can we expect them to do something to prevent them?

On Thursday, Ministers sought to imply that there was some contradiction between what I have said in the past and my policy today. We should follow the practice of other Governments, however, including that of the United States, and take an active role in helping defence companies to convert from arms production to civil production. We should set up a Government agency for that purpose. *[Interruption.]* This is an important issue. Ministers often shrug their shoulders for years at various suggestions, but are finally forced to take them up. That is what the United States Government had to do.

Our Government agency could meet, head on, the shrinking defence market, which is the major challenge facing the defence industry. It could assist the vast amount of British skill and expertise in that market to produce for civil industry. We need vision from central Government, but all we get is inaction on a grand scale.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) mentioned Belize, because the decision to withdraw our garrison is extremely short-sighted. The remaining troops will have a training role—they will not fulfil their previous function. When the Government made their announcement they said that their "assessment of the security threats to Belize is that they are very low".

*[Mr. Foulkes]*

Just a few days later, there was a coup in Guatemala. The subsequent instability in that country proves that the military remains a dominant force there. Surely Ministers, especially those in the MOD, should remember from their experience in the south Atlantic that sending the wrong signals to Latin America can be extremely dangerous. I hope that the MOD will give some further thought to that decision.

I hope that when the Minister of State for the Armed Forces replies to the debate he will also clarify the future of the Caribbean guard ship, because nothing explicity has been said about it. It not only has an important defence role, but an important disaster relief role when hurricanes strike.

**Mr. Ian Bruce** (South Dorset): Has the hon. Gentleman lost his way, as he does not appear to be keeping to the terms of the Opposition amendment, which calls specifically for

"the inclusion of . . . conventional forces in further international disarmament negotiations"?

The hon. Gentleman has, however, specifically expressed concern about reducing the number of our armed forces around the world. He appears to be speaking in opposition to his amendment.

**Mr. Foulkes:** I can understand that the hon. Gentleman, as a Back Bencher, is unaware of the conventional forces in Europe negotiations, which are already under way, but I was most surprised that the Minister also seemed to be unaware of them. As I have already said, my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North, who is an acknowledged world expert on this matter, will deal with it in more detail later.

As the Minister has said, the Opposition have consistently given full support to the Eurofighter project. Indeed, one of my first acts as Opposition spokesman on procurement was to reaffirm Labour's support for the fighter at a time when the project was in serious trouble. The aircraft is the fighter which the Royal Air Force needs for the next century. We fully support the continuation of the programme on that strategic basis.

**Mr. Keith Mans** (Wyre): I acknowledge the support that the hon. Gentleman has given to the project. Can he tell the House what he is doing to convince the members of the Social Democratic party, the SPD, in Germany of the need for that aircraft so that we can go forward together?

**Mr. Foulkes:** I have had discussions, courtesy of the Minister of State, with members of the SPD, but, more importantly, my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields has had discussions with high-ranking members of that party. He has stressed our support for the Eurofighter project. The Minister said that he expected the cost of the project to increase by 10 per cent. *The Daily Telegraph* said of the cost increases:

"This is creative accounting to eclipse even the most adventurous City takeover arithmetic."

I hope that the Minister will spell out exactly how he reached that figure of 10 per cent.

I also hope that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will state, simply, Britain's share of the overall cost and whether our share is expected to rise in the next few years even above the 10 per cent. increase forecast.

It might also be helpful if the Minister were able to ask the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle about Britain's share of the work on Eurofighter. The Opposition hope that that share will match the level of our contribution.

**Mr. Aitken:** The work share arrangements cannot possibly be finalised until we enter the production phase. It is premature for any decisions to be made now. They will be made by industry on the basis of the off-take of the numbers of aircraft. That must await the final decision of the four Governments as we enter the production phase.

**Mr. Foulkes:** I am grateful to the Minister for that information. I am sure that he would agree, however, that, as those decisions are made, we should bear in mind our contribution and ensure that we get a fair, rather than an unduly unfair, return on it.

The Opposition still support Eurofighter as an essential project, but that does not mean that we are in favour of a blank cheque. Money that is overspent on Eurofighter could and should be spent on other badly needed defence projects.

I had intended to mention other procurement projects, such as the EH101 and the Challenger 1 upgrade. I hope that, at some point, we shall have an opportunity to pursue the particular procurement issues with which the MOD is faced and which are subject to delay. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has already mentioned the great delays to which the Hercules replacement project has been subject.

I know that a great many right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in the debate so, in conclusion, I should like to return to the Secretary of State's attempt, last week, to divert attention from his own inadequacies. I know that there are many diversionary tactics—the RAF experts, of whom there are many here, describe it as laying down chaff. That is exactly what the Secretary of State was doing on Thursday—laying down chaff.

**Mr. Wolfson:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Foulkes:** More chaff.

**Mr. Wolfson:** I think not. As the hon. Gentleman is returning, presumably, to what he sees as the key issues, may I remind him that the key issues in the debate on Thursday were costs and expenditure? The hon. Gentleman has mentioned a number of projects which the Labour party supports. Will he tell us how, in terms of Labour policy, all that will be paid for? Will it be at the same level as now, at a higher or at a lower level?

**Mr. Foulkes:** It was best put in the manifesto on which we fought the last election. It said:

"We will provide whatever resources are needed for effective defence for our country, providing the necessary level of forces with the appropriate equipment and weapons."

That pledge was not included in the Conservative party manifesto. In the year since the election, we have seen cuts that are uncoordinated and unplanned because the Government do not have an overall defence strategy. In the debate on the Navy, I said, and it bears repeating, that the people whom we represent have fought in successive conflicts, including the Falklands. There are those who fight and those who support them, cooking the meals and repairing the vehicles.

We seek the resolution of conflict by peaceful means. We want to stop the arms trade which fuels such conflicts.

We want to alleviate the underlying poverty and prejudice on which conflicts breed. If we fail in peaceful resolution of such conflicts, and if the security of our country or our allies is threatened, we accept the need to defend ourselves and the corollary of that—that we need to provide the means to make that defence both credible and effective.

The bottom line on the Government's defence policy is that it is in a mess. Time and again, those on the Treasury Bench have had to make embarrassing retreats and postpone important decisions. The few decisions that they have made have been exposed as plain wrong. They stand guilty of inconsistency, indecision and old-fashioned incompetence.

4.52 pm

**Mr. Tom King** (Bridgwater): I congratulate the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on his speech—the first that I have heard him make from the Front Bench—and compliment him on his vigour and gall. I would not have used the word "chaff" against my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. The hon. Gentleman reminded the House of the largest piece of chaff used by a political party—the statement on defence policy in the Labour party's last manifesto in which it tried to cover up the inadequacy of its defence policy.

The hon. Gentleman rightly said that we must not engage in personal attacks, but it required quite an exercise in restraint and courtesy to listen to the hon. Gentleman, and other Labour Members, chiding my right hon. and learned Friend about every procurement programme, when the Labour party's defence policy would decimate our defence industries and our defence.

I do not wish to indulge in party politics, because there are serious issues to be addressed, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said today. Among the challenges in the world, we face two serious problems, which I wish to set out for the Secretary of State and the Minister. I have certain recommendations to make which may be helpful, and worth further study.

I readily join my hon. Friend the Minister and the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley in paying tribute to our forces. We are seeing yet another chapter of extraordinary achievement by our forces in Bosnia. The way in which they are being asked to conduct themselves, not just in the past week, in turning the other cheek in difficult circumstances that could have appalling consequences shows that the tributes paid to them are quite deserved. I associate with those the tributes that anybody who has held the office that I have held would pay to our forces serving now and at any time in Northern Ireland for the work that they carry out to protect the community there.

I also pay tribute to the civilians and all who work in the Ministry of Defence. They have to carry out some of the most difficult tasks, at a time of inevitable change. We have set the course of reorganisation and reduction which involves some redundancy, some movement and some closure. There is widespread understanding in the House that that is necessary, but this is still a worrying time for those involved.

I and my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) set in train a programme; my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State was also a member of the Cabinet then. We tend to focus on the infantry, and I understand why that is so; it is obviously much in our thoughts at this time. However, one must remember the full spread of the Ministry of Defence. Nearly half a million people are employed there, with 140,000 civilians and 330,000 uniformed staff. Many people are also employed by suppliers to the industry.

All those people are embarking on the process of change sensibly. I pay tribute to those on the Treasury Front Bench who are carrying out this difficult and demanding task. I am pleased that one or two tributes have been paid, perhaps unconsciously, by Labour Members.

When I read the *Hansard* of Thursday's debate, I saw that they had asked that we keep open the employment office advice centre in Hereford. That is a tribute to the quality of the resettlement advice and of the work being done to help with housing. All that resulted from what I like to believe was an unequalled programme, in which my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell played a major part. I congratulate him on seeing that, in such a difficult situation, our forces had as much help as we could give them.

In paying tribute to my right hon. Friend, I give the warmest possible welcome to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), who takes over those responsibilities. I know that he will bring to the challenge of the care of, and concern for, our forces the qualities that make him a valuable member of the Ministry of Defence team.

My first concern is that we set in hand a difficult programme of change designed to operate over four years. It was fully funded and gave people some certainty about the course on which they were embarked. Now, we have a changed situation, for which I make no criticism of my right hon. and learned Friend.

I have considerably more sympathy with an article written by Lord Rees-Mogg that appears in *The Times* today than I have with others that he has written recently. No responsible member of the Cabinet can pretend that he can remain completely separate from the difficult financial situation that we face at a time of recession, like every other significant country. Many other Governments are facing problems greater than ours.

We built flexibility into the "Options for Change" programme. That is why I was able to support the decision of my right hon. and learned Friend not to remove some battalions. We said that we would allow change so that, if circumstances were different, that could be taken into account. My right hon. and learned Friend was right to do so.

What is also true is what my right hon. and learned Friend said to my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor). The claim that everything was Treasury-led was rubbish. We made decisions and proposals, and it was done by the military and civilian staffs in the Ministry—I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said in his winding-up speech on Thursday, when he set out the matter clearly—under the direction and leadership of one of the most distinguished serving officers of recent years, Field Marshal Sir Richard Vincent, who was vice-chief of the defence staff and who went on to become chief of the defence staff, and is now a distinguished chairman of the military committee of NATO.

As I said, my programme had some flexibility built into it. I recognise that problems, especially financial ones, have

*[Mr. Tom King]*

arisen since then, but if we ask people to accept change, it is our duty clearly to set out what that entails so that they know what they face. Constant changes lead to low morale. One of the greatest pressures is the overstretching of the infantry. It was always going to be difficult because of the rationalisation of regiments, but it is being made even more difficult by the need for additional regiments in Northern Ireland and those required to form part of the peacekeeping commitments in Bosnia and elsewhere.

I urge on my right hon. and learned Friend the need for a most serious study of the way in which we meet the security commitments of Northern Ireland. It is our duty to meet them. We must consider how the challenges there can be most effectively met without impinging on the roulement commitment and all that that means for our armed forces.

On the wider issue of flexibility, I am delighted that my right hon. and learned Friend is paying particular attention to reserves. I have not yet had the opportunity to study his consultation paper, but I am sure that it deals with the intelligent use of reserves. Indeed, he was kind enough to quote my consultation paper on that matter, and I am glad that he and the Ministry of Defence are building on that.

There appears to be a serious gap in our present contribution to what Ministers have rightly called the third objective of our defence provision. In his foreword to the 1992 White Paper, my right hon. and learned Friend referred to promoting

"the United Kingdom's wider security interests through the maintenance of international peace and stability."

The House knows that the liberation of Kuwait, under the auspices of the United Nations, was a very successful operation. We had the resources, mechanisms and instruments to meet that threat to international peace and stability.

Bosnia poses different needs, and therefore requires different approaches. We have found it much more difficult to meet the challenges there, and I want to discuss ways in which we might better deal with them.

I am not criticising the Government; I simply want to examine the readiness and capability of the United Nations to deal with the challenges. One of the first requirements is to ensure that, in times of potential conflict or disorder, we are able at the earliest possible moment to mount an effective team of observers which might be able to intervene and make a contribution.

I was impressed by the suggestion of Mr. John Keegan, the distinguished defence commentator, of the development of a cadre of political, military and diplomatic observers, perhaps drawn from the ranks of retired officers and diplomats. People may think that I am talking about elderly generals, but there are a number of young retired officers sitting on our Back Benches, and I am sure that people like them could make a highly useful contribution. They are the sort of people that I sent to Bosnia as observers in the early stages of the conflict, and they did valuable work. I do not envisage a standing cadre, as that would be unrealistic. However, the UN should organise a register of available people with the right experience in peacekeeping, monitoring and reconciliation.

**Sir Jim Spicer** (Dorset, West): I hope to catch Madam Speaker's eye later, when I intend to refer to the Commonwealth. Does my right hon. Friend think that within the Commonwealth, and as we become a much more positive force in the world, we could draw up such a list and present it to the United Nations?

**Mr. King:** The sort of thing that I am talking about is very relevant to the Commonwealth. Mr. Keegan's article drew attention to the French, with their experience in Africa, and to the British colonial experience. Many people have considerable experience of different territories. If they are available—quickly; there is a need for speed—they could make a useful contribution. What we need is a range of instruments that can help in particular situations, each of which is likely to be different.

We need to concentrate in peacekeeping on the speed with which we can move. The UN Secretary General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, is calling for a standby arrangement of groups of forces from individual countries. I support what my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell said on the first day of this debate about the need for the maximum number of countries to make a contribution.

I am pleased that Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali has called upon Germany and Japan to make forces available so that the burden of meeting the UN's requirements can be spread as widely as possible. That will make it possible to rotate the troops so that we are not stuck with permanent commitments that put an added strain on our deployments.

Another serious matter is the gap between peacekeeping and peacemaking. We need a body that carries greater credibility than pure peacekeeping forces, which have no power to retaliate. In the Gulf, under the auspices of the UN, we blew out of the way an army of 500,000 men and a considerable amount of modern equipment. In the former Yugoslavia, one old peasant with a shotgun prevented the passage of a convoy of 10 Warrior APCs with 30 mm cannon. That happened because of his total commitment, and the understandable limits on the ability of our people to retaliate.

The position is never easy, but there may be times when a different sort of force is needed. It is difficult for individual countries to deploy forces that will take that extra step towards confrontation and retaliation. That calls for a small UN standing force made up of volunteers, not troops seconded from national forces.

I am thinking of suitable groups around the world—the Gurkhas, for example. Many of them would be willing to serve in a force pursuing a responsible aim, and they would be outstandingly good soldiers. I think also of people who have recently left the British forces—perhaps, sadly, because they are no longer required. I think also of the French, the Germans and even the eastern Europeans.

All of those could make up the core of a body that would be prepared to take slightly greater risks of casualty than can be authorised by national Governments for their forces. Those volunteers could move with speed, and perhaps greater conviction, in difficult circumstances. It is not possible in such a debate to examine all the serious issues that would need to be considered, but I think that proposal is worthy of discussion at the highest level with other countries to see whether we could promote that instrument within the United Nations.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** I am listening with interest to the right hon. Gentleman's remarks. He has made a very

positive contribution to the debate. Does he agree that a group drawn together in the way he described would ultimately depend for its effectiveness on the rules of engagement on which it was invited to act—which would depend on the United Nations' political commitment—and to the extent to which it could be seen to act in a unified political fashion?

**Mr. King:** That is obviously true, but I sense that it might be possible for the Security Council, operating entirely with its own forces, and with them as volunteers on clear terms of engagement, could go just that step further than is possible with individual Governments, who must be sensitive to public opinion at home and who have to explain to individuals what it is they run the risk of dying for.

That was not difficult in the Gulf, because in that conflict there was a cause for which people were prepared to engage themselves—and to die, if necessary. The country accepted that also. I do not believe that there is wide public support for dying for the United Nations in Bosnia. That is a real problem, and the instrument that I suggested might just help, although it is not a total answer.

There is then a problem about costs. This year's United Nations peacekeeping operation is already $1 billion in debt. The budget provision for the year was $1·4 billion, but peacekeeping in Somalia has already totalled $1·5 billion, and Cambodia is expected to cost $800 million. The cost of 5,000 men at United Nations rates is £400 million a year, to which must be added equipment, ships, helicopters and other aircraft.

The United Nations' present peacekeeping costs are equivalent to 0·14 per cent. of the defence budgets of the world. It is not easy to raise the issue of costs just now for any country. However, given the self-interest of national Governments, that must be considered—otherwise, peacekeeping will distort individual defence budgets and impose unacceptable pressures on individual defence requirements. I understand that Canada's difficulties have already led it to withdraw its forces from Somalia, and the French are already complaining about the distortion of their defence budget.

One great breakthrough in the Gulf war, and a consequence of the ending of the cold war, is that the Security Council can now work. The use of chapter VII of the charter is becoming more and more frequent. Forty five years ago, the then United Nations Secretary-General said that the time had come to give attention and imagination to strengthening the United Nations. He put forward just such a proposal—and in readiness the United States earmarked 300,000 troops, 1,250 bombers and 2,250 fighters for that standby force.

I am not talking about anything remotely approaching that scale of operation. That earlier initiative was killed by the cold war—and now that has ended, that option is back on the table. The United Nations Secretary-General said that the nations of the world failed to give attention and imagination to strengthening the United Nations. Now is the time to give them again.

5.14 pm

**Dr. John Gilbert** (Dudley, East): The right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) makes far more interesting speeches now as a Back Bencher than he ever did or was able to do as Secretary of State for Defence. Various ex-Ministers are affected that way. I shall enjoy reading the right hon. Gentleman's remarks with close attention when I see them set down in print tomorrow.

At the end of today's debate, I propose to join my right hon. and hon. Friends in opposing the Government motion, but I shall not be with them when they vote for their amendment. That will come as no suprise to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench.

The reason for my difficulty with the Opposition amendment relates to a sentence in the middle that

"demands an immediate end to British nuclear testing, which would greatly assist efforts to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons".

I do not hold myself up for one moment as an expert on nuclear testing, but there are few experts on that subject in the House, and it is an issue on which Ministers are almost bound to accept the advice that is given to them.

The proposition that the end of nuclear testing by the Government would contribute in any way to a reduction in the proliferation of nuclear weapons strikes me as an insight into the thought process of the great and good leaders of North Korea—I am not being sarcastic, for that is the title that they give themselves—Saddam Hussein, and those responsible for Iran's defence policy that is very different from my own.

As to the motion, I am astonished to see a Conservative Government responsible for the havoc that the present Government are wreaking on the armed forces of this country. I am particularly concerned about the rundown in the Army and Royal Navy reserves, which are totally deplorable. I am certain that the Government are seeking to put commitments on the armed forces that they do not have the manpower to meet.

That is due in no small part to the Treasury's baleful influence, and I do not believe that the right hon. Member for Bridgwater or his successor as Secretary of State put up nearly as big a fight as they should have done against the Treasury in respect of manpower reductions.

I was interested to hear the remarks of the Minister of State for Defence Procurement about procurement decisions. We must buy where it is cheapest, provided that quality needs are satisfied. I know perfectly well the agonies through which Ministers went at the time of Swan Hunter. I will not criticise them for that decision, because I went through the same agony many times over in respect of Cammell Laird, when I was responsible for warship procurement.

I am not against industrial and regional considerations being taken into account when defence procurement decisions are made—of course not—but any costs attached to those decisions should fall squarely on regional budgets and on the budget of the Department of Employment, and not on the Ministry of Defence's budget.

That Ministry is voted funds by the House to provide the most effective resources as economically as it can for the defence of this country. Those other considerations are wholly admirable, but the cost should not be attached to the Minister of Defence's budget. It is easy to ascertain the cost of a non-optable, non-cheaper solution. Such costs should be placed on the budgets of other Departments —whether it is a case of keeping an order within a certain facility in this country against competition from elsewhere in this country, or of competition from abroad.

I am afraid that it has become a truism to say that we are now free of the cold war, and face an entirely different

*[Dr. John Gilbert]*

set of security considerations; it is precisely because it is a truism, however, that we must deal with it. We are now confronted by the problems of state-sponsored terrorism, the deliberate imposition of mass starvation on the populations of certain countries, the use of chemical weapons on countries' inhabitants by their leaders, and deliberate genocide masquerading as "ethnic cleansing" —a disgusting term.

Some developments in the United States seem to have been discussed very little on this side of the Atlantic, developments in what is described as "non-lethal warfare". Hon. Members may consider that almost a contradiction in terms. In fact, there has already been a good deal of research into methods of non-lethal warfare on the other side of the Atlantic. I hope that Ministers are paying attention, as I should like a response to my remarks at the end of the debate.

In September last year, the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command published a document entitled "Operations Concept for Disabling Measures". It seems that a range of methods are available—for instance, supercaustics, which are much more caustic than hydrofluoric acid. An artillery round delivers super-acids that can destroy the optics of heavily armoured vehicles, penetrate vision blocks or glass, or be employed silently to destory key weapons systems or components.

There are many kinds of anti-traction technology which can make it extremely difficult for vehicles to move across bridges or through other narrow defiles. The surfaces of airport runways can be made extremely slippery, so that it is difficult for aircraft to use them. There are many other disabling weapons, often employing laser technology. I shall not try to deceive the House: it is not very pleasant to be on the receiving end. Although disabling, those weapons are in no way lethal.

I understand that there is some argument in the Pentagon about whether such technologies should be treated as "black technologies"—kept as secret programmes—or whether they should be put into the public domain. The argument against the latter option is that, if talked about at length in public, those programmes would have to compete with other "conventional" programmes. I hope to hear that Her Majesty's Government are currently studying the position; I also hope that we can be told whether research is being done here, and how much access this country has to research in the United States.

I wish next to deal with a matter on which I have touched before in the House—the operation of the missile technology control regime. As hon. Members who have been kind enough to listen to my speeches in the past will know, I have long believed that it is more important for us to get a grip on the spread of technology and the development of medium and long-range missiles than it ever was for us to deal with the non-proliferation treaty and nuclear devices. I am especially concerned to note what is apparently still happening in North Korea.

I understand that the model D Scud missile, which has a range of between 1,000 and 1,300 km, will come into service later this year, if it is not in service already. Based in North Korea, it could reach Osaka, the whole of the south of the Korean peninsula, Beijing and Shanghai. I gather that testing is taking place for the model E Scud, which has a range of at least 1,500 km.

We may ask what concern that is of ours. If an effective missile with such a range were sold by the North Koreans to unfriendly powers in the middle east—or to what could become unfriendly powers on the southern shores of the Mediterranean—a great many cities in western Europe, including English cities, would come within its range. I hope that the Government are taking the North Korean developments seriously, will make representations—as they may already be doing—and will take part in joint representations with the Americans. Not only the Americans but the Chinese, the Taiwanese and the Japanese are anxious to introduce some sense into the difficult regime in North Korea.

I shall deal tangentially with some of the subjects raised by the fomer Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King). I shall not detain the House by bemoaning what I consider to be a cause for concern for all of us—the inability, so far, of the United Nations, the European Community and NATO to make any effective contribution to ending the appalling events in what was Yugoslavia.

I believe that the Community has failed to contribute not just because it does not want to make a financial contribution; one of the main reasons is the fact that it has ideological and psychological difficulties with intervening, using its own troops as part of a joint force, in that or any other part of the world. We observed such difficulties, to a lesser degree, during the recent Gulf war: our European partners were far from unanimous in advocating participation with us, the French, the Americans, the Italians and the Dutch.

This country and France have usually been in the van of peacekeeping or peacemaking activities in relation to western European countries, and I think that that will continue. I do not necessarily welcome that state of affairs, but I do not find it deplorable; it is understandable that countries such as Denmark, Portugal and Greece are less enthusiastic than we are about engaging in some of those conflicts.

In a few months, a conference will take place within the European Community to discuss its constitution. It has nothing to do with Maastricht; the aim is to settle some of the constitutional outlines of the Community's future. I hope that, at that conference, the Government will take the initiative and suggest that we should not be so concerned about whether all our Community colleagues contributed material and manpower to operations of this kind, as long as they were prepared to pay a reasonable share of the costs and to take the burden off our defence budget.

If we could reach agreement in advance, over a period, so that these decisions were not always made at the last minute, it would make a substantial contribution to the defence budget of this country. Furthermore, it would make it possible to ease the grotesque overstretch to which the armed forces of this country are subject, and it would add greatly to future stability on the fringes of Europe.

I confess that these are imprecise thoughts that I put before the House. However, I hope that they, together with the suggestions made earlier by the right hon. Member for Bridgwater, will be taken seriously by Her Majesty's Government.

Something has got to be done. We cannot afford a repetition of this shameful inactivity in territories so close to our own, whose civilisations are so close to our own. It

could have an immediate impact elsewhere in Europe. Furthermore, it could affect our own security and the wider security of Europe.

5.30 pm

**Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes** (Wimbledon): The debate has addressed some uncomfortable questions regarding this country's future defence policy. Much of the optimism in the aftermath of the collapse of communism has evaporated. We are debating the defence estimates against a gloomy background of increasing world disorder.

As the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said in his wind-up speech on the first day of the debate:

"Defence tasks consist of the imperative, the desirable and the optional."—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1993; Vol. 226, c. 1084.]

If we start from the assumption that the imperative is an absolute, what we are talking about principally today is the future shape of our armed forces in the other two categories. I shall develop that theme, for it involves the issue of double hatting. I cannot resist saying to the Minister of State for Defence Procurement that I notice that he has been double hatting, inasmuch as he wound up the debate the other day and opened today's debate. I am sure, however, that he would be the last to complain.

I begin by endorsing heartily the Foreign Secretary's declaration that we "punch above our weight." That we can still do so is a tribute to the universally recognised skill and dedication of our armed forces. That is clearly good for this country's standing in the world and for its self-esteem. Far more flows from this than narrow, but important, military engagements, such as training teams world wide. Our economy has benefited from trade, both military and non-military, and good will has been generated throughout the world. Several hon. Members have, however, pointed out that we cannot be expected to get involved in every area of conflict and that priorities must be set. We must be selective. To do otherwise would undermine the standards set by the British armed forces.

The "Options for Change" proposals were set out as a direct reaction to the collapse of the Warsaw pact. Since then, events in the Gulf and in Bosnia, let alone in Somalia and 25 or so other conflicts that have erupted throughout the world, have reminded us all that unforeseen commitments can crop up at any time. It is thus essential that the implementation of the inevitable drawdown is done, to coin a phrase, with flexible response.

Many hon. Members feel uncomfortable that those close to the decisions made in "Options for Change"—I should make it clear that I am referring to the military and not to my two right hon. Friends sitting in front of me, my right hon. Friends the Members for Bridgwater (Mr. King) and for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton)—when confronted by developments since "Options for Change" have tended to shrug their shoulders and declare, "Well the resources went one way and the commitments another." I suggest that we shall have to do better than that.

The fact is that "Options for Change" does not reflect the present rapidly altering world. That is hardly surprising, for it was published some three years ago. I welcome the fact, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater, that the Government have already acknowledged that in reprieving two infantry battalions, in the light of changed circumstances, the criteria that the Minister and his right hon. Friends set out were indeed followed. However, I must point out a certain irony in that the changed circumstances consisted of two parts: the first was a new commitment in Bosnia that was totally unforeseen; the second was the expansion of an existing commitment in Northern Ireland.

I understand that in the defence estimates for 1993, to be published next month, a new form is to be adopted. There will be an assessment of our capability to perform some 50 military tasks on a tri-service basis. I hope that this will, in effect, be a strategic review. For 30 years and more, Governments of both parties have shied away from this concept, but I hope that whatever label is put on it, the defence estimates will, in effect, be a strategic review.

The timing could hardly be better. The United States is reassessing its world-wide role. Russia is preoccupied with its own internal problems. Germany and Japan are constrained by constitutional issues. That leaves only this country and France capable, from Europe, of operating on a global basis.

I hope that I am not unduly cynical when I point out that it is not the capability of carrying out 50 individual tasks as paper exercises that matters. What matters is the capability to carry out what amounts to the actual and inevitable overlap of unpredictable combinations of those tasks. Unless the House is conscious of that problem, I suspect that the exercise will look very neat but will have precious little practical application. One might have 50 things on the menu, but I doubt very much whether any hon. Member would ever have put the Falklands or the Gulf on the menu 12 or more years ago.

Hon. Members in all parts of the House have been critical of past projections by the Ministry of Defence and of the matching of units to tasks. I continue to be deeply concerned about that. We have all seen overstretch. We need to be convinced that the sums are indeed right. Both I and others have put forward sums, but we have not received adequate answers. The Select Committee on Defence, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), has produced in its appendices similar sums showing that the arithmetic is wrong. The House deserves a better answer to these statistical questions.

When I refer to my concern about the 24-month aspiration for tour intervals, one has to remember that it has two aspects. The first is the actual aspect of how impossibly difficult it is to maintain morale in the Army if we do not have a 24-month tour interval. Secondly, the 24-month interval is the index of whether our troops are overstretched or not. I have looked at the numbers carefully and consulted people both inside and outside the House. I cannot say that I am any more convinced that we have a realistic chance of getting to a 24-month tour interval than when the question was first raised in the House about two years ago.

We shall need to be convinced that we achieve meaningful training at brigade, divisional and even at corps level. I am informed that in the past two years there has been virtually no training at brigade level. If my hon. Friend can confirm that that is true, I shall be grateful if he will tell the House what plans have been made to remedy what I believe to be potentially an extremely dangerous situation.

We shall also want to know what is to be done about what I have described in this House before as two-timing NATO. I refer to our troops, with their NATO

*[Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes]*

commitments, serving in Northern Ireland. I wonder whether, and if, that will be tolerated by our NATO partners. We shall need to be convinced about that.

Finally, we shall need to be convinced that, together with the peace dividend, there is such a thing as a service dividend—in other words, that our brilliantly respected service men and their families are allowed to live the sort of lives that they are entitled to live in this day and age. In a debate last week, my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster told an extraordinary story of service men having to dump their wives in sovereign bases in Cyprus and go off to do an emergency tour in the Falklands. I believe that, in the late 1990s, that cannot and will not be tolerated.

Furthermore, at a time of recession and high unemployment, I find it extremely alarming that recruitment to all ranks has fallen. It is below target, and that is merely storing up trouble for us all in the future. It will have a disastrous effect on morale and, if my somewhat pessimistic comments are well founded, it is not the least able who are leaving our armed forces but the most able, and the lessons of that are obvious to us all.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) and I have not always seen eye to eye on defence matters, but I thank him for his many acts of courtesy during his term of office and congratulate him on his distinguished tenure of his important job.

I should like to return to finance. My right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell and my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster had an interesting exchange on the subject the other day, which will be dealt with later by my hon. Friend the Minister. My right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster differed about how the armed forces should be funded. I should like to make my position quite clear. In the current economic climate, further resources must be found from within the existing defence budget. That, I believe, is the stand taken by my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell.

One must follow that argument through. It seems to me, at the risk of being simplistic, that there are two different ways of tackling the problem. First, we can reduce our commitments. Hon. Members have expressed reservations about our reduced commitment in Belize which, although I am not an expert on the area, seems strange in view of the uncertainties in Guatemala and central America generally.

Moving on to the question of Ulster, I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) to the Front Bench. We shall rely on his specialised knowledge of security in Ulster, whose problems can be considered constructively by a combination of military and political initiatives. I do not think that this is the right forum in which to discuss the details, but I very much welcome his expertise and ideas on that sensitive subject.

The second way of tackling the problem is to increase efficiency, which can be considered under three headings. The first is the civilian establishment. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement rightly identified the vast array of jobs that are done magnificently by civilians in the Ministry of Defence. It is strange that under "Options for Change" the civilian establishment will be reduced by only 20 per cent. According to briefing papers, that is the proposed reduction in the Army. In fact, if my mathematics are right, the reduction in the Army is 24 per cent.; more importantly, however, the number of fighting troops is being cut by around 40 per cent. It lies rather uneasily to have a 20 per cent. cut in civilian manpower, however well they do their job, but a 40 per cent. cut in fighting forces.

Unfortunately, I missed the remarks of the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert), but I suggest that, due to the diversity of employment of the Ministry's civilian employees, other Departments may be able to employ them or, alternatively, their functions may be taken away from the Ministry.

The second heading is management of the defence estate. I shall not go into detail, but I have considerable anecdotal evidence of less than efficient management of the defence estates. That needs critical and fresh examination.

Finally, under the heading of increasing efficiency, I ask the House to consider the question of reserves, in which I declare an interest. I noted that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave an assurance that the legal position of reserves will be reconsidered. In the Gulf it really came down to, "If we call you up, would you like to come along?", which was not satisfactory. That is a slight over-simplification, but my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater is nodding and we know that it did not work as well as it should have.

I took up with my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell when he was still in office the way in which reservists are now being treated. The mechanism for calling up reserves has been changed. One no longer has to report annually to say, "I am here, fit and can do whatever task is required." There is now what is known as the postal reporting system. If that system is adequate for calling people up at war time, it is an idea that the Whip on duty might pass to the Patronage Secretary. Rather than coming in here and traipsing through the Lobby, hon. Members could send a note saying, "We agree with Government policy" or, in a purely hypothetical case, "We do not agree with Government policy."

The reserves represent a very low cost, well-motivated group of people and their demands on the defence budget are negligible, but I do not think that they are used properly. Many disciplines followed in civilian life could easily be translated into the military on an ad hoc basis: engineers, for instance, and experts in communications, medicine and logistics. I hope that many of the Territorial Army volunteer reserve associations that have expressed concerns to Ministers, and no doubt to Opposition Members, will be actively involved in the consultation process when the role of the reserve forces in the Army is defined.

I should be negligent if I did not point out that we must consider defence budgets and estimates in the context of history over a span. Under "Options for Change", the percentage of gross domestic product devoted to defence will fall to 3·4 per cent. It has not been so low since 1935, with all the sinister connotations of that dark age. The House should address that point. The percentage has never fallen below 4 per cent. since, and although our actual expenditure is almost identical to that of France and Germany the House knows that our unique commitments place special demands on our budget.

The days of countries taking military action alone are coming to an end for political and economic reasons. We must thus consider British forces towards the end of the

century in the context of international organisations. I was fascinated by some of the ideas proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater. The world will look back on its reaction to the tragic events in the former Yugoslavia with shame. To see the international community paralysed and impotent was a pathetic spectacle. The diplomacy of Lords Carrington and Owen and of Mr. Vance was almost certainly doomed from the start in the absence of military sanctions. History teaches us that the only sanctions that work are military sanctions.

There has been much wringing of hands and much hypocrisy. Is the United Nations ever to be more than an instrument of persuasion or more than a thin blue line? What happened to the much-vaunted Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and to the Western European Union? Is it not clear that the only organisation with a competent command structure for a regional coalition is NATO? If that is so, and as we have a rapid reaction corps, why are we not willing to use it? Do we lack the resolve or the resources?

Much has been said and little has been done, but I believe that the whole sad episode yet to unfold has the smell of something approaching appeasement. One day we shall all pay the price unless we get the international organisation in the right mind and the right shape to deal with future tragedies.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence recently said that our aim is not to be an international gendarmerie. We must therefore aim for a proper modern army, by which I mean properly manned and trained, retaining existing capabilities and focused on the tasks ahead. If we get it wrong, we shall prejudice our permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council and our leadership of the rapid reaction corps, let alone this country's reputation and its safety. If we get it right, we may yet find the role that Dean Acheson said that we had lost, by giving a lead with our special expertise in international organisations. I wish my right hon. and learned Friend and his colleagues well in their difficult task.

As I have already suggested in previous debates—I do not apologise for raising this again—one of our imperatives, to repeat the description that I used at the start of my speech, needs re-examining urgently, especially in view of the extraordinary and unfortunate lag between the publication of the defence estimates and the events to which they refer——

**Dr. Reid:** It is called a debate.

**Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** Indeed, the debate which follows. I am referring to the easy solution to get out of the problems I have outlined, which is to shift the drawdown set out in "Options for Change" from 1995 to 1997. In practical politics, one must bear in mind what is certain in this world. One yardstick is that in 1997 we shall withdraw from Hong Kong, so it makes sense militarily and politically for the Government to take that decision which, above all, is a matter of common sense.

5.52 pm

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): I should like to put it on the record and make it known that I am a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and proud to be so. I joined CND in 1966 and am a member of its national council, and I am a vice-chair of Labour Action for Peace. My constituency is very pleased to have in it the offices of the Campaign Against the Arms Trade. I make my remarks from that standpoint.

Unfortunately, the amendment tabled by some of my colleagues and myself was not called. Apparently, we are not able to debate why it was not called, but it rejected the defence estimates and called instead for a reduction in spending at least to the European average. That was, in fact, official policy as it was carried by a majority of more than two thirds at last year's Labour party conference. Our amendment also called for a halt to

"the production and testing of nuclear missiles and de-commission Polaris and Trident submarines; and calls for those employed in the arms and related industries to be provided with economically and socially useful work and for overall spending reductions to be used to benefit the social needs of Britain and the overseas aid programme."

Every week, we receive unsolicited bumph about high technology weapons of war. For example, I read *Worldwide Weekly Defence News* avidly because I am fascinated by the technology involved in the production of weapons of mass destruction. I wish that some—just some—of the scientists and brilliant brains could be put to work solving the world's ecological, health and social problems. The world economy is seriously out of kilter.

Not so long ago, the House went along with the Government's policy on the Gulf war. I remind hon. Members that, only a short time before, the few of us who opposed the arms trade with Iraq prior to the invasion of Kuwait were told to shut up. Indeed, a Minister told me that trade came before anything else in policy considerations. In any case, the Gulf war happened. I ask those who so happily went along with it to consider the outcome of the war: the cost, the bombing of unarmed, retreating soldiers on the road to Basra after the liberation of Kuwait, and the question of human rights, equality and democracy in the liberated Kuwait, which is apparently now one of our staunchest allies. Such issues raise serious questions to which people are entitled to an answer. In addition, the families of the 300,000 mainly Iraqi but also British, American and other soldiers who died in the Gulf war are also entitled to know what the war was all about.

I cannot see what were the great advantages of that awful conflict. There are still enormous denials of human rights and there is still a bloodthirsty regime in power in Iraq, which many of my colleagues opposed—not from 1990 but from 1980 onwards, when we tried to expose its human rights record.

The post cold war era has not brought peace and stability to much of the former Soviet Union. In fact, it has brought a great deal of social conflict, poverty and unrest. I am not defending everything about the previous system, but the break-up of the Soviet Union has not brought peace to the area. In any case, I do not believe that the former Soviet Union presented a threat, any more than I believe that the remains of the Soviet Union, or Russia, present an external threat now.

What concerns me is the NATO strategy enunciated in paragraphs 106 to 109 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992". There is talk of extending NATO's activities outside its sphere of influence in order to protect the security of western Europe and its member states. I am not sure what the out-of-area activities are able or likely to achieve.

It is time for an examination of the history of NATO, the way in which the United States forces were brought back to Britain in 1948, the way in which this country's

*[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]*

defence policy and that of every other member state was taken over by a group of generals sitting in the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe headquarters in Brussels, the fantastic expenditure on arms and the arms race promoted by NATO which ended up creating the biggest ever federal deficit in the United States, bankrupting the Soviet Union and leading to its break-up. The arms race also led to a massive proliferation of nuclear arms.

Let us consider the effect of the level of defence spending in NATO member states and the industrial development of non-NATO member states. There are obvious parallels. The standard of living in Britain compared to that in Japan or the Scandinavian countries and many others is different from what it was in 1945 or 1950. One of the problems for British industry has been the high level of defence spending and the way in which so much research and development has been diverted into military needs and requirements rather than peaceful needs or the development of our industrial base.

British industry is working with out-of-date equipment because many possible sources of research and development have gone into the arms trade rather than into developing civilian industry. The present problems of the shipbuilding industry have in part been caused by the industry's reliance on defence contracts. The Government should have supported the development of civilian orders and a civilian shipbuilding industry. There are brilliant workers with brilliant skills in the defence industry. I should like those workers to be making bulk carriers, oil tankers and river craft. I do not like their skills being used to develop nuclear weapons or—the current obsession—in the Trident submarine programme.

I wish to mention specifically the issues of Trident and nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons have been used twice in war—in 1945, at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. People are still dying today in Japan as a result of the fallout from those small nuclear explosions. The airborne nuclear testing that continued for 30 years after those explosions has caused increased radiation throughout the world, which in turn has probably caused a large number of cancers—as many as have been caused by smaller nuclear explosions such as those at Chernobyl and in other nuclear accidents, some of them unreported, around the world.

I cannot go along with the idea that nuclear defence is any kind of defence at all. Bruce Kent made the point once and his audience immediately knew what he was talking about. He said that having a nuclear weapon was like firing a gun in which there were two bullets, the second of which came out of the back of the gun and killed the person who had fired it. There can never be any kind of defence against nuclear weapons. Indeed, the first to fire a nuclear weapon will be the first to suffer as a consequence of nuclear fallout. Yet we are told that, somehow or other, the massive expense on nuclear weapons is a guarantee of peace around the world. It has been no guarantee whatever —28 wars are being fought between nuclear and non-nuclear countries as we speak. They are being fought in many different theatres and scenarios. Nuclear weapons have not sorted out the world's problems, but have resulted in enormous expenditure on research and development capability. The holding and use of nuclear weapons is fundamentally wrong and immoral.

Hon. Members are asked to approve estimates that include the further development of the Trident nuclear submarine system. Let me cite information that has been given to many hon. Members. The current Polaris nuclear system has four submarines, 16 missiles per submarine and three warheads per missile—a maximum warhead deployment of 192. That makes a total system yield of 38,400 kilotonnes—the equivalent of 3,072 Hiroshima explosions. I remind the House that 60,000 people were killed immediately at Hiroshima, and probably as many more have died in subsequent years.

We are now expected to support and approve the Trident system. That system will have a total of four vessels, unless someone proposes to build the fifth, sixth or seventh. The total yield per warhead is 100 kilotonnes, and the total system yield is 1,200 kilotonnes—the equivalent of 4,096 Hiroshimas—with a range of 6,000 miles. The Trident submarine system has 512 warheads.

We are entitled to know where those warheads are directed. Who is the enemy apparently threatening this country and requiring us to have 512 warheads that can destroy the world and the people in it several times over? What on earth are those warheads for? Whom are they directed against—Iceland, France, Somalia, Angola, South Africa? Who is the enemy against whom we are expected to defend ourselves with a ludicrous amount of firepower, sufficient to destroy our whole world? The cost of the Trident submarine system is absolutely unbelievable. Every time anyone looks into it, we get nearer to realising what that true cost is. I tend to believe the Greenpeace estimate, which puts the figure at a total of £30 billion, including decommissioning costs.

In my view, we need a policy of arms reduction. We need to end once and for all the holding and stockpiling of nuclear weapons. Anyone who managed to see the "Panorama" programme on the problems of Aldermaston will begin to realise the danger of the manufacture of nuclear warheads to those who manufacture them or live near their place of manufacture—never mind those against whom they might be directed in future. I repeat that we need a programme of arms reduction. We also need a Government-sponsored arms conversion programme. We do not want pressure for increased arms expenditure of the kind that understandably comes from the endless groups of people whose jobs at shipyards, dockyards and factories are threatened because of the changes in defence priorities and who have been offered no alternative work by the Government—from people who themselves know that such an increase is neither necessary nor wanted. We need a Government-sponsored arms conversion agency that can put those people's skills to better use.

I believe that the British Government and others are promoting the arms trade. At the beginning of my speech, I mentioned the arms sold to Iraq, to Indonesia and to bloodthirsty dictatorships all round the world as a result of the British Government's obsession with and heavily subsidised expansion of the arms trade. British industry is falling behind because of the emphasis that has been placed on military rather than peaceful developments. Why cannot the shipyards produce vessels of peace rather than weapons of war?

Let us take a look at what is happening in the world —at the causes and the basic problems. Wealth is being transferred at an unprecedented rate from the poorest to the richest people and countries in the world.

Environmental destruction is continuing at an unprecedented rate. Are we seriously approving the expenditure of nearly £24 billion on arms this year at a time when a quarter of the world's population is on the brink of starvation and when life expectancy in a third of the world is rather less than two thirds of the life expectancy of 75 or so that we enjoy in this country?

Why on earth cannot we look towards the real causes of conflict in the world—the imbalance of wealth and power, resources and health resources, life expectancy, education and many other things? We should be using the opportunity afforded by changes in the world to support the principles on which the United Nations was founded —to identify the basic causes of conflict and to try to end armed conflict. Nuclear weapons provide no solution to any of those problems.

Let me quote from a briefing that the Quaker peace organisation was kind enough to send me:

"In these changing circumstances we suggest it might be helpful to look at security in a different way and consider how one country is not made more safe by its ability to threaten another because these are threats to our common security. In the future wars may arise from a number of sources, in addition to those noted above, and we must consider how to create common security in the face of these threats: economic problems (. . . maldistribution of resources globally, between north and south as well as east and west . . . poverty, starvation, debt . . . environmental problems (climate change, deterioration in life systems such as soil and water), global resources scarcity"—

a major factor in the Gulf war—

"political oppression and human rights abuses"—

which receive scant regard from the Ministry of Defence and the arms manufacturers, who are happy to sell arms to Indonesia and similar regimes—

"terrorism, crime and disease."

We are on completely the wrong track. We should look to develop peace in the world, and to develop and support peaceful institutions, rather than arming ourselves for conflicts in order to maintain the unfair economic relationship between north and south. We should be using this opportunity to rid ourselves once and for all of the scourge of nuclear weapons and the threat that they constitute to the whole of humanity.

6.8 pm

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith** (Wealden): I hope that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) will acquit me of any charge of discourtesy if I do not follow or try to rebut his argument. I have heard it before. I know that he speaks with great conviction, and I have no doubt that, over the years, he has totally convinced himself that he has the right answers. He has so far failed to convince Conservative Members. No Government in the western world would espouse his view, and an increasing number of those in his party oppose it. I am sorry that I cannot continue further, but I would rather return to the mainstream of the debate, which is not really about nuclear weapons.

I start on a rather sour note. I address my remarks not to the Ministry of Defence but to the way in which we conduct our affairs. It is no good our debating estimates that were published over a year ago when we know that, in a few weeks' time, we shall have another lot. It is like trying to guess what this year's train timetable will be by looking at last year's Bradshaw. That is about the size of it.

The speeches by Ministers so far have been reasonably comforting. Of course, there is a promise of better things to come, so Opposition Members had better be careful what they say. They know very well that the Government are far better at handling defence than the Labour party is because they have a united group behind them—except in one area where Back Benchers and Opposition Members continually voice the criticism that we are in danger of spoiling the efficiency of our armed forces by too big a downward pressure on our defence expenditure. That has been the theme of most of the Back-Bench speeches on Thursday and so far today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) was concerned about the level of expenditure. He talked about the trooping of the colour and the battalion of the Coldstream Guards walking into the sunset, leaving just one battalion. He also mentioned the overstretching of resources, as did the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), who was concerned about the enormous strain on families as a result of having to undertake too many emergency tours.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) struck a strong chord with many Conservative Members when he said that there was no longer really effective combined training in our armed forces, and that the first three exercises carried out in a base training camp in Canada—with the generosity and help of the Canadian Government—were a fiasco because all were conducted without infantry. Military commanders will echo some of those points.

My right hon. and hon. Friends must realise that on the Back Benches today there is a remarkable number of hon. Members, some quite new to the House, who are extremely well informed about what is happening in our armed forces. Not all of us agree on the question of the overstretch of resources because of one big difference lying behind people's judgments. I am not asking the Government to spend more in such financial circumstances. I do not think that that is possible, and I understand that, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) said, it is unrealistic to expect it. We spend on defence about the same as France and Germany spend and there is nothing special about Britain that should lead us to insist that the Government should do more.

The disagreement lies in the extent to which we believe that we face a greater threat than we did before the end of the cold war. One of my hon. Friends said that he did not see any great reduction in the threat from the Warsaw pact countries. I disagree. There is a marked decline in the threat, but I shall not elaborate on that view because I think that it is shared by many hon. Members on both sides of the House. On the other hand, it is no good kidding ourselves; the criticisms about the strain and overstretch of our armed forces are valid and therefore we must reach some conslusions about how we will be able to meet those strains.

We on the Back Benches must insist that, at the very least and beyond any doubt, the Ministry of Defence will resist and continue to resist any further pressures on the defence budget. We do not believe that our armed forces, and especially the Army, will continue to be able to discharge their current duties at the standard we have come to expect if there is a further downward pressure on our already stretched budget. Of course, we recognise that

*[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]*

during the interim period, when the strain is especially harsh, the garrisons in Hong Kong and Belize will be withdrawn. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster, the Chairman of the Select Committee, was opposed to that, but as long as we maintain the training, I think that it is fine. I do not see why we must have a premanent occupation of those areas—perhaps the RAF have a different view, judging from the faces of my hon. Friends.

If we understand the realities of finance and that the threat is not as great as it was, it is no good bleating from the Back Benches for the Government to hold on to everything and not withdraw from Cyprus or some other place. That is not fair and it is not common sense. That is one area in which I may differ in emphasis from some of my hon. Friends who have been critical of the stress that is put on the armed forces as a result of the downward pressures on the budget. However, I have no doubt that, unless we stick strongly to the policy that I asserted a moment ago, we shall concede that we can spend less, which will lead to the structure and morale of our armed forces falling apart.

What can we do in the meantime? My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has told us that he gets better value for money. There are signs that that is happening through competition. Savings cannot wholly be ascribed to the fact that the percentage of the budget that is spent on equipment has declined. My hon. Friend would argue that his economies have been a result of his being able to get better value for money. However, there are undoubtedly pressures on procurement.

There is one area in which we can take some more imaginative steps, which were signalled by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on Thursday. He referred to the reserves and he said that he expected to come forward later this year with a programme which would make it much more possible for the reserves to be used, by calling out whole units at a time, in a more productive and useful role. I am sure that that is right because it would give the reserves a sense of purpose. As we all know, the first priority of defence is defence of the realm. There is no real threat to the United Kingdom right now.

We have a highly professional Army which, in too many cases, performs duties that do not need to be performed by people with such high skills. It is imperative, therefore, that we should welcome, as I did on Thursday, the first step taken by my right hon. and learned Friend when he said that we should see whether we could have volunteers who would volunteer to serve in a Territorial Army unit on peacekeeping duties overseas. He was not suggesting sending them to Bosnia and getting into that sort of ball game. He was suggesting something less intense and less dangerous than that, which would release highly trained troops.

I rashly jumped to my feet and said that I was sure that such a step would be widely welcomed by both sides. However, when I looked at Opposition Members, I saw that they were very po-faced. The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) said that he would have to reserve his judgment on that and that he would give us his opinion today. I should welcome his comments.

**Dr. Reid:** I know that the hon. Gentleman would expect the courtesy of a reply to that specific point. My hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) said that we should, of course, wish to see the small print. We welcome the general principle of integration of the Territorial Army into operational duties, although we share the view expressed by those who warned about having to volunteer twice. It is sufficient that a person volunteers once for the Territorial Army. On the second occasion, he should be called up. He should not be asked to run the risk of losing a job or a home by volunteering a second time.

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** I do not know how the hon. Gentleman can talk about someone having to volunteer for a second time. Either he volunteers or he does not. I do not see anyone volunteering twice. He can volunteer for a company, as suggested by my right hon. and learned Friend, which he knows before he volunteers will discharge overseas duties. That is a very simple proposition.

What I did not like about some of the feelings expressed in reaction to my right hon. and learned Friend's initiative was the idea that we would try to get infantry on the cheap. That is an old argument that has been brought out in every generation by some Regulars. The more enlightened understand what we are about. Some argue, "Oh my golly, that is money that would otherwise go to the Regulars. It is going to the TA." That is why they do not want the TA to take a more prominent role. I doubt whether that view is strongly held today by our enlightened military leadership. However, that was the little murmur that went round our Back Benches on Thursday.

I stick to my guns. I believe that if we are to be realistic about defence, we must be more flexible. It is no good our asking the military to be flexible unless we have political flexibility. I welcome my right hon. Friend's suggestion.

I would like to consider briefly a subject that was referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King). I will deal with the point rather more quickly than might otherwise have been the case because my right hon. Friend covered the ground extremely well. However, there are certain differences of emphasis.

There is no area in which our armed forces have displayed their skills so apparently to the world as they have done in Bosnia. They have also displayed their skills elsewhere in other peacekeeping duties—for example, in Cyprus. Those tasks place enormous strains on our soldiers who face intense provocation. They demand courage and cool judgment when the moment comes for our soldiers to take firm military action.

It is not a criticism of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to say that the UN cannot discharge its functions efficiently. Dr. Boutrous Ghali, the Secretary-General, as good as admitted that in "Agenda for Peace", which was a good document. The Secretary-General is aware that the new international context makes demands on the UN which have become increasingly burdensome. For example, many countries do not pay their bills.

The Secretariat has been called upon to engage in fact-finding, observation, mediation, peacekeeping and peace enforcement. I am sure that we are all familiar with the comments of the first UN commander in Bosnia, the Canadian Major General Mackenzie, who complained

about the lack of 24-hour, seven-day service from the United Nations. He said something like, "If you phone on Friday, you'll get the answer when the weekend is over."

Brian Urquhart, a countryman of ours who served so successfully as deputy Secretary-General, put his finger on the matter in an article in the *New York Times* of 29 December. He argued that the time had come for the UN to see how far it would welcome an overhaul of its machinery. The Secretary-General followed that up by asking all countries to consider taking chapter VII more seriously as that would give the Security Council the option of using military force to restore international peace and security. He said that that would require the realisation of article 43

"whereby member states undertake to make armed forces, assistance and facilities available to the Security Council on a permanent basis."

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater suggested that one way of doing that would be for the UN to have a permanent force in which there would be more volunteers from the United Kingdom, France, Germany and goodness knows where else. That would be a kind of Foreign Legion of the UN. I believe that that suggestion should be studied closely. However, I have strong reservations about such a force. I do not know where it would be based, who would train it and to what standard. As some nations do not pay their bills, I am not sure how that force will be financed or equipped.

I do not want to kill stone dead the suggestion of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater. We know what line my right hon. Friend is taking and I do not think that he will die at the last ditch in respect of his suggestion. However, as a former Secretary of State, he might believe that a more practical way of dealing with the problem would be to set up with the UN a system whereby it could more easily call on regional frameworks that already existed.

Some of those frameworks are better than others and the best is clearly the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. I have worked for the North Atlantic Assembly for 12 years and I have seen a great deal of NATO, so I am very biased. I believe that NATO is ace. It knows what it is on about and its important feature is that the Americans are right there. If the Americans do not want to send troops on peacekeeping ventures because of the bloody nose that they received in Vietnam, I understand that. However, the Americans have a great military characteristic: they have the logistical capacity to take any number of troops, food and the rest to the four corners of the earth. That is what we need. With its superb record and idealism in international affairs, and with its firm commitment to NATO, America would find that to be a very useful role.

If we do not want our soldiers to spend a disproportionate amount of their time on peacekeeping duties or paying a disproportionate burden for the task, the NATO regional framework can best ensure that we pay our fair share and no more and no less.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) is an old friend of mine and chairman of the Defence Committee of the Western European Union. I do not believe that WEU is a rival to NATO. As my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington is aware, some NATO circles are not always as complimentary about WEU as I would like them to be because they fear that WEU is the forerunner of control by the European Commission and a kind of federal European army. They hate the idea of that.

I know that that is not the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington. However, we know that we must not go through this ridiculous business of duplication and fighting and squabbling. Many NATO countries are members of WEU and they must sort out that problem. The Heads of Government in the North Atlantic Assembly, all of which are members of WEU, have agreed that NATO should be called upon to contribute to global stability. However, the European nation members of NATO should, among their other problems, resolve their problems to avoid the awful duplication that took place in respect of Yugoslavia.

**Sir Dudley Smith** (Warwick and Leamington): I agree with a great deal of what my hon. Friend has said. Does he agree that Bosnia happened, rather inconveniently, two or three years too early? Had it happened in two or three years' time, we would have been much better prepared. I agree with my hon. Friend that duplication is wasteful and must be overcome. However, we must achieve that very carefully and many of us have real anxieties about the European Commission taking over the whole of the defence of Europe.

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** I understand that the time was out of kilter. However, we now have time to think and to do something about the problem.

I should like my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to consider the fact that there is money to be made out of anything that involves peacekeeping on a regional basis. As my hon. Friend the Minister will be aware, after the Falklands, many NATO ships come in for special survival training and we are said to run a very good training course. We are paid for that training. If there were a peacekeeping training school, the Brits could be very helpful and provide advice to countries which have not had our experience—and I do not say that with any sense of vanity.

We have a great responsibility to take the lead in these matters. One of my colleagues referred earlier to "punching our weight" when he quoted my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. We can punch more than our economic weight by virtue of our diplomatic skills, knowledge, integrity in public affairs and our economic weight in terms of overseas aid and so on. We want to live up to our responsibilities and we have the public behind us. It is right to affirm and strengthen the observance of civilised behaviour in international affairs and to strengthen the values of democracy. I believe that our country is well up to that task.

6.27 pm

**Mr. Gordon McMaster** (Paisley, South): We have heard many endorsements and much praise for our service men who are serving in various parts of the world. I am sure that we all associate ourselves with that praise and endorse those comments.

However, a large body of ex-service personnel who heard the endorsements from the Treasury Bench will find those words rather windy, hollow and little more than rhetoric. I refer to the 26,000 personnel who, in the 1950s,

*[Mr. Gordon McMaster]*

were sent to witness nuclear test explosions. It is sad that the defence estimates and Ministers have not mentioned those service men.

In my brief contribution, I wish to ask one very simple question. When are those men, the widows—there are now too many widows—and their families going to get justice? In the 1950s, 26,000 service personnel, many of them young men, were called up for national service and were sent to places such as Monte Bello Island in north-west Australia, Maralinga and Emu in South Australia, and Christmas Island and Malden Island in the Pacific, and 14,000 of them directly witnessed nuclear explosions. Eleven men from my own home town went to those tests. Five of them are now dead, and six of them suffer from some form of illness associated with exposure to radiation. One of them, William Rettie, even had it recorded on his death certificate that the cause of his illness was associated with exposure to radiation. Those men and their bereaved families still await justice.

The Government have long said that there was no case for those men to be compensated. Contrary to the official propaganda films that were made at the time and all the subsequent Government statements, for many of those men no protective clothing, either for their bodies or for their eyes, was issued. In the hot sunny weather, many of them wore shorts, vests and sandals.

Back in 1951, the Ministry of Defence stated in a secret memorandum that it needed to test the impact of radiation on human beings. Those tests, as acknowledged by the memorandum, were as much about testing the effects of radiation on human beings as about testing the effects of the nuclear weapons themselves. The Director of Trials Planning at the Admiralty at the time wrote:

"Ill effects may be long delayed. With any claims for compensation I feel that some formula might be accepted by Ministries which would dispose any tribunal in favour of a . . . claimant."

Sir William Penny went on to state that there was a need for

"adequate insurance for participating personnel, especially against radioactive hazards, without undue disclosure to insurance companies."

We know also that, on 28 April 1958, in the Grapple Y test, the second test off Christmas Island, the megaton nuclear explosion was at a much lower height than the officially reported 8,000 ft, and that it happened not five miles out but one and a half miles from the island. We know that there was greater exposure to radiation than has been acknowledged.

Successive Governments have refused to pay compensation. There has never been more evidence available than is available now. The British Nuclear Test Veterans Association, to its great credit, has gathered much of that information. Indeed, the association was founded only about 10 years ago by a friend of mine who at the time was not involved in politics—a man by the name of Ken McGinley.

Ken is a constituent of mine. He was disgusted at the official position of the Government. He has been an active member of the Labour party for some time; he is now a Labour councillor, and has broadened his activities in relation to helping people. However, his main cause remains the winning of justice for veterans of British nuclear tests.

Let us consider Ken McGinley's experience. The protection that he was offered when he served on Christmas Island was to cover his eyes with his hands. When the bomb went off, Ken saw the skeleton of his hand. Since then, he has suffered many ill effects which he would not wish to be put on the public record, and he has fought consistently for 10 years to win justice for his colleagues.

Those men know what happened on the island—they were at the tests. Many of them feel that all that they did wrong was to serve their country and obey orders.

The case has been taken up over the 10 years by many people, notably the former right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, Mr. Jack Ashley, as he then was; the former Member for Sunderland, North, Mr. Bob Clay; and my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz). It has also been taken up by the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and the right hon. Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins).

During that period, the Government have hidden behind the 1988 study by the National Radiological Protection Board, which the Government have always claimed gave no credence to the nuclear test veterans' claim. The report states:

"It is concluded from the study that participation has not had a detectable effect on the participants expectation of life nor their total risk of developing cancer"—

then, almost as an afterthought, it adds—

"apart from a possible effect on the risks of developing Multiple Myeloma and Leukaemia."

That is a matter of political presentation. The report could and should have said something along the lines that participation might have caused death from multiple myeloma and leukaemia, although not from other cancers. That is the real conclusion of the 1988 report.

Of course, since then, the Government have said, "Hang on: that report was not conclusive, so we will commission another one, and it will be ready at any time." In fact, on 5 June last year, in reply to a parliamentary question, the Prime Minister said:

"A further report from the NRPB on more recent data on mortality and cancer evidence is expected later this year." —[*Official Report*, 5 June 1992; Vol. 208, c. 655.]

On 5 June, the report was to come later.

On 29 July, in response to a letter which I wrote on behalf of Mrs. Rettie and her two daughters—as I said, her husband had died—we were told that it would be later still. The most recent reply from the Prime Minister was on 14 May, and he told me that it would be produced later in 1993.

The report is desperately awaited by those men who are dying from the effects of radiation. More important, it is desperately awaited by widows and children who have lost a loved one, and who feel that they are not getting justice from the Government.

Let us compare that with the situation in the United States of America. In 1988, the year in which the NRPB study was published in Britain, the American Government considered what they would do for their veterans. Senator Rockefeller of West Virginia, speaking in Congress, said:

"I think it is time to bring an end to the research and to the injustice and to respond with recognition and compassion to what these people went through in the line of duty. We know enough to act."

When new legislation was announced by President Ronald Reagan, hardly a left-wing campaigner, he said:

"The nation is grateful for their special service, and enactment of the law makes clear the nation's concern for their continued welfare."

He said:

"The nation is grateful . . . We know enough to act."

Why is it that the United States of America, with all the research that it has done, has said that it knows enough to act while our Government have continued to stonewall? Men are dead, men are dying, wives are becoming widows, and children are losing fathers, while the Government claim that there is no link with the exposure to nuclear radiation in those tests. Frankly, that argument is believed by fewer and fewer people. The Government's case is becoming less and less credible as more and more evidence accumulates.

I return to the simple question that I want answered: when are those men and their families going to get justice? When can we expect the full publication of the NRPB study? Why have the Government waited and not done the same as the United States has done and said, "Enough research, enough investigation—let's pay just and adequate compensation now"? The motto of the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association is

"All we seek is justice"

Let the House give justice to those men and their families.

6.38 pm

**Sir Jim Spicer** (Dorset, West): I start by paying tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), who has carried out a difficult task over the years with good humour and great efficiency, always supplemented by the fact that he towers over us and we are not prepared to risk a punch-up if we disagree too strongly with him. I warmly welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), who has taken over that difficult task.

I am never sure how handover notes are arranged, but I wonder whether one small item has been omitted from them. That would have read, "Watch for an invitation about January of next year to lunch at the annual regimental sergeant-majors conference of the Parachute Regiment." My right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell came to that lunch the year before last, and the Secretary of State came last year. They found it an interesting experience, which I do not think either of them wants to repeat.

That may well be the reason why my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell decided that discretion was the better part of valour and that he had better leave office. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes has about nine months in which to show himself worthy of lunch with the parachute RSMs and to come away virtually unscathed. I am sure that he will do that very well.

I shall first say a word about the welcome announcement by my right hon. Friend on Thursday about giving the Territorial Army a new role and a positive sense of purpose. For 40 years, our Territorial Army had that sense of purpose, because it knew exactly where the enemy was and what its role would be in fighting that enemy if it ever came to war. Suddenly, the whole idea of and reason for a Territorial Army in that context has gone out of the window. I served on the staff of the 16th Airborne Division of the Territorial Army for two years. I know about the quality that we had there—I know that it still exists today and is even better than it was in the 1950s and 1960s.

I warmly welcome what was said on Thursday about calling up those volunteers from the TA and giving them a role. What I do not welcome is the delay that we will face before that decision is implemented. Such a delay may be necessary, but I suggest that one of the first things that the Minister of State should do is earmark those units and give them warning that they may be required for such a duty once the measures are fully implemented.

There seems to be general agreement on both sides of the House that such a warning would be welcome. Obviously, I do not need to stress that too much. Clearly, if the Minister is looking for the right sort of company or companies to perform that function, his first port of call will be the Territorial Army parachute battalions, because they would provide the best source of supply for such a force.

On Thursday, I was delighted that the Secretary of State spent so much time talking about the role of the United Nations. We all know that this will be the decade of the United Nations and, increasingly, we will be involved in United Nations operations, rather than acting independently.

That point was strongly reinforced today by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith). There is absolutely no problem if we are dealing with a European theatre of operations, because we have NATO and with it a command structure that is second to none, and so we do not need to look any further. The United Nations can simply designate a NATO command structure to take over the role.

What happens in the rest of the world? That is where our problems begin, because a command structure cannot be cobbled together in a matter of weeks. Much more proper training is needed in a command structure than for the troops who will be answerable to that command. The command structure then needs to be in a position, if possible, to command a homogeneous group of troops who have worked together before and who have a common language—if that can be achieved. If there are common weapons as well, so much the better.

One of my greatest disappointments in the past couple of years is how little has been said about the 1991 Commonwealth conference in Harare. Everyone I know who attended that conference, from the Secretary-General and all the members of the secretariat down, said that it marked a watershed for the Commonwealth. This was for various reasons. South Africa was on the back burner, but also, for the first time, a Commonwealth conference showed a sense of unity and purpose, and began to make sense once again. I have been told that the main reason was the fact that our Prime Minister played a crucial role at the conference. In three months' time, the Commonwealth conference will gather again in Cyprus.

To add to what my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater and my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden said, I am sure that there is another way in which we could operate under United Nations command. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater talked about observers, perhaps drawn from the Commonwealth. We then looked at the possibility of having a regional force. Another option would be a direct United Nations force under the command of the Secretary-General.

*[Sir Jim Spicer]*

Why should we not at least explore the possibility of the Commonwealth playing a part under the United Nations? Why should we not have a small Commonwealth planning group drawn together to discuss this? It would be not regional but worldwide, and above all would give the Commonwealth a sense of purpose that, sadly, it has not had for the past 25 years.

I pass that idea to my hon. Friend the Minister, for what it is worth. I hope that he will forward it through the usual channels and ensure that something is made of it in Cyprus. After all, we are simply looking at a small initial step—a planning group to see whether there would be support in the Commonwealth to ask the Secretary-General of the United Nations whether he would like us to go down that road, and then possibly the establishment of a small permanent planning force with the idea of drawing regional groupings from the Commonwealth as and when required.

It would be impossible for me to finish without saying a word about procurement policy. Five hon. Members have mentioned the EH101 directly—and most other hon. Members have done so indirectly. All of them said that now is the time for a decision.

All hon. Members accept the need for a radical rethink and restructuring of our armed forces to meet the challenge of this decade and those to come. Far be it from me to put the boot in the Armoured Corps, but there is no place in the 1990s and beyond for great massive heavy armed forces sitting around on the north German plain. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden said, the threat from the east has virtually disappeared and we must think more about the sort of conflict in which we might be involved in the future. In my view, it is down with most of the tanks and into helicopters in a more positive way, in support of infantry.

In that context, the helicopter becomes crucial if we are to produce an effective infantry force for any situation under United Nations command and control. That fact was recognised by the former Secretary of State, Lord Younger, when he said, in 1987, that he intended to place an order for 50 utility 101s, with the proviso that the price and the contract could be satisfactorily concluded.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** Twenty-five.

**Sir Jim Spicer:** It should be 50. My recollection is much better. Fifty is the minimum figure, and would be much better at 75.

Sadly, there is still no order. We now have a major problem. It is not as if we are fighting over whether the order should go to Rosyth or Devonport: we seem to be skirmishing over whether a British world beater is ordered or whether we go for a Chinook. The Chinook is a marvellous helicopter, but it is almost in the same category as the Hercules. It has been around for 30 years. It is a good workhorse, but it is at the end of its shelf life. Is it any wonder that the American manufacturers are perfectly prepared to undercut Westland all the way down the line? They want to get shot of their Chinooks. They have far too many. They would like to undermine the challenge that Westland will mount worldwide with the EH101.

Whether we order 25, 50 or 75 helicopters is neither here nor there. It is important that our Government put in an order for that utility version now. That would be the turnkey for orders worldwide for at least 400 utility versions of the EH101. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and that he does not have full responsibility for procurement policy, but I inform him that the matter will be on the agenda when he meets the RSMs and the Parachute Regiment next year. I hope that he will have achieved a solution before then.

6.51 pm

**Mr. John Hutton** (Barrow and Furness): This is the first opportunity that I have had to speak in a defence debate since I was elected to the House. I begin by paying tribute to the professionalism and dedication and the humanitarian efforts of Britain's armed forces around the world. We have heard recently of some of the heroic exploits in Bosnia of our soldiers from the Cheshire Regiment and now the Yorkshire Regiment. It is a tribute to the training and professionalism of our soldiers to draw attention to their work.

Service in the armed forces is public service of the highest order. It is perfectly appropriate for hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber to make that clear. I also have a clear constituency connection with the subject of the debate. As many hon. Members will know, the shipyard at Barrow-in-Furness is synonymous with the Royal Navy. Over many generations and many years, we have provided some of the finest ships that the Navy has ever had.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement spoke about the impressive engineering accomplishment of my constituency in completing the Trident programme to schedule and to cost. It is worthy of note that that is a signal engineering achievement which is without parallel in the history of naval architecture in Britain.

It is also worth placing on record the concern felt in my constituency that, although Ministers talk in the House about the achievements of the men and women who work in the shipyard at Barrow in completing the Trident programme and building many other ships for the Navy, they appear content to do nothing while thousands of my constituents lose their jobs at the shipyard.

It is clearly important for the security and the health of the nation that shipbuilding remains active in my constituency. I must inform Ministers on the Treasury Bench that in 10 or 15 years' time, when the needs of the nation might be different and new and different forms of naval procurement might be required, they may ask the shipbuilding workers in my constituency to co-operate and find that they are not there.

I have said on previous occasions that there is a real danger that, in our drive to reduce defence spending, we shall strike deeply at the core of the defence industry of Britain. There is a strong strategic case for the House, and especially Conservative Members, to pay careful attention to what is happening in the defence industries.

The defence industries are a strategically important part of Britain's engineering base. It is dangerous and damaging for the Government to wring their hands and claim that the problems can be solved by the market and that diversification is about defence cuts. It is not. The case for diversification is a central strategic military case. It is a mistake for Conservative Members to say that there is a problem of over-capacity in the defence industries. That is not the problem. At present we have under-utilised

capacity. Diversification is necessary not only to save jobs in the short term but to preserve engineering capability in the long term.

In 10 or 15 years' time, there may well be a need for different types of defence procurement. If the engineering base is not there, as a result of the programme of running down and cutting defence—the problems are felt not only in my constituency but in the constituencies of many other hon. Members who are present tonight—there will be serious strategic problems for the country in the years that lie ahead.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) for his comments about the need for justice for the nuclear test veterans. He made an extremely strong argument to the House. I hope that the Minister will be able to make a positive response.

The House also has a responsibility to set the right parameters for British defence and security policy in a rapidly changing world. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree that not all the recent changes have been for the better. Clearly, the end of the cold war and the dismantling of the Warsaw pact were positive developments for Britain and our allies. That is not questioned. There is a consensus between the two sides of the House. However, those changes have not been without other difficulties, as we see in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere. Real security problems face many Europeans. Therefore, it is imperative that Britain acts in co-operation with our colleagues in NATO, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and the United Nations to develop new security structures and policies for the changed world in which we live.

Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends believe that the Government are not effective and rigorous in pursuing some of those changed security priorities. As many hon. Members have said, it is important that the House provides the armed services with the right equipment at the right time and at the right price. Much of the two days of our debate has dealt with difficult decisions on individual items of procurement such as helicopters, main battle tanks, frigates and other items of essential equipment.

Although I agreed with much of what the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) said, the Government repeatedly give the impression that their policy is Treasury-led. It is not sufficient to rely on competition to secure value for money in defence procurement policy. As we saw recently with the demise of Swan Hunter, competition may deliver to the Government equipment of a certain price and value, but the end result is that we lose capacity. It is clear that Swan Hunter might not be there to build ships, frigates or other boats for the Royal Navy in the years that lie ahead.

Competition is obviously important, but it is not sufficient in itself to guarantee some of the long-term procurement priorities that the Government must have.

I said that there was evidence that the Government's policy for procurement was Treasury-led. The Select Committee's first report on the White Paper said at paragraph 4.18 in its discussion of the lightweight Sea Wolf missile system that it was the strong view of the Committee that the decision to cancel the development of lightweight Sea Wolf was

"another example of financial disciplines overriding military requirement."

I choose that as one exmaple of the weakness at the heart of the Government's policy.

As the hon. Member for Wealden and others have said, we cannot expect any substantial increase, or any increase whatever, in the defence budget for many years to come. That is common ground. However, there is a legitimate debate, which we have had tonight and on previous occasions, about how the Government manage the process of change in the defence policy of Britain. Increasingly, there is evidence that the policy is being determined by the Treasury. It is incumbent on defence Ministers to provide a more convincing case than they have been able to produce to date for the priorities that underpin their policy. Ritual incantation of the policy from the Front Bench is not evidence that the policy is not Treasury-led. So long as the Select Committee continues its excellent work to track the Government's progress to date, hon. Members will be furnished with more examples of Treasury-led cuts in our defence programme.

It is important that hon. Members actively support efforts to contain the spread of inappropriate military technology—the nuclear weapon technology. For what it is worth, I believe that the threat from, and spread of, nuclear technology around the world is one of the greatest threats to security for many decades. The Opposition believe that the Government have not paid sufficient attention or devoted enough energy to that issue.

It is important to consider the scant and rather flimsy attention that was paid to nuclear testing and nuclear proliferation in the White Paper. Paragraph 135 strikes me as indicative of some of the problems that we face. On the issue of non-proliferation, the Government say:

"Our aim at the 1995 NPT"——

non-proliferation treaty——

"Extension Conference will be to negotiate an indefinite extension to the Treaty."

I am sure that that approach represents common ground between hon. Members, perhaps with the exception of my right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert). I am sure that there is consensus on the fact that it should be an international priority to extend the non-proliferation treaty.

The timetable that the Government have announced in the White Paper, however, is far too optimistic given the rather laggardly way in which they have approached the issue to date. The recent preparatory committee meeting in New York was a wasted opportunity for the Government, who concerned themselves with procedural and technical issues. Insufficient attention was paid to making progress on the substantive issues that could form a real agenda for progress on the treaty.

It is also important that we should consider the replacement for the WE177 nuclear gravity bomb. I know that hon. Members have already spoken about that, but I do not believe that there is any such need. It would be an extremely expensive item of equipment to produce in the present economic and political climate. I have not heard any convincing strategic case for it.

To some extent, defence policy lags behind events. It is, therefore, easy for some people to remain fixed in their belief that a panoply of nuclear weaponry is essential to maintain peace. Even in the past four years, however, the world has changed dramatically. I, for one on the Opposition Benches, have always been prepared to accept the case for an independent nuclear deterrent. I have never made any secret of my views on that subject; after all, I

*[Mr. John Hutton]*

represent Barrow and Furness. The case for a tactical, nuclear replacement for the WE177 gravity bomb, however, cannot be made in current circumstances.

The defence posture encapsulated in the Government's White Paper involves a new programme of nuclear weapon testing at the test site in Nevada. The Minister of State for Defence Procurement has made it clear that the three additional tests requested by the British Government relate to developing a replacement for the gravity bomb. They have nothing to do with Trident, because, as we know, the testing programme for that has been completed. I do not believe that there is any case for the tests to go ahead. That is why I am particularly glad to note that the Opposition amendment tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend, the Leader of the Opposition contains a specific reference to nuclear testing.

**Mr. Mans:** Am I right to say that the hon. Gentleman believes that once the capability of the strike role of the Tornado becomes obsolete, as a result of the free-fall bomb no longer being a capable system for delivering nuclear weapons, we should rely solely on Trident, despite what he said about nuclear proliferation?

**Mr. Hutton:** I do not believe that there is a strategic or military case for that type of tactical nuclear weapon. I cannot foresee a range of military circumstances in which that weapon could be deployed effectively.

As I said earlier, I believe that there is a case for an independent nuclear deterrent. I stick to that argument. The particular replacement weapon that we are discussing, however, is unnecessary. In the context of continued pressure on the procurement budget, expenditure on developing the tactical air-to-surface missile, TASM, is wholly unjustified. There is no plausible military case for it.

A decision on the replacement of the WE177 is long overdue—that point has not been made. According to paragraph 7.28 of the 1991 White Paper on the defence estimates, the Government said that a decision on WE117 would be made during 1992. We are obviously some way behind that timetable. I hope that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will be able to give us the benefit of his opinion on this subject, because it is an issue on which opinion on both sides of the House is divided.

I hope that I have made it clear that my perspective in the debate is based on my strong support of the armed forces and the men and women who serve this country and the international community, through the United Nations, as their members. There are a number of specific concerns, however, on which I want to address the House. They come within the context of my remarks about addressing the House as a constituency Member with an interest at heart.

I must say how delighted my constituents and I were at the Government's decision to place an order to build a helicopter carrier in my constituency. I am sure that my constituents will build a first-class ship for the Royal Navy and provide a good deal for the taxpayer at the same time. However, there is a great deal of concern and sadness in my constituency about what has happened to Swan Hunter. No one in any shipbuilding community takes any satisfaction from seeing other shipyard employees lose their jobs, particularly at a fine shipyard like Swan Hunter, which has developed a reputation for excellence over many years. I urge the Government to find the means to resolve the uncertainty that hangs over the future of that shipyard. It was an important decision to place the order for the carrier, however, and, on behalf of my constituents, I am delighted that it was placed with a shipyard in Barrow and Furness.

In addition to preserving the amphibious role of the Royal Navy, which is crucial in terms of the wider security context in which the British armed forces will operate in the future, and, in particular, to the assistance that we can give to the United Nations in its peacekeeping work, it is also important that the Government can confirm that it will be their policy to place early orders for the replacement of HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid. It is important to concentrate on the complete package. The helicopter carrier is an important part of the amphibious jigsaw. Without replacements for HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid, the Royal Navy, including the Royal Marines, will not be able to play a complete role in that arena.

Other important decisions must be taken about the future procurement of the Royal Navy. The decision on HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid will, however, be awaited with eagerness in my constituency.

I am also concerned about the future size and structure of the Royal Navy submarine fleet. It has been my understanding for some time that the Government are sticking to their assertion that that fleet will consist of 16 submarines. It will be made up of 12 nuclear-powered hunter-killer submarines, predominantly from the Trafalgar class, and four type 2400 Upholder diesel electric submarines—a design which was pioneered at Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. shipyard in Barrow.

The future of the Upholder class submarines has been subject to much attention in recent months. The Opposition have tried to raise the issue with the Government. I know that other hon. Members share my concern that the Government might be proposing to dispose of those four diesel electric submarines to a foreign navy. What has changed since "Options for Change"? What strategic assessment underlines the Government's case for believing that they can dispose of those four submarines? I am unaware of any such case. Quite the contrary—without a diesel electric component in the submarine service, the capability, the role, the range of missions and functions that the submarine service can discharge will be handicapped.

In navies throughout the world, including the many successful ones, diesel electric submarines play an important role in the configuration of submarine forces. Particularly in export sales, diesel electric submarines have a sellable identity; the transfer of nuclear technology is a completely different issue, and I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House would have strong reservations about that technology being widely sold around the world.

The technology in some diesel electronic submarines is world class and, in particular, the Upholder class submarine could, with the right backing and support from the Government, form the basis of a successful export operation. However, it will be immensely difficult to sell a unique development such as the Upholder class if the Royal Navy does not operate it. What other navy is likely to say, "We'll buy some of those" if the Royal Navy has given up any operating capability in that class? On

strategic, military and industrial grounds, the type 2400 diesel electric submarine should not be sold but should remain part of the Royal Navy.

There is a more pressing issue in the submarine fleet —the Government's intention to procure a replacement for the Trafalgar class or the Swiftsure submarine. It is important that the Government go ahead with their decision to produce a follow-on to the Trafalgar class boat at the earliest opportunity. The minimum number for the batch-2 Trafalgars should be six. That is the way to guarantee an operational deployment of 12 SSNs, assuming that we maintain our fleet of diesel electric submarines. That is of particular interest to my constituents, because we hope and expect to build those submarines.

I have another concern, and again I locate my comments in the context of the emerging role of Britain's armed forces in a changed world. There is a need for new procurement for the Army to ensure that it has a genuine rapid reaction role. In particular, I should like the Minister to be aware of one item of equipment, if he is not already. VSEL is developing an ultra-lightweight howitzer, which is undergoing tests in the United States. That is an ideal weapon for a rapid reaction corps, and I am delighted that British units will play a leading role in that corps. It will be useful because it is air portable and can be lifted by light helicopters.

My right hon. and hon. Friends have for some time been raising the issue of diversification, and I have also spoken about it. Paragraph 350 of the White Paper, in the words of the Select Committee, offers "nothing but cold comfort" to the defence industry. That is an accurate assessment. At least 80,000 jobs have been lost in the defence industry in the past two and half years. That is a catastrophic loss of skills and talents, which the nation cannot afford for very much longer. I simply emphasise to the Minister and the Government that diversification is not the soft way. It is not an excuse for defence cuts. Far from it—it is a method of retaining capability in an industrial sector.

If we do not have an industrial strategy—I know that those are dirty words to some Tory Members—for preserving skills and jobs, and capacity in the defence industry, we run a serious risk of undermining the capability of Britain's industrial base to equip British armed forces in the years ahead. It is essential that our industrial base has that capacity. That is the point and purpose of a policy of diversification. That is why it forms such an important part of the amendment to the Government's motion. International co-operation is to be encouraged, and collaboration between nations on projects is worthy, but it is not an exclusive policy.

In opening the debate, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement rightly said that the main challenge for defence policymakers in the west was how to respond to, and deal with, a changed international climate. I am not convinced that he provided us with any real evidence that the Government either understand the nature of those changes or have any strategy to meet the challenge.

7.14 pm

**Mr. Keith Mans** (Wyre): I am glad that we are having this debate on the 1992 White Paper, albeit a bit late. I sincerely hope that we shall not wait quite so long for the debate on this year's White Paper. I follow my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) in welcoming my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) to his new duties on the Front Bench.

I have listened to most of the debate, and I fully agree with the remarks of the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) about nuclear testing. I served with a number of people in the Royal Air Force who took part in those tests in the Pacific, and have little doubt that, if we have to wait for the sort of evidence that is thought necessary before admitting that there are problems, most of them will be dead. It is important that the Ministry of Defence looks closely at the matter immediately to see whether something can be done.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) that our only nuclear independent weapon should be Trident. It is important to have a flexible deterrent. I question the credibility of Trident as a proper deterrent in the sort of situation that may occur when some of the countries in Asia that are already in possession of nuclear weapons pose a threat to us. A better deterrent is an air-borne system which can be deployed in a way that makes it clear to those nations that we are serious in our intentions. I am not convinced that a submarine-based deterrent would be able to achieve that.

The hon. Gentleman made a good point about the equipment of the Royal Navy. His comments turned into something of a shopping list. Although I fully commend him on representing so well his constituency, and the firm that employs so many people in it, he should be careful about the amount that he suggests should be spent. When I added up the figures, they came to well over £1 billion. Recent Labour party conferences have proposed cutting spending on defence; conference decisions last year or the year before asked for £6·5 billion worth of cuts. I hope that future Labour conferences will be a little more responsible and will match the amount that they propose to spend on defence with the comments made by Opposition Members today and last Thursday about the equipment that they wish the armed services to have. There is a huge gap between the shopping list that they set out and the actual sums that they are prepared to spend on defence.

Defence has already taken a large cut. Figures published as recently as last week by the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies show that the defence budget for 1984-85 is £26 billion at 1991-92 prices. By 1994-95, that figure will be reduced to £21·5 billion, a cut of nearly 20 per cent. What is even more significant is that, for that first year, the equipment budget consumed 46 per cent. of the defence budget whereas in 1994-95 it will consume 37 per cent. That shows that equipment has taken a larger share of the cuts than personnel, although the number of personnel will fall from 336,000 to 265,000 by 1994-95.

I mention those figures because in the current public expenditure round it is important to recognise the cuts that have already occurred in the armed forces. If we are to meet our future commitments, they cannot continue. The RAF strike attack capability has been reduced by 40 per cent. and our air defence capability is to be reduced by 30 per cent. Those are large cuts and they are causing a problem with morale. The older service men are concerned that they may be candidates for redundancy and the young service men are concerned about their careers. I meet a number of young service men in my minor capacity as an RAF reserve pilot. When they are part or full way through their training, they often have to wait for up to two years

*[Mr. Keith Mans]*

before completing their training or joining their operational squadrons. That is demoralising and they begin to question whether a career in the armed services is right for them. It costs between £4 million and £5 million to train a front-line Tornado pilot, so it is essential to have a steady throughput.

I hope that the Ministry of Defence will consider ways in which young service men can be used more effectively during the gaps in their training. I accept that such gaps must occur, but I hope not to the extent that has been happening. We need to deploy our young service men in a way that encourages greater motivation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) suggested, they could be used in peacekeeping roles. Detachment to one of the areas in which we are currently involved would make a good start to their careers.

It is my belief that we have already largely spent the peace dividend, so we cannot spend it again. Although the cold war is over, there is a proliferation of nuclear weapons. There are unstable regimes throughout the world, especially in north Africa and Asia. When determining the size and shape of our future armed forces, we must remember that not only should they be involved in peacekeeping; they should be able to fight in a major conflict. That is an important point to bear in mind when considering budget constraints.

The new roles that will undoubtedly evolve over the next few years mean new weapons systems and equipment. I agree with the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness that there must be a viable defence industry on this side of the Atlantic. However, I do not agree with his suggestion of the establishment of a defence diversification agency. The history of such agencies is not good. The Labour Government established one in 1965 when they cancelled the TSR2, but, if my memory is correct, it lasted for only about six months and was then disbanded.

A better route would be to examine the possibility of combining the research and development facilities in the defence industry with wider industrial research, thereby providing a research and development base in engineering that could apply equally to military and commercial products. I hope that the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Defence will consider funding projects on a partnership basis, as happens successfully in the USA.

I want to refer to two pieces of new equipment that demonstrate the importance of collaboration in military and civilian research. The first is the replacement for the C130. One of the most interesting points that came out of the recent tragic crash of a C130, with the resultant loss of life, was that the aircraft did not have a black box recorder. That was because it was designed long ago, when black box recorders did not exist in the form that we know them now.

The Labour Government decided to buy American aircraft, and the C130 came into service with the RAF in 1967. I do not want to enter into a debate about whether that decision was right or wrong, although I think it was wrong. What has been evident is not only that the initial purchase of the aircraft caused employment problems in Britain, but that over the past 27 years we have had to rely on the USA for a steady supply of spare parts, maintenance and updating. That has been both a drain on our balance of payments and a cause of unemployment in Britain.

The MOD must seriously consider the whole life costs of a replacement for the C130, not just the costs of the initial purchase. It is a fact that almost any new military aircraft involves spending more on spare parts and modifications during its life than was spent on the initial purchase. Therefore, the case for the C130J is nothing like as attractive is it might initially have appeared to be.

I argue that there is a case for becoming more fully involved in the European future large aircraft programme. Then, not only will we keep a viable aircraft industry on this side of the Atlantic, but we will get good value for the RAF during the life of the aircraft. I understand the time scale problems; it is only a paper aircraft and no detailed design work has been done. I hope that the consortia, both in this country and elsewhere, will firm up their proposals and, perhaps, base the aircraft on some of the technology that already exists in the airbus.

It would be right for the RAF to suggest further modification and renovation of some of its existing C130 fleet so that, at the end of the century, it can purchase the future large aircraft. It will have the ability not just to take on the role of the C130, but to replace some of our tanker force and our maritime reconnaissance force of Nimrods.

That sums up the importance not only of having the right aircraft for the RAF, but of finding a way to retain the technology on this side of the Atlantic so that we can continue to replace the aircraft into the foreseeable future and not rely solely on the Americans.

My final point about the C130 replacement is the importance of having a decent airlift capacity in Europe. At present, as hon. Members said last Thursday, we rely almost solely on the Americans for our heavy lift capability. I do not know how much longer we shall be able to do that, so it makes even greater sense to combine with some other European nations—perhaps encouraging them to take a fuller part in the sort of operations in which British armed forces participated over the past few years—in producing an aircraft that can do the job.

The second project, the EH101, was mentioned by six hon. Members on Thursday and today. The difference between them and me is that I do not have a constituency in the south-west. None the less, I am convinced that the right way forward is for the EH101 to meet the RAF's need for a medium-lift helicopter, not the Chinook.

Again, the full-life costs are important. Whereas the Chinook is cheap to buy, the costs over the life of that aircraft are likely to be much larger. It is difficult to maintain, and while the RAF already has a good training base at Odiham and therefore the on-costs of introducing further aircraft of the same type are small, that advantage must be balanced against having the same helicopter that the Navy has decided to purchase. I argue that, again in the medium term, there are training cost-savings to be made if the EH101 is bought.

Perhaps I should have made the point also in relation to the FLA—the future large aircraft—that there is undoubtedly export potential for the EH101. The Canadians have already bought it, and I am convinced that many other armed forces around the world are only waiting for the RAF to confirm the stated intention of a former Secretary of State for Defence, Lord Younger, seven or eight years ago and firm up the order for that aircraft before considering purchasing the EH101

themselves. That important decision should be made soon if we are to retain a viable helicopter industry on this side of the Atlantic alongside a viable fixed-wing aircraft industry.

Both projects can demonstrate the link between civilian and military research. Much of the technology that would go into the FLA is readily transferable to the next generation of civilian airlines. In the same way that the American 707 was built on the basis of the defence money that went into the KC135 tanker, and the 747 was based on the American defence spending on the competition for what turned out to be the Galaxy heavy lift transporter, we too should look at ways of ensuring that money put into the FLA will result in another generation of airliners on this side of the Atlantic to succeed the airbus generation that has been so successful to date.

The 1993 White Paper will be published in less than a month, and I hope that it will answer at least some of the questions posed in this debate about the future direction of our armed forces. We have a clearer idea now of what the post-cold war world is likely to be like. It is plain that it will be more unstable, and that in future our armed forces will play varied roles. Beyond that, nothing is clear.

If we are to punch above our weight, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said, it is important to restore morale in our armed services by giving them a much clearer idea of what they will be asked to do in future and the size and shape of the forces that we will have to complete those tasks. I hope very much that the imminent 1993 White Paper will answer at least some of those questions.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. Only one hour and 45 minutes is left before the winding-up speeches, and no fewer than 12 hon. Members still hope to catch my eye. If hon. Members will co-operate, it may be possible for them all to contribute.

7.33 pm

**Mr. Peter Hardy** (Wentworth): I will follow some of the important points made by the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans), but I will first comment on an earlier reference to Matrix Churchill and trade with Iraq. I was reminded that on the day on which the Select Committee was supposed to begin its deliberations, directors or employees of Forgemasters were arrested and placed in cells in the police station at Rawmarsh in my constituency. I never received a satisfactory explanation for that arrest, except that the Government were passing on to the shoulders of business men burdens that the Government should have been openly eager to bear themselves.

That is not least because it was argued that it was thought that a pipeline rather than a gun was being built. Apparently, that was the Government's view, but if they had even the most rudimentary grasp of metallurgy and had placed a piece of steel in a spectrometer, they could have ascertained that the steel used in a pipeline is rather different from that used to manufacture gun barrels—even long gun barrels of the sort involved in the Matrix Churchill affair.

Just as the Government were eager to have business men serve as fall guys in respect of trade with Iraq, so are the Government deliberately placing service men in an impossible situation. The Government have not adequately reviewed their arrangements since "Options for Change", although since it was published the burdens and responsibilities placed on the services have grown enormously.

In many parts of our armed services, men are repeatedly away from home on short, unaccompanied detachments. The strain on their families is enormous. At the same time, the service man does not know whether he has adequate career prospects. Ministers pay tribute to service men, but those men do not know whether they can maintain the careers that they are currently fulfilling with dedication, ability and courage. That is not a satisfactory situation.

Over the past 18 months on visits to a number of RAF stations, I have been enormously impressed by the technological skills exhibited by those involved in avionics and engineering, who possess a considerable ability to keep old aircraft flying. The hon. Member for Wyre referred also to pilots and pilot training. However, many of those dedicated and able men do not know whether their careers have a future. They must reach certain ranks by certain ages. If promotion is frozen or delayed, they must go. That is not a particularly happy outcome.

Those men know that if they leave, the skills that they have learnt in the RAF will enable them to obtain jobs with private contractors. However, many have asked me, "Who will replace us when we retire, because contractors are much less willing to train than the services?" That aspect should command much more attention. The review should consider also whether the services have an adequate, guaranteed long-term capacity to maintain their equipment.

In the years since the first Halton apprentice, the services have trained people in advanced technology, and have had the use of their services for an average of 12 to 15 years. Then they left, and the largest part of their working life may have been spent applying skills acquired in the services to many areas of British industrial technology. If the training in the services dries up, that will not help Britain today—lacking, as it does, skills training —for that is forefeited in the name of economy.

It is odd that, for some time, we have had little opportunity to hear the sort of speech made by the hon. Member for Wyre. A long time has elapsed since the last Royal Air Force debate. Last July, we briefly debated discipline. Then there was a mongrel debate—to quote the Foreign Secretary—when we hoped to debate the Royal Air Force, but the powers that be decided that it should be a debate about Iraq instead. I trust that the serious decisions that must be made will indeed be made, and that the House will have an opportunity to debate them at an early stage.

Much has been said about aircraft. I referred to the Hercules in an intervention on the Minister. As the hon. Member for Wyre reminded us, it is an old aircraft, but it is not the oldest: the Wessex entered squadron service in 1964, a long time ago. It is a gas-guzzling helicopter, which has had its day. The Puma is not much younger; I believe that it entered squadron service in 1971. In recent years, those two helicopters will have been used much more heavily than was thought possible when they were introduced. The service must be given a new helicopter.

I accept that that puts the Government in some difficulty. As the House has been reminded, they are Treasury led. However, the Government are right to

*[Mr. Peter Hardy]*

remind the House that our armed forces are of superb quality. Last week, I spoke in a debate on the United Nations in the Western European Union. My speech was not particularly popular: I pointed out that European countries—apart, perhaps, from the French, with their paras and Foreign Legion, and apart from Britain—seem remarkably eager to send medical orderlies, civil police and nursing and military observers to areas of conflict and danger while at the same time they are remarkably unwilling to send adequately trained fighting soldiers or combat aircraft into such difficult zones, perhaps because they are unable to do so. It is remarkable that when we debate the Gulf or, as we did last week, the United Nations, an enormous number of people from the Parliaments of Europe are willing to speak; yet those same Parliaments seem unable to send, or endorse the sending of, those with the skills required to secure order and stability. And this is an unstable world.

The cold war meant stability, although it also meant the sterilisation of the United Nations. The end of the cold war has released forces in Europe that are extremely dangerous. Bosnia may represent just the first stage. Only a few weeks ago, I spoke to members of the Arab League. Their anxiety about the treatment of Muslims in Europe is arousing increasing animosity and hate and it is raising the temperature in the middle east in a way which could prove exceedingly dangerous.

I believe that we should have an adequate capacity to defend the United Kingdom. I think that we are entirely right to tell the Government that the days of privatisation for the sake of dogma should end. I do not suggest that the Government should not look for value for money, but I believe that no service should be weakened by the application of Conservative dogma in favour of privatisation. That would be disloyal—indeed, treacherous. Above all, the Government must understand that the burdens placed on some of our service men—the denial of careers, for example, or anxiety about career prospects—are not tolerable. Their quality and dedication must be reflected properly in the decisions and policies of Her Majesty's Government.

7.43 pm

**Mr. Ray Whitney** (Wycombe): I am happy to endorse what the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and a number of others have said about the quality of the British service man, in which we all take great pride. I also agree with what the hon. Gentleman said about the importance of the quality of training available to the armed services, and the contribution that it makes to our national life. Like all other Opposition Members, however, he paid too little attention to the huge financial pressures placed on the Government. Those pressures must be dealt with in terms of our crucial national interest.

Along with many other hon. Members—Conservative Members, certainly—I warmly welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), the new Minister of State for the Armed Forces. He is an important new adornment to an impressive defence team, replacing another admirable member, my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton). I look forward to his winding-up speech.

As has been pointed out, this rather tardy celebration of the 1992 defence estimates is probably regrettable; however, we are engaging in this crucial debate at a very important time. We are all aware of the problems of the £50 billion public sector borrowing requirement; they make it even more important than usual for us to secure value for money from all our budgets, not least the defence budget.

Moreover, we all understand that the new world order to which we rightly looked forward is proving very dangerous and challenging, and that the peace dividend that we expected is proving difficult to collect. We also understand that the situation in the former Yugoslavia may well repeat itself elsewhere. It is important for us as a nation—and, indeed, the international community—to recognise the need to find a new way in which to tackle the challenges.

That is no reflection on the capacity of the European Community or the United Nations; it is simply a challenge that the world has never faced up to before. That challenge has been exacerbated by the ubiquity of the television screen, and the consequent universal awareness of the horrors now taking place in Bosnia—which, 50 years ago, could have taken place in many parts of the world without having the same political impact. A great deal of hard thinking is needed about the future of our armed forces—not just the British forces, but those of our allies. We need a clear intellectual framework, and a coherent overview of what we require our forces to do.

I must say that I find the three targets set out in the White Paper somewhat vague and unsatisfactory. More brain power should be brought to bear. I say that knowing the difficulties, having had some personal experience as a defence analyst loaned to the Australian Government, as a Foreign Office official and as a Foreign Office Minister. I have had to make such prognoses, and I know that it is a challenge; I also know that what is planned for never materialises as a requirement.

Nevertheless, we must ensure that the best brains available are brought to bear, and that the old charge that defence policy is Treasury-led is finally laid to rest. That is not to deny—I would be the first to say it—that Treasury consideration is the framework within which the hard thinking for which I call must take place.

We could, of course, opt out. Some right hon. and hon. Members—especially Opposition Members—would suggest that our defence spending is too high, and not in the national interest. I suggest that it is very much in the British interest for us to continue to make a significant contribution to our security activities and those of our allies. We have an important contribution to make.

As many hon. Members have pointed out, over the centuries—and recently—our armed forces have manifested characteristic skills, which we owe not only to ourselves but to the rest of the world. Our position as a nuclear power continues to be important, as does our position as a member of the Security Council. There is no opting out for this country. I do not believe that the people of this country would wish us to opt out.

As we face this challenge, our contribution must inevitably, because of resource constraints, be limited. We must therefore take yet another look at the level of international collaboration to which many hon. Members, in particular my hon. Friends, have referred. New ideas are required. Existing organisations should be used. The

NATO framework, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) referred, is particulary valuable.

The roles of the Western European Union, the Franco-German force and the rapid reaction corps are worth examining and exploring further, but the western European contribution is likely to be more effective if the NATO framework is used, not least because of the importance of the United States connection, which needs to be handled with even more care now than it was in the past, because of the changing relationship between western Europe and the United States and the changing attitudes —in some ways worrying—in the United States towards western Europe.

Collaboration means that we should take yet another look at our European relationships. For example, we must encourage our German friends to overcome their constitutional inhibitions about using their own forces. We must ensure that we collaborate not only with them but with our French allies. I was particularly interested in a proposal by Dr. Christopher Coker in a recent edition of the "European Security Analyst" of April 1992. He said:

"The Europeans might develop . . . a new formula for European security based not on burden-sharing, but the sharing of responsibilities. Such a concept of security would enable each country to measure its own contribution to a diverse mixture of international public goods such as defence expenditure, foreign aid, grants to multilateral institutions, even environmental protection. Such an accounting framework would permit countries to establish macro-political and macro-economic targets for European security."

That approach was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), and it bears close examination.

I want also to refer to our reserve forces. As a former regular officer, I came to appreciate their value, which has greatly increased. I was glad that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence referred to their contribution in his speech on 17 June. He spoke about the "crucial contribution" that the reserve forces have to make. When he announced the changes, he pledged his

"personal commitment to the future of our reserve forces."—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1993; Vol. 226, c. 1008.]

I am sure that that is the answer.

In this new, difficult world in which we live, a case can be made for a general reserve force. The unpredictability of the tasks that lie ahead of us is a strong justification for retaining our reserve forces, which cost only just over 2 per cent. of the defence budget. At a very low cost, they provide a well motivated and well trained source of manpower.

Volunteer reservists could be used cost-effectively to bring regular units up to strength, prior to operational deployment, with little or no need to resort to plundering other regular units. Reservists are particularly strong in the infantry battalions. Infantry and armour are the forces that will, I believe, be needed increasingly in this strange new world in which we are learning to live.

I hope that, in my right hon. and learned Friend's review of the Territorial Army, which he has promised later in the year, he will take careful account of the great contribution that the TA infantry battalions in particular have made to this country, and of their potential role in this complex world of the future.

Service in the Territorial Army has an even greater spin-off. It ensures that many members of society become linked with the armed forces and therefore know what the armed forces are all about. It is many years since we dispensed with compulsory military service. Relatively few members of our society therefore understand the needs and the points of view of the armed forces. The reserve forces can make a significant contribution.

If I may dare to say so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Chamber makes an important contribution to the reserve forces. Those who saw war service are few indeed. The Father of the House is the only exception who comes immediately to my mind. Hon. Members with Territorial Army and reserve forces service therefore bring another important element to our deliberations.

I return to the crucial issue of funding. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden, I believe that there can be no question of increasing the defence budget. We must, consequently, ensure that we use the funds that are available to the maximum possible effect.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State reminded us, in an article in *The Sunday Times* on 18 April, that in this current financial year

"we will still be spending £24·5 billion compared with £23·5 billion two years ago."

Those figures have to be set against the constant cuts in manpower and weaponry. That highlights yet again the need for good housekeeping, which must again be emphasised and brought to bear upon the Ministry of Defence and all its activities.

I know that the Ministry of Defence has heard this song for at least 30 years, but it cannot be sung too often. I urge my right hon. and learned Friend and his ministerial colleagues to go on probing and prodding to ensure that we get value for money for the expenditure of £24·5 billion.

7.58 pm

**Mr. Llew Smith** (Blaenau Gwent): Parliament is being asked to approve a £24 billion commitment to the so-called defence of the nation. However, the Government, who want us to accept this programme, are planning cuts in public services and in invalidity and many other benefits.

It is not good enough just to criticise the Government. There is an obligation on each and every one of us to put forward an alternative. That alternative should, I believe, be based mainly on cuts in defence expenditure. If we made those cuts, we could begin to protect our public services. If we refuse to take that road, we shall have to ask ourselves how we intend to fund those public services, which are so important to each of us. We could, for example, raise VAT and income tax. I would oppose increases in VAT, but would support increases in income tax for higher earners. I suspect, however, that my party will not fight the next election on a platform of tax increases.

We could begin to fund public services by increases in economic growth. I suspect that there will not be growth in the next few years, partly because of the Government's incompetence in managing the economy and, linked to that, because of the recession in western Europe. I suspect that we shall not see economic growth, or the increased tax take that results from it, to fund public services.

If we are unable or unwilling to finance public services using those methods, we must cut not programmes to help areas and people who are in greatest need but our defence programme. Why do not Labour Front-Bench spokesmen have the courage to propose that? Why cannot we link defence expenditure to that of other European countries?

*[Mr. Llew Smith]*

Labour Front-Bench spokesmen continually tell us that we cannot oppose the Maastricht treaty because it is Labour policy to support it. If, all of a sudden, Labour policy, decided at our conference, is now of paramount importance in the minds of our Front-Bench spokesmen, I ask them to apply the same reasoning to this argument. Successive Labour conferences have decided that we should link our defence expenditure to that of other European countries.

The 1992 NATO review shows that the average defence expenditure of European countries is 2·7 per cent. of GDP, whereas in the United Kingdom it is approximately 4 per cent. If we were to spend the same proportion of GDP as our European partners, we would save about £8,000 million. Imagine what we could begin to do with that money. Imagine the houses that we could build and the improvements that we could make in education and health services and invalidity and other state benefits, which are so important to our people. We would then begin to meet the demands and aspirations of the people whom we purport to represent. If we fail and continue to spend vast sums of money on weapons of war, the losers will be those same people whom we were elected to represent. As someone once said:

"You cannot eat missiles and you cannot educate people with aircraft carriers."

It saddens me to say that Labour Members—or at least some Labour Members—will not have the courage to support that demand.

Neither will we have the courage to support the abandonment of Trident. According to the former Minister of State for the Armed Forces, the annual running cost of Trident is about £190 million, although some people would estimate it to be far higher.

What is the purpose of such expenditure? It is supposed to be partly for refits. In the past few months, we have heard a lot of politics about the refit of Trident. Squabbles have broken out between Devonport and Rosyth yards over which is to be awarded what some people regard as a very lucrative contract. I understand Members representing those areas arguing that the contract should be placed with their own work force, but that is not the answer. We should demand the establishment of real jobs, with long-term stability and security, not shadow jobs. We should back conversion of the military nuclear industry. We should use its skills to clean up the terrible legacy of radioactive waste that has already been created by the Polaris nuclear programme, rather than adding to the problem.

Indeed, if a future Labour Government were to implement present party policy, as set out in our last manifesto—to strengthen the non-proliferation treaty and to negotiate with the other four recognised nuclear powers for a reduction in the stocks of nuclear weapons—Trident would not have to be refitted. It would have to be cancelled or negotiated away. It is a short-sighted strategy to continue military employment on a programme that the nation is committed to abandoning as a result of our nuclear disarmament commitments under the non-proliferation treaty.

The former Minister told the House on 18 May that he was somewhat alarmed that my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) had talked "about negotiating away our deterrent." [*Official Report*, 18 May 1993; Vol. 225, c.147.]

That is what the non-proliferation treaty requires of us—to enter into negotiations in good faith, to end the nuclear arms race at an early date and to pursue nuclear disarmament. The political pressure that was exerted on, for example, North Korea when it announced in March that it was going to opt out of the non-proliferation treaty—a decision which it postponed a couple of weeks ago—shows that the elite club of nuclear weapons nations, including the United Kingdom, wants to persist with the hypocrisy of, "Do as we tell you, not as we do ourselves."

Some nuclear doubters want a compromise on keeping nuclear weapons by calling for a commitment of no first use by the United Kingdom, but that obviously implies that we shall support their second use. Whom do we intend to blow up with our Trident missiles or Polaris submarines? Perhaps children or teachers in school, patients or medical staff in hospital, the infirm, the old, pregnant mothers or politicians who represent countries in eastern Europe, all of which we now supposedly support. All those innocent people would be devastated even if one single nuclear weapon were dropped on a nuclear or military target.

What is the purpose of our expensive status symbols? Nuclear weapons were not deployed in the Falklands or in the Gulf and I have not heard any rumours that they will be deployed in Yugoslavia or Somalia. We should heed the advice that was given at the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—advice which people hoped would be heard the world over. They said, "Step back and learn from us." That is what we should be doing. I have no confidence that the Government will respond positively to that advice, but surely we must expect Labour Front-Bench spokesmen to do so.

**Mr. Wolfson:** The hon. Gentleman argues that we should not continue to keep a nuclear deterrent because it has not been deployed in recent conflicts, but what about its possible deployment by others if we did not have that deterrent?

**Mr. Smith:** If nuclear weapons are a deterrent, by definition, they must deter. They can deter only if the other side knows that we are willing to use them. Once they have been used, civilisation as we know it will come to an end. I cannot see the sense of those nuclear weapons, which is why I began by talking about nuclear weapons and their so-called defence of the nation state and the United Kingdom. I am interested in defence, not annihilation.

That is why we must set our sights a lot higher. I shall conclude with the words of one of the greatest peace campaigners of this century, Bertrand Russell:

"Humankind could then look forward to a future, immeasurably longer than the past, inspired by a new breadth of vision and a continuing hope perpetually fed by a continuing achievement."

He was talking about the possibilities open to us if we should, once and for all, get rid of nuclear weapons. That is the challenge and opportunity facing us. If we refuse to accept that challenge, future generations should not, and will not, forgive us.

8.8 pm

**Mr. Rupert Allason** (Torbay): We are at a crossroads. Since "Options for Change" was published, the world has changed dramatically. "Options for Change" was meant to

reflect the concerns of the Government and to show that the Government had grasped what could be interpreted as the peace dividend. I believe that one essential aspect of "Options for Change" has been overlooked in the past 18 months, and that is that there must be a balance between commitment and resources. There must also be an honest and public recognition of exactly what that commitment is.

Many people in the armed forces believe that there is a hidden agenda. They are dismayed not so much by "Options for Change" but by what has happened since. It is worrying that, depending on what criteria one uses, there are between 24 and 28 conflicts in the world. My proposition is that, far from being a safer place, the world is now more unpredictable, and global insecurity is a reality. I wish to make two specific points in that connection. The first is nuclear proliferation.

Algeria, Libya, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Pakistan are indulging in nuclear research at a dramatic rate. We are well aware that within the old eastern bloc there is not only one nuclear power but four. In the era of the old super-power confrontation we knew what the Soviet negotiating position was likely to be on any particular issue. Whether we liked the Soviets or not, we knew that they would negotiate and that, when they signed the treaty, they would, by and large, deliver. That is no longer the case. We are no longer aware even of who the personalities are in the four eastern bloc nuclear states; nor do we know the extent of the control that they exercise over the nuclear weapons on their territory or how much support individual leaders have in those countries.

I have mentioned the countries that we know are indulging in nuclear research at a dramatic rate. I emphasise their importance because we are talking about nuclear physicists in the old eastern bloc who have spent their lives developing nuclear weapons. Today, they cannot feed their families or buy bread on their income. Accordingly, they are very susceptible to offers of lucrative contracts from Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Libya and Algeria. None of those states recommend themselves as paragons of stability or democracy, but what of the other countries that we know for certain have nuclear weapons? Israel has about 24 or 26 individual weapons. South Africa has about three devices but has agreed to dismantle them.

We are talking about a proliferation not only of nuclear weapons but of nuclear expertise and, significantly, of the raw material that is required to put them together. Surely it is a dangerous recipe: the technology and the raw materials are available across eastern Europe—there have been several arrests recently in which important technology has been seized—and various powers are willing to employ the people who have that technology.

I deal now with North Korea, another state which one would hardly describe as a paragon of democracy or anything else and which has opted out of nuclear inspection. That is surely a very worrying scenario. What is our response to the threat? I call it a threat because if certain countries acquire nuclear weapons—we know how very close Saddam Hussein came to acquiring nuclear technology and at least one weapon—we will become vulnerable to nuclear blackmail.

Although I am a strong advocate of the retention of the nuclear deterrent, I am not entirely convinced that the threat of a nuclear strike by a Trident submarine from 6,000 miles away will have an enormous impact on a despot operating from an Islamic country, perhaps in the north of Africa. I believe that with Trident we may be lumbered with an expensive system which we are obliged to retain. It would be sheer folly for us to rely solely on Trident.

Islamic fundamentalism is the second topic that I should like to cover. Islamic fundamentalism will continue to be a source of instability across the globe. It is easy to forget that the largest Islamic country is also a country that has the second highest rate of population growth. Its name does not immediately spring to mind, but we should bear it in mind that, about 20 years ago, it realised that it was running out of space, exercised aggression and took over a neighbouring country. Not one country did a damned thing to stop the Indonesian invasion of East Timor. It is the country to which we last week decided to sell £500 million worth of jet aircraft trainers.

I am all in favour of defence sales, but anyone visiting Australia will know that the security and intelligence authorities there are always extremely nervous about their neighbour to the north. There is a volatile combination of an Islamic country with an enormous population growth rate and no more room. I therefore believe that Islamic fundamentalism, whether it be in the Mediterranean or in the middle or far east, is likely to be a source of instability in the future.

The Government's first responsibility is not the provision of child benefit to multimillionairesses such as Soraya Khashoggi or the provision of universal benefits to higher rate tax payers. The Government's first responsibility is surely defence. There will not be any money to dish out to meet all the demands on the social security and other budgets if we are not able to defend ourselves. I say "ourselves", but I am not an old Blimp suggesting that the Warsaw pact poses a credible threat to the south coast of England.

We have important commitments throughout the world. Several parallels have been drawn, and Germany and France have been identified as having similar defence budgets to ours. However, their commitments are nothing like ours. They do not have the anxiety that we should surely have about Hong Kong. We have a continuing commitment to NATO and, of course, we have a seat on the United Nations Security Council. That means a commitment to United Nations forces around the world. Bearing in mind dependent territories and our responsibility to the nine remaining colonies, we should not necessarily be considering cutting our budget but deciding what our commitment is and then deciding the appropriate defence strategy to match it. Surely it is dotty to assume that we will always be joined by multinational forces whenever there is a conflict in the globe. The truth is that no one assisted us in the Falklands conflict, and we could not have expected any other European country to do so. In fact, Spain and Italy were utterly opposed to our action and everyone else was ambivalent. We cannot rely on Europe.

Similarly, it is odd that, within a few days of the announcement that we were to reduce our commitment to Belize, there should be political instability on a grand scale in Guatemala—the one country that directly threatens Belize. The proposition that we can reduce our commitment to Belize because the Guatemalans have been quiescent for a while is sheer folly.

The first responsibility of the Government is unquestionably defence. I believe that we should approve the defence estimates this evening, but only if there is a

*[Mr. Rupert Allason]*

commitment from the Government to explain to the British public what our defence commitment is around the globe and what that commitment is perceived to be in the future. I think that that anxiety is shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I am afraid that I do not have much faith in the ability of the Foreign Office to protect British interests. It is up to this sovereign Parliament to protect British interests, because I do not believe that anyone else will.

Parallels have been drawn this evening between this age and 1935 and other dark eras. One lesson that can be learned from history is that no one ever learns anything from history. There are no parallels with 1935, or indeed with any other time. We are now aware that there never was a credible threat from the eastern bloc. That threat appeared to be potent, but analysis of the opened archives in the former Soviet Union make it clear that the Soviets were never a threat to anyone but themselves, countries in the eastern bloc that could not defend themselves and, of course, Afghanistan. That does not change the fact that the armed forces that remain in the former eastern bloc have enormous strength.

I would therefore urge the House—whether or not the Government are prepared to do so—to demand a strategic review of all our commitments around the world. I am afraid that I do not trust the civil servants to do that job for us.

8.24 pm

**Ms Ann Coffey** (Stockport): I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate. My interest concerns the Minister's recent announcement that Kentigern house in Glasgow is the favoured option for the new integrated army personnel centre.

The Minister will appreciate that I am not happy about that decision. Europa house—the rejected building—is in Stockport, and my constituents were bitterly disappointed by the Minister's announcement.

On 13 January 1993, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces initiated a consultation process on the proposal to establish an integrated army personnel centre in Glasgow. That consultation followed a study by Brigadier Roberts, which concluded that the purchase of a commercial property in Glasgow at a cost of £20 million would offer the most cost-effective location.

On 4 March, the Minister announced in the House that an alternative proposal was being looked at relating to a building in Stockport, Europa house, at a significantly lower purchase price of £4 million. He said that a number of other representations also offered alternative solutions to the original selection of Glasgow and, in the light of those, the original parameters of Brigadier Roberts' study and the options available to meet the requirements were to be reviewed. That new review was able to take into account the Department's new space guidelines, which had not been finalised when Brigadier Roberts undertook his study and recommended Glasgow, in November 1992.

The result of the review was the announcement on 13 May that Kentigern house had been chosen for the new army personnel centre. Brigadier Roberts had of course looked at Kentigern house in his original study but had concluded that it was not the most cost-effective option as it involved building an extension to house the anticipated extra staff. The new guidelines meant that the review could now consider more "flexibly" the use of accommodation in Kentigern house.

The space guidelines have not yet been accepted by the Council of Civil Service Unions, as I am sure the Minister is aware; they are still the subject of negotiation. It would presumably be very difficult if they were rejected, as the option of Kentigern house is based on their acceptance.

The introduction of the army personnel centre accommodation study that recommended Kentigern house after looking at all the options states that the formal statement of requirements reflects the recommendations of the Roberts study and that the building specification mirrors closely that which was the basis for the Roberts study search. I draw the Minister's attention to appendix C, which states that all the office accommodation is to be available under one roof. There is a probable requirement to house 1,967 staff full time, with a further 150 in designated support areas. It is proposed to house 1,910 in Kentigern house and the remaining 207 in Wellesley house. Kentigern house is one roof. Wellesley house is one roof. One plus one roof equals two roofs. That does not meet the requirement laid out in appendix C.

I also draw the Minister's attention to appendix A, which deals with car parking requirements and states that there must be one space per 300 sq m of gross office space, with a quota of 3 per cent. of civilian staff for disabled civilian staff, as well as 15 spaces for visitors. Kentigern house has 96 car parking spaces. It is estimated that, of the 1,910 staff to be housed in Kentigern house, 237 will be Army personnel. That leaves 1,673 civilian staff. The 3 per cent. requirement will be 53 spaces. Add to that 15 spaces for visitors and we have a total of 68 spaces, leaving 28 car parking spaces for the 1,957 staff. That is ludicrous. It will not meet the requirement of one space per 300 sq m. In fact, I understand that the 1,000 staff already based in Kentigern house hold a raffle once a month for car parking spaces.

I refer next to the costings and to the comparisons between Kentigern and Europa house. For Kentigern, it is stated that the cost of refurbishment of the building and upgrading services will be £5·79 million and will take 22·5 months—that is very precise—to complete. However, the study states:

"Feasibility of this option is dependent on whether the whole potential Glasgow requirement—Army personnel centre and non-Army personnel centre—can be housed cost effectively in the city."

The Roberts study stated that 75 officers' and 55 soldiers' married quarters would need to be built at a cost of £8 million for the Glasgow option. In the Stockport area—not only in Stockport itself, but in Chester and Ashton-under-Lyne—there is a minimum of 102 quarters, many of which are empty. The cost of Kentigern is £8 million plus £5·79 million for the building—a total of £13·79 million. Add to that the fact that the high cost of Glasgow housing, referred to in the Defence Council Instructions Civilian 75/92, suggests that in relocating staff in Glasgow additional housing costs allowances will have to be higher than anywhere else.

One of the factors in favour of Kentigern was that the first tranche of staff from London could be moved to Glasgow by May 1995, whereas Europa house would be completed in November 1995. However, existing staff have to be moved out to allow refurbishment of the building —some 500 staff for 15 months, at an estimated cost of

£0·8 million, which I suggest is a gross underestimate. The cost has now increased from £13·79 million plus £0·8 million to £14·59 million. We must add to that the cost of car parking, as I assume that the Ministry of Defence will be meeting its own requirements as set out in its document.

It is estimated that it would cost £15·98 million for the complete refurbishment of Europa house. It has 510 car parking spaces and it is under one roof. Included in that figure is the purchase price of £4 million. Nuclear Electric owns the building. It is a nationalised industry, so the purchase price is a transfer between the budget of one Government Department and another—meaningless in terms of the overall Government budget. If we subtract £4 million from the £15·98 million, we arrive at the figure of £11·98 million. Some additional housing costs may be added to that. On my calculations, Europa house is the cheaper option. There are other details to consider, such as the cost of redundancies, which would also favour the Stockport location.

Kentigern house does not meet Ministry of Defence requirements on two counts—roofs and car parking. I suggest that the costings are highly dubious and that they have been massaged to make Kentigern house, overwhelmingly, the only possible option. The Kentigern house option was thrown out by Brigadier Roberts in his original study as being too expensive. Since his study and the new study, the specifications have not changed—with the exception of new space guidelines which have allowed a review of Kentigern house. Those new guidelines, which have not as yet been accepted by staff and would apparently create a high degree of staff cramming, make the difference in the building being acceptable. It is incredible that an option thrown out initially as being too expensive is now enthused over as the favoured option.

In the words of the Prime Minister last week, this tale of the search for a site for an integrated army personnel centre "beggars belief". Thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money has been wasted on fairly useless consultants. My constituents believe that those figures bear no relation to reality and that it is a political fix so gross as to be worthy of an episode of "Yes, Minister".

I urge the Minister to reconsider Europa house in the name of justice and fairness to my constituents and the constituents of my colleagues in the north-west. If that does not touch his heart, will he reconsider the matter because his alternative proposal will cost the taxpayer more? That surely cannot be acceptable to the Government—and even if it is acceptable to the Government, it is certainly not acceptable to the people.

8.33 pm

**Mr. Ian Bruce** (South Dorset): I am glad to follow the hon. Lady. I am going to enrol her in my new organisation called "MOD office-blockers anonymous". That is certainly a scandal waiting to happen. I am sorry to say that I already have an MOD building in mind, which will become vacant and could accommodate all the people she has been talking about—but that is a constituency interest of mine.

I very much appreciate the armed forces of our country and the many civilians who support them—including the many in my constituency. I have just returned from Nigeria, where I was an international observer, watching the military regime transferring, one hopes, to a civilian regime. That made me realise that the standards that our armed forces set, as world leaders, are ones to which we must pay tribute. We must also try to understand those people and maintain their morale in these difficult times.

I am glad to see the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), taking note. I am sure that he has been warned by his colleagues of the terrible people of South Dorset, who are constantly accused of trying to make his life difficult. That is not true. I could go through a list of some 20 or 30 changes that have happened at Portland and at Bovington. I have looked at those changes and I have found my hon. Friend to be working well in that area. I believe that the Ministry occasionally gets things right.

I can assure my hon. Friend that the concerns that I discuss with him are real concerns and that they reflect not a belief that we should increase our MOD budget, but a belief that we must make savings and cut out waste. I am sure that hon. Members from all parties share that view.

I was somewhat confused when I looked at the amendment tabled by the Leader of the Opposition and others. They were obviously flushed out by the official Labour party line as expressed in the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and others, and had to table their own amendment.

It is preposterous that the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition refers to conventional forces being included in "further international disarmament negotiations". That suggests that simply talking to the former Soviet Union about further cuts in its armed forces, as has happened in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, would automatically trigger our ability to cut our armed forces even further. We heard about the Labour party's hidden agenda from the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith). It would mean an additional £8 billion being taken from the defence budget after the cuts that we have already made in it. That chop-logic must be exposed for what it is.

The other main plank of Labour's policy, about which Labour Members constantly talk, is defence industry diversification. They constantly say that we should tell companies that currently manufacture defence equipment how to convert themselves for civilian uses. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister has read the detailed report produced last Session by the Select Committee on Employment entitled "Industrial Change: Retraining and Redeployment". Labour Members have certainly not read it.

We especially targeted the defence industry and studied what happened in the United States, especially in Texas which found that there were large cuts in its defence industries. We talked to all the defence companies that had studied diversification. Time and time again, the defence companies told us that they could not convert their companies into civilian companies manufacturing consumer goods. It was not possible or sensible.

If an area is affected by large defence reductions, we must do something to stimulate the economy generally. Such efforts must come from other Government Departments. Although the Ministry of Defence is very much appprised of our problems in Portland and in Weymouth, and of the cuts in defence expenditure and defence employment, we have not got the message fully through to all the other Departments.

*[Mr. Ian Bruce]*

I am very concerned that after months of discussions about the KONVER programme, which was designed specifically by the European Parliament to get over the problems of individual blackspots caused by cuts in defence which were outside assisted area status, we still do not have agreement within the Government on how to spend the money that is available to us under KONVER. We need to target that money. We must talk to the Department of Transport about the roads infrastructure and to the Department of Environment, which needs to realise that local authorities will have to spend a lot more money on attracting people and will have to provide the sites necessary. The Department of Employment does seem to be aware that it needs to have a lot of retraining and to have many schemes in place. That is extremely important.

In these debates, we go into detail about many issues, not all of which are important in getting the armed forces right. We always spend an enormous amount of time talking about regiments. I am glad to say that there has been little of that today. I believe that we may well have taken a wrong turn in reinstating regiments rather than concentrating on how many more people we could have got into the new regimental structure. That would have been a better way in which to spend the money.

We must also be careful about the balance between high technology and low technology. Yes, we need weapons systems and we must ensure that they are battle-winning, high-technology systems. However, we should not try to reinvent the wheel in every defence manufacturing posture. We must achieve partnerships with the United States and our European allies to ensure that we do not have to build every high-tech system. We must look for economies and take difficult decisions and that occasionally means that a particular manufacturer in a group of constituencies will not receive a certain order.

Low technology is also very important. We must have the infrantryman, the ordinary sailor, marine and RAF guy available to do what is necessary when we carry out the policing roles in which we are so often involved.

The EH101 is very important. The RAF and the Army have been very slow in getting that helicopter for medium lift. By keeping one type of helicopter, we will ensure that there are savings in spares and training. When my hon. Friend the Minister decides to order the EH101 for the other services, he should insist that there is a commonality in respect of that aircraft so that each service does not order a completely different type of EH101. If there is a commonality, there will be interoperability and spares savings.

I want to finish, as I began, by referring to the new organisation that I have just christened called "MOD office-blockers anonymous." As my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces is a fresh face at the Department, I urge him to consider the way in which brand new high-tech office blocks are the name of the game within the MOD.

I understand that my hon. Friend will be able to tap into a computer system. I am not sure whether that system is classified, but I am sure that my hon. Friend has clearance. That system will show him all the current schemes in train to build new office blocks all over the country. I do not know whether those office blocks will be able to move on wheels or attack the enemy if we are under attack, but they seem to be the flavour of the month.

My hon. Friend also has in his Department a complete list of the sites that his predecessors have been persuaded to close and sell for other uses which were never sold and for which we did not receive any money in the form of savings.

When my hon. Friend tries to make savings and when the Treasury is on his back looking for more money, he should ask himself where he can find £300 million for a new office block and to move people. He should also ask himself where he will find another £300 million for a new computer system which, I heard just the other day, will probably never come to fruition. An interim system is being installed and the Sea Systems Controllerate, which is to move to the north of Bristol, will cost an arm and a leg, and I do not believe that it will be efficient. If my hon. Friend the Minister starts with that and moves on to the other office blocks about which we have heard today, I believe that he will make his name quicker in the MOD than he made it in his previous Department.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I draw the attention of the House to the fact that in the 38 minutes remaining for this debate, six hon. Members still hope to catch my eye. I hope that they will all be able to do that; with a little co-operation, that will happen.

8.42 pm

**Mr. Mike Gapes** (Ilford, South): In the time available to me, I want to concentrate on paragraphs 133 and 134 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992." I wish that we could have had this debate last year, and it is an absolute disgrace that we are debating today a document which is so out of date as world events have moved on so much. Unfortunately, that is the way things are organised at the moment.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) referred on Thursday to the need to achieve a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty. He pointed out how the British Government's position is a threat to the continuation of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the review conference of which will be held in 1995.

The 1990 NPT review conference was a disaster and complete failure largely because of strong criticisms by several third world countries led by Mexico of the position adopted by the United States and British Governments because they were deemed to have not acted in good faith to secure real measures of nuclear disarmament as a result of their opposition to halting nuclear tests. The British Government's position today poses a long-term threat to the survival of the NPT. It also acts as a red light to disarmament and a green light to proliferators and those who wish to keep nuclear weapons in the republics that have emerged from the former Soviet Union.

We have heard that our action to stop nuclear testing would have no effect on proliferation. I do not accept that. Action that we could take would have a serious effect if only we could have an internationally verified and enforced disarmament regime to stop nuclear testing.

If people say, "Well, you can do nothing about North Korea," they should consider what the United Nations and the international community have done in the past

two years to rid Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction. That proves that if the international community and the UN Security Council have the political will, and are prepared to carry it through, they can act forcibly to stop countries which defy those treaties and which are prepared surreptitiously and with the connivance of leading figures in this country and, unfortunately, in our Government from building up their nuclear weapons programmes.

The real debate about nuclear testing in this country is not being carried out here. It is being carried out in the United States. I want to refer to two press reports which have appeared in the past few days. On 12 June, *The Daily Telegraph* reported that:

"British hopes of testing a redesigned nuclear warhead at a Nevada site suffered a setback yesterday when United States officials suggested President Clinton may drop his plan to resume underground testing.

They said Mr. Clinton intended to 'take the temperature' of . . . Congress on the issue"

this week. *The Times* stated that Britain was banking on the United States to restart nuclear weapons tests because it wanted to test a new weapons system. It did not want to go ahead with it for the reason that we are given publicly, which is to ascertain the safety of the old WE177 warhead. Instead, it wanted to introduce a replacement for TASM —the tactical air-to-surface missile—or its successor which presumably will be deployed as a sub-strategic nuclear weapon system alongside the Trident system which, according to the former Minister, the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), has completed its testing programme.

I want to raise several fundamental questions. Why do we need such a sub-strategic nuclear weapon system? Why do we need to spend some £3,000 million? The hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) referred to the spending of £300 million on an office block. Why do we need to spend £3,000 million on the development of future sub-strategic nuclear weapons which will operate at the same time as the Trident system? On whom will the systems be targeted?

What is the relevance of a sub-strategic nuclear weapon system when NATO's doctrines are moving away from that way of thinking and when we no longer have the mass tank formations of the Warsaw pact and the Soviet Union which were seen five, seven, 10 and 15 years ago as the justification for such theoretical systems, when it is inconceivable that this country would initiate the use of such nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states? Indeed, our Government, by treaty and commitment, are pledged not to use nuclear weapons against countries which do not possess them and do not use them. According to remarks made by the Prime Minister last year, we are moving away from the idea of threatening the use of nuclear weapons in such circumstances.

What are the military benefits and the reasons for that? We have heard one justification which was, allegedly, the Islamic fundamentalist boom, but a few minutes later we were told that it had become clear that the alleged Soviet threat of the past never really existed. I wonder whether the alleged Islamic fundamentalist threat exists or whether it is a convenient device for those who wish to continue their nuclearphilia—their love of nuclear weapons—and develop nuclear weapons systems.

This country needs a fundamental rethink about the nuclear weapons system. We have to be prepared to say that we will make our own contribution, persuade our people that this is the right way forward and that we will join people in the United States, Russia and France who, by their own choice, have introduced a moratorium on nuclear testing. Our choice was not made by us; it was made by the United States when it stopped the use of Nevada. We will say to President Clinton and to the Congress of the United States, "We do not want you to lift your moratorium; we want you to opt, as you have said, for a complete and verifiable comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty by 1996." That should be our aspiration and our goal, and then we need a strong United Nations enforcement against countries which breach the guidelines.

Real security in the future will be based not on national security but on international security and co-operation. That requires us to move from the narrow view that, somehow, we can do things regardless of their impact anywhere else. Arguments in our Parliament for our national nuclear weapons will be used by people in Ukraine who want to keep a nuclear weapons capability and go back on their previous commitments to rid Ukraine of nuclear weapons. It is time that we joined the international mainstream and made our own contribution to verified, negotiated and enforceable measures to stop nuclear testing and bring about nuclear disarmament.

8.52 pm

**Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): I used to be against the televising of Parliament, but the speeches of the hon. Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) were much better than any party political broadcast that my own party could do. If people had any doubts about voting Conservative at the next election, I would urge them to obtain the video and look at those two performances.

To be serious, I must declare two interests. First, I am a parliamentary consultant to Thorn EMI Electronics Ltd. and, secondly, I am on the parliamentary armed forces scheme with the Royal Marines. I enjoy both roles; both teach me much—certainly much humility. The skills, application and dedication of our armed forces are second to none. Likewise, the personnel who work in our defence industries deserve the very best of the House and of the Government. They work with tremendous commitment and they have enormous skills. Many of those skills are not easily deployed outside the sector in which they work. This sector has seen huge redundancies, and we must be aware of that.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made a speech which, like Caesar's Gaul, was divided into three parts. First, there was a section on Bosnia. We are all very aware that our armed forces are involved in the most perilous operations of a humanitarian nature which we admire, although we are deeply anxious because the military objectives do not seem to be very clearly defined. Secondly, my right hon. and learned Friend also spoke about the reserve forces. Thirdly, he had a bash at the Labour party. I thought that this section of his speech was rather tilting at windmills until I read the amendment which was not selected by Madam Speaker and until I heard the two contributions to which I have alluded.

I take as my theme the remarks of the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), who spoke of centres of excellence in our armed forces. I shall briefly allude to

*[Mr. John Wilkinson]*

three such centres. First, we are a nuclear power, and that is of great importance to world security. I urge the House to consider carefully, as indeed we were enjoined to do by my hon. Friends the Members for Torbay (Mr. Allason) and for Wyre (Mr. Mans), the consequences of moving from an air-launched, sub-strategic nuclear deterrent system. WE177 has a relatively short life ahead of it in operational terms. It cannot be regarded as credible as a theatre nuclear deterrent beyond about the end of this decade because of the enhancement in air defences not just of major powers but of regional powers.

It is my belief that a visible, flexible, easily deployed nuclear deterrent, such as an air-borne system with a stand-off capability—a TASM—is much more credible than a strategic submarine-launched system as a version of Trident. I urge my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister of State to think again about the matter. As I said in an intervention, do we really wish the French to be the only country with a truly credible sub-strategic nuclear deterrent in Europe?

Secondly, on reserves, I applaud what Her Majesty's Government are seeking to do, but they must remember the importance of territorial loyalties and of unit affiliations. It is all very well to try to get individual people to fill posts in the front line, be it in the TA overseas or in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force in Rapier squadrons, but it is the particular units to which they belong and which can be deployed as units which count in recruiting.

I ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister of State to think again about retaining some ships, purpose built for the Royal Naval Reserve. I urge, as my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) did, the Royal Auxiliary Air Force to have flying squadrons. The Americans do so very well, as do the Israelis and the Swiss, and we should do likewise.

Thirdly, the defence industries are a great source of excellence—they have to be. The numbers in our armed forces are dwindling all the time and our reserves, sadly, are dwindling in number, too, which is not what we would wish to see at such a time of uncertainty. We must ensure that they have the best equipment possible.

The decision of the board of Swan Hunter to go into receivership was understandable. However, the Navy cannot afford to see a yard with such a comprehensive capability, from aircraft carriers to corvettes, simply disappear. It negates the competition policy that we have been pursuing. The same can be said about the MLRS3. We need an effective intelligent anti-armour weapon in the control of the Army. We should not rely simply on air power. Aircraft could be in the wrong place, and, of course, one cannot always ensure air superiority.

We need new attack helicopters as well as support ones for the Royal Marines and the Army. We will need more transport aircraft soon. Although my hon. Friend from the Parachute Regiment, the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer), decried the need for tanks, we still need them to hold ground and take it. If we buy more tanks, I urge Her Majesty's Government to buy more of the Challenger 2 type than simply revamping the Challenger 1.

8.58 pm

**Mr. Harry Cohen** (Leyton): I wrote to the Prime Minister after I read an interview in the *India Digest*, in which he said:

"I would like to see no nuclear weapons in Pakistan, no nuclear weapons in India and in due course no nuclear weapons in China or anywhere else."

I was interested to read that statement, especially as I remember the former Prime Minister saying that she wanted nuclear weapons in Europe and the United Kingdom for ever.

I wrote to the Prime Minister asking whether the Government's policy had changed. I received a reply from the new Minister, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley)—I congratulate him on his promotion and wish him well in his job. His reply did not please me, because he said that there was "absolutely no inconsistency" between the position of the two Prime Ministers, and added:

"security does not, however, come from wishful thinking."

Presumably, then, the Prime Minister was indulging in wishful thinking.

The Minister said:

"we maintain a minimum nuclear deterrent"

for security. Obviously, "minimum" means more in the context of Trident.

Basically, the policy means that the Government want nuclear weapons for ever in the United Kingdom. The Prime Minister was being dishonest in India when he said that he does not want nuclear weapons anywhere else because that does not include the United Kingdom. If there is no inconsistency, the Government's policy is that they want nuclear weapons for ever in the United Kingdom and Europe. Nuclear weapons for ever is the heart of the Government's defence policy and that is the reason why they are scuttling the test ban. The proliferation of nuclear weapons worldwide also flows from that policy.

On 1 October 1992, the United States began a moratorium on nuclear testing. Since then, it has been under pressure from the United Kingdom to stop the moratorium and start testing again. The consequence is that Russia, France and China would resume testing again, and small states would say that they need nuclear weapons as well. Once testing started, the pledge of the Clinton Administration for a global, comprehensive test ban by 1996 would be scuttled, and the extension of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty beyond 1995 would be destroyed.

The pressure has paid off, because the United States has released a plan for nine tests, three of which would be for the United Kingdom. However, existing weapons would not be tested—new weapons would be tested. An article in the *New York Times* on 16 June 1993 says:

"The British tests would be used to develop a new Trident warhead and a bomb that could be dropped from an aircraft, the Congressional experts said."

Ministers said that they do not need to test existing systems, so a new Trident weapon and presumably the tactical air-to-surface missile would be tested.

I ask the Minister clearly whether the Government will cancel TASM. We have heard Government Back Benchers speak in favour of it but they were most unconvincing. As I said, TASM would mean an enormous proliferation and an overkill on an enormous scale. We are talking about hydrogen bombs.

I reiterate one of the lessons of the Gulf war. Dictators such as Saddam Hussein are prepared to go not simply to the brink but over it in defiance of the west. They do not mind if nuclear weapons are used and their populations are slaughtered as a result. Such populations are not in democracies, so they cannot alter the situation. That tactical air-to-surface missile is not a reasonable weapon. It simply kills populations instead of dictators.

My next point relates to thermal oxide reprocessing. The expansion of THORP was justified by the Prime Minister on Thursday in the context of jobs. It has already been argued that here today there should be defence diversification and that new civil jobs would be created by using the peace dividend. But are those nuclear jobs worth the risk of the world being blown up and a city such as London blown to smithereens in a plutonium bomb holocaust? That is what is at stake if THORP is used. In February 1992, I said that it would

"produce the equivalent of about a quarter of the nuclear arsenals of both the Soviet Union and the United States at their peak by the year 2000".—[*Official Report*, 24 February 1992; Vol. 204, c. 674.]

It could be used to make a bomb.

An article in *The Times* on 19 November last year said:

"The world is glutted with plutonium and a good part of it is at Sellafield . . . The stockpile of plutonium there from civilian nuclear plants amounts to 40 tons: by the end of the century that will have risen to at least 60 tons, theoretically enough to make 10,000 of the bombs that destroyed Nagasaki in 1945."

On top of that, 100 to 110 tons of weapons plutonium will come from dismantling nuclear weapons.

*The Observer* has published an article in which experts say that that plutonium could be used to make bombs. It could be used by terrorists to make bombs. That is an enormous proliferation. It is perverse that the Government and Conservative Back Benchers use proliferation as their main argument for keeping and increasing our nuclear weapons, when we are a main source of plutonium production and of such proliferation. Production of plutonium is lunacy. It is proliferation on a huge scale. It could lead to instability and the devastation of the world. THORP should be abandoned.

9.5 pm

**Mr. Mark Wolfson** (Sevenoaks): I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench realise that it is unacceptable that we are debating the 1992 estimates for defence in June 1993. Obviously, I welcome what my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) said about the 1993 White Paper. We look forward to its publication and to a relatively early debate on it.

I strongly support the call by the Chairman of the Defence Select Committee for a rapid return to a proper schedule, so that the 1994 estimates are published in the spring of 1994 and debated at the latest by that summer. To do otherwise is to allow the Executive to develop and implement their defence plans without proper parliamentary scrutiny. It is up to all of us in the House to ensure that that does not happen. That is even more important today, because, in times of peace, defence matters are not necessarily a high political priority. They seldom have been.

Since the first world war, there has always been a considerable number of Members of Parliament with service experience of one type or another. But, as was said earlier in the debate, that group is a rapidly dwindling band. Those with experience of active service are few. My generation is the last to have been through national service. Those who come to the House with a background of service life as professionals or reservists are especially welcome, but in any one parliamentary intake there will not be many.

Thus, defence interests now have a much smaller natural constituency in the House than was formerly the case. That interest comes from members of the Defence Select Committee, those who represent constituencies in which the service element is important to the local economy and other individuals, who, whether they fall into those categories or not, continue to focus clearly on the continuing importance of putting Britain's defence capability high on our agenda. If we do that only in times of crisis, we do it far too late.

The prevalence of defence issues in Parliament plays an important role in public awareness of defence matters. As in Parliament, fewer and fewer people in the general population have had experience of service life. Although the standing of our professional forces is surely higher than that of almost any other profession—politicians probably come at the bottom and the services come at the top—it is vital that the House demonstrates the high priority it gives to defence issues and to those in the services who carry out the job for all of us, to our great safety and with our admiration.

I make no apology for labouring that point, because it leads directly to the first substantive issue that I want to address. "Options for Change" was developed as a policy in the light of the then apparent removal of the threat from the Warsaw pact countries. The removal of that threat was used, and is used, as the central continuing argument to justify the reduction in the armed services. It was accepted by Ministers, however, that the "Options" reductions would be reviewed in the light of any changing circumstances.

My argument is that the break-up of the Soviet Union, let alone the type of situation that arose in the Gulf and the greatly increased peacekeeping role of the UN, has created a different scenario from that which existed when "Options for Change" was published. That point was well argued by my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) in a speech which was strategically focused. He spoke particularly about the dangers posed by nuclear proliferation and Muslim fundamentalism.

As a realist, I accept that it is extremely unlikely that the Warsaw threat will return in its old form. The danger to our island and to our NATO allies has therefore greatly diminished. All hon. Members would agree, however, that the world remains an unstable and dangerous place. In many ways, the world is much less certain than it was when cold war confrontations followed a more predictable pattern. Then, the threat of nuclear war had its deterrent effect on brinkmanship. Its ultimate success, in acting as a catalyst for political change, was driven by the economics of the arms race. That is what caused the political approach of the Soviet Union to be radically altered.

A fixed defence budget figure does not represent a satisfactory way forward, but that was the baseline argument used by my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) on Thursday. He was an uncompromising Minister on the importance of getting the public sector borrowing requirement down. He clearly saw

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it as his ministerial responsibility to play a full part in achieving that. Doubtless he will continue to argue the same case from the Back Benches.

I suggest that that argument contrasts with the original, more flexible approach, used in the argument in favour of "Options for Change". That was confirmed again today by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), who stated, once again, that the "Options for Change" plan was not Treasury driven. He said that the policy was based upon a genuine assessment of the changed threat and was developed by the service chiefs and Ministers. He also said that it was designed to be flexible.

I believe that my right hon. Friend was arguing, if gently, that same point today. If I have interpreted him correctly, I firmly support his view. Obviously, budgetary constraints and national circumstances must be taken into account, but I do not believe that it is right to have a fixed figure for defence spending, whatever the threat may be.

I deal now with a number of specific matters. A sharp cut has been proposed in the total number of reserves. I welcome the positive action to increase their training opportunities with the professional services. I am particularly concerned, however, about the future of the Royal Naval Reserve. We need to know a lot more about how those proposals are likely to work, and what the reserve centres will mean in practice. I make one small plea. I hope that the title "HMS' will not be lost from the training establishments, as it is an important focus for people's commitment to what they are doing in the RNR.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater said, we now have the diplomatic will to make the United Nations a real force for peace, something that we could not have done during the cold war. However, we still lack the means to make that diplomatic will an effective arm in action. I welcome my right hon. Friend's proposal, which I hope will be followed through, for a directly employed United Nations force. That could be attractive to many people.

My contribution to the debate would not be complete without a brief reference to the continuing diminution of the British flagged merchant fleet. In my view, we do not have a satisfactory sea-lift capability to get our armed forces to where they may be needed. I ask Ministers again: are they satisfied that that capability exists? We first had arguments about that over 10 years ago, when our capability was 10 times larger than it is now. If it was adequate then, how can it be justified as adequate now?

Finally, how effective is local budgeting, an initiative begun some years ago? Is money being saved by delegating authority for running their own budgets to people out on individual sites operating within the MOD? That proposal was made for Sandhurst, Dartmouth and Cranwell, but I have heard that it was not working as it should, because all the issues still had to go up the MOD tree to be decided on, and then to come all the way down again before being settled.

Has there been progress? If not, there should have been. Other speakers have rightly focused on the need to get maximum value for money, and the MOD bureaucracy must be part of that focus, as well as the fighting arm of the services.

9.17 pm

**Mr. Alan Simpson** (Nottingham, South): Many of the contributions to the debate have focused either on technical arguments or on the heroism of the British armed forces. Vera Brittain offered a different approach, when she wrote in her diary that there was never a shortage of men willing to die heroically—the difficulty was finding one capable of living sensibly. The defence estimates lamentably fail the test of what is sensible. They offer a view of the world that is out of date and out of time. They are mutterings from the men on the Maginot line wanting to live in a world that no longer exists.

When I look for a recognition that we have moved from threat to risk, I find at least a mention of the risk of ethnic and territorial conflict in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, about the risk from economic and political instability and, outside Europe, the risk from arms proliferation.

The defence estimates do not recognise that there is no direct threat to the territorial integrity of the United Kingdom nor the fact that there are other threats, possibly far more serious—for example, from the chain of unstable conventional nuclear power stations down the corridor between eastern and western Europe. There is also the threat from mass population migrations, driven by fear, famine, starvation and civil war. They do not recognise the fact that, in the next decade, there will be global insecurity or wars fought over the resource scarcities of oil, water, land and food. Against those causes of insecurity, the White Paper does not offer a programme of protection or redress.

Britain's defence policy should be based on simple principles. First, we should be able to defend ourselves against the threat of invasion. Beyond that, we should contribute to the building of international security systems based on what this country can do best, what it can afford and where the world is going today, rather than where it was yesterday.

We must be willing to confront the contradictions within the defence estimates. They refer to the wish to reverse proliferation, yet many of Britain's policies compound the problems of proliferation. They cite examples of the reversal of the nuclear arms race, yet Britain is expanding its nuclear commitment. We cannot go outside the Chamber and the country and convince countries that do not have nuclear weapons that there is a case for reverse proliferation while we are increasing our nuclear capacity. It is not a credible position for Britain in the world.

We are in fact engaging in vertical proliferation, in breach of article 6 of the non-proliferation treaty. The estimates refer to our desire for an extension of that treaty, yet we are doing our best to sabotage the prospects for that. They refer to wanting to bring to an end the threat of nuclear weapons, yet Britain and China are alone among the nuclear powers in refusing to engage in a moratorium on testing. They talk about wanting reverse proliferation, yet Britain is a major contributor to the spread of the world arms trade.

The estimates refer to the UN register of arms, but this is merely a register of arms sales, not arms making. The estimates do not recognise that Britain commits 45 per cent. of its investment in research and development to

researching military hardware. They do not recognise that we are supporting little more than a register of commercial interests in the killing fields of the arms trade.

I shall cut short my intended speech, because there is nothing in the estimates that offers a sensible approach to common security rather than defence. I shall simply cite what the 1991 Stockholm conference said about the real challenge of global security. It said that the agenda for the 21st century was a simple one:

"Unless we develop an ethical basis for human survival, all our technical solutions may turn out to be ineffectual in the long run. This is so because it is essentially the undeveloped nature of our global morality that has put humankind at risk: our greed, our arrogance, our lack of vision. What value should we place on our genius if, unconstrained by the ethics of survival, it leads the human race to despoil its earthly habitation?"

Against that measure and that agenda, the estimates fail lamentably, and do not deserve the support of the House.

9.22 pm

**Dr. John Reid** (Motherwell, North): I apologise to those hon. Members who have been waiting all evening, but have not been called. I understand their difficulties. There have been so many speeches of substance that it is impossible to deal with them all. Therefore, I shall pick two from each side of the House.

First, the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), who is not in his place—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, he is in his place. I do not intend to insult him; he made the best speech that I have heard him make in the House. In particular, I endorse his views about the development of the military structure in the United Nations. I do not agree with all that he said about the voluntary nature of that, but he pushed forward the frontiers in a direction that the House should seriously consider.

Secondly, the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) spoke with tremendous depth of thought on two subjects —nuclear proliferation and the need for those in the western democratic culture to come to terms with Islam.

Thirdly, my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) spoke with tremendous passion about the 26,000 veterans of the nuclear tests and about his colleague, Ken McGinley. He spoke not only with passion but with a sense of feeling that is shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I make the point to the Minister that those 26,000 people were war wounded. They were wounded in the cause of British defence in the same way as someone who was shot in Bosnia or on the streets of Belfast. I hope that the Minister will take the sense of my hon. Friend's remarks and those made by some Conservative Members, and treat the issue as non-partisan. As my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South said, the only question is when those people will receive justice.

Fourthly, my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) spoke of the difficulties that ordinary soldiers, sailors and airmen face because of the academic discussions that we have in the House. They serve in roulement battalions and abroad, and sometimes have to leave their families on unaccompanied tours. We will benefit from being reminded that we are speaking not about facts, figures and statistics but about ordinary men and women who serve this country well.

I pay tribute to my former jousting partner, the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), who also served the country and his party well. I learnt only tonight that the press referred to us as Little and Large, but I have not worked out who was Little and who was Large. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman enjoys a happy retirement on the Back Benches. Having spent two years trying to control a lady from Finchley, it must have been a comedown in the world to be asked to control nothing more than the Parachute Regiment.

We regret also the passing of the former Minister for Defence Procurement, Mr. Alan Clark, who featured in some of the debate. He is probably the first Tory Minister to resign to spend more time with other people's families.

I know that the right hon. Member for Bridgwater will not mind if I come straight to the heart of the matter on "Options for Change". Although Alan Clark was mentioned, no one quoted him directly, but I shall do so. Remember that one is talking of the academic who wrote, "Barbarossa". Writing about "Options for Change", he commented:

"This happens the whole time. It's not just the slow balls-up"—

the House will remember that I am quoting—

"of the 'Options' project, it's 100 examples a week of waste, blinkers, vested interest, idleness and failure to put the country before narrow personal, regimental or sectarian considerations."

I am sure that that was before the time of the present Secretary of State for Defence. Mr. Clark continues:

"A long letter today from beloved Tip."

It is not explained who Tip is, although we can speculate. He goes on:

"He says that the whole of the Rhine Army is completely demoralised. There's a freeze on spares, so if vehicles break on exercise they're just towed back to Sennelager and abandoned. The great Panzer workshops that featured in Hitler's exchange with Jodl after the fall of the Remagen bridge are now a scrapyard for broken Land Rovers. The 'chaps' are good, still, and keen. They want to get out into the Empire, sort out the 'trouble spots'. But he says some of the new recruits are almost illiterate."

He then writes one of the finest lines ever from a Tory ex-Minister:

"It's all so depressing. Especially when you think we've had a Tory Government for the last ten years."

That is a condemnation of Tory education and of Tory party defence policy.

**Mr. Whitney** *indicated dissent.*

**Dr. Reid:** Would the hon. Gentleman like me to read more? We have a demand for an encore. Would the hon. Gentleman like me to read more now?

**Mr. Whitney:** How about reading from Crossman?

**Dr. Reid:** I do not have anything by Crossman in front of me, but, as we are involved in literature, I will read something more from Mr. Clark:

"I think what saddens me most is the so near and yet so far experience at MoD. I have written the Defence Review".

The right hon. Member for Bridgwater told us that there was no defence review and that, if there was, he wrote it. According to his second in command, that is not true. He states:

"I have written the Defence Review. It has, to all intents and purposes, been accepted by Number 10. But no one is getting on with it. It's all being screwed by this absurd 'Options' exercise, which muffles everything."

Those are not my words; they are the words of one of the defence team. I suppose that we should have a minute's silence for dear departed friends—the old Tory defence team.

*[Dr. Reid]*

I have not been an Opposition spokesman for long, but since I took up this post we have lost a Secretary of State for Defence, a Parliamentary Under-Secretary, a Minister of State for Defence Procurement and—only last week or the week before—a Minister of State for the Armed Forces. We now have a fresh team. I suppose that I should congratulate my opposite number, the new Minister of State for the Armed Forces: he is a very good choice. I understand that he comes from a long line of thespians: he seems to have all the qualifications for membership of the Tory defence team.

Hon. Members would expect me to respond to the points made by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, who launched an attack on the Labour party for having the audacity to suggest that we might have an agreement on conventional arms. He pointed out that that was mentioned in our amendment. I am not sure how long the Minister has been in his post; somebody told me that he had been there for 15 months. I looked him up in "Parliamentary Profiles", which tells us—under "Traits"—

"Tall; dark; handsome; natty; Old Etonian charm; ruthless, sardonic wit".

The one thing it does not say is "knows anything about defence".

Let me try to educate the Minister. Conventional arms agreements have been on-going under Conservative Governments for some 20 years. The last example was known as CFE—conventional forces in Europe. When the Minister attacks, in principle, the idea that reductions in conventional forces are possible, he criticises not the Opposition but his own party. I am sorry if, in his 15 months at the Ministry, no one has told the Minister that we are negotiating conventional force reductions; but I should be obliged if, after those 20 years of agreements, he did not attack the Opposition for including Britain in their amendment.

I shall say no more about the Minister's opening speech: I think that that is the best way in which to treat it. Let me say three things.

Two or three years ago, we said that the Government had made a mistake about the infantry—that they would have to put soldiers back again. They said that we were wrong; now they have done it.

Two or three years ago, we said that the Government should give the Territorial Army an operational role, integrating it with the regular forces. They said that we were wrong; now they have done it.

Three years ago, we said that it was nonsensical to spend £3,000 million on a new sub-strategic nuclear weapon called TASM—the tactical air-to-surface missile. They said that we were wrong, but we predict tonight that they will cancel it, because there is no military or strategic need for it, and there is certainly no financial way in which it can be secured. If we have TASM, we cannot have the infantry. The threats that we now face do not require yet another nuclear weapon; they require British soldiers on the ground.

In his 1992 "Statement on the Defence Estimates", the Secretary of State boasted:

"In the work on Options for Change"——

hon. Members will note that his view was different from that of Alan Clark——

"and subsequently, we have carried out a fundamental reassessment of the potential for conflict"

within and outside Europe, and how it should be reflected in defence strategy, policy and the structure of the armed forces. I take it that that was a joke; I take it that it was written with irony and sarcasm. If there is one thing that the Government have not produced, it is a fundamental reassessment and a strategic view of where we should be going.

The hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) warned us not to underestimate the forthcoming White Paper. In a non-partisan spirit, may I say to him that if the Government intend to publish a White Paper that is based on a strategic analysis and opens up to the public and to Parliament the basis on which we are trying to match resources to commitments, the Opposition will welcome it and will give it credit. We do not underestimate the fact that it is a difficult task. If, even belatedly, the Secretary of State for Defence comes to the Dispatch Box and brings with him a rational, strategic analysis of our defence needs and how those commitments are to be matched to our resources, the Labour party will welcome it.

**Mr. Patrick Cormack** (Staffordshire, South): One is always delighted when a sinner repents. Is the hon. Gentleman serious when he tells the House that his party has had a consistent, coherent defence policy over the past three or four years?

**Dr. Reid:** I have. */Interruption./* I am not sure that all Conservative Members have always followed a consistent defence policy. The hon. Gentleman should not try to make out that the only people in the world who have shown inconsistency are those who sit on the Opposition side of the House. There are those on the Government side who have been just as inconsistent as others.

None of us underestimates the problems. In particular, the right hon. Member for Bridgwater lived, as he told us, through a period of tremendous change—away from the nuclear threat and capability of the Soviet Union to the new type of risks that we face. Perhaps they could have been foreseen. It is easy to say that in retrospect. I think that it was the German philosopher, Hegel, who said that the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only at the coming of the dusk. It is easy, as I say, to say these things in retrospect. I do not claim that the Labour party has a monopoly of wisdom on defence, but I challenge the arrogant assertion of some Conservative Members that they have a monopoly of wisdom when it comes either to patriotism or to an analysis of defence. They have not.

**Mr. Aitken:** Can the hon. Gentleman give us the benefit of his wisdom?

**Dr. Reid:** I am giving the Minister the benefit of my wisdom. If he wishes to intervene, all that he has to do is to come to the Dispatch Box. If, however, someone who has already spent 15 months in the Ministry of Defence does not even know that we were involved in the CFE reductions, he is in no position to try to educate other people.

In an attempt to be constructive, let me make two or three suggestions to those who sit on the Treasury Bench. As I said earlier, we did it on the infantry; we did it on the analysis of the threat; we did it on TASM. Let me, therefore, put two or three points, which I hope will be constructive, to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces who is to make his defence debut tonight.

I refer to the increasing compulsion of people to think that the United Nations can solve all problems. That is based on two assumptions: first, that for every problem there is a solution and, secondly—the most dangerous assumption—that for every problem there is a military solution. Both assumptions are wrong. The House has not yet come to grips with that fact.

The strategic defence question is ultimately one of foreign affairs policy, because defence is the daughter of foreign affairs. Strategy is merely the use and distribution of military force towards the end of policy. The first and overriding matter, therefore, is clarification of our political —more often than not, foreign affairs—aims and objectives as regards any particular case, within the context of our general aims and objectives.

Within that context there are a number of issues that we should all bear in mind. The first is legality. Is the proposed military action compatible with, justified by or conflicting with international law? International legality is a necessary, but not a sufficient, justification for military action.

The second issue is consensuality. Is the action proposed compatible with, and justified by, United Nations resolutions and the maintenance of a political consensus at the United Nations? In the event of Britain's taking action alone in defence of her own specific interests, this question would be relevant to the United Nations or other potential allies.

The third issue is proportionality. Is the proposed military action proportionate to the threat posed or the aims and objectives envisaged?

The fourth issue is strategy. Put simply, does the military action proposed in any given case—Somalia, Bosnia or anywhere else—stand a reasonable chance of achieving the policy aims desired?

The fifth issue is practicality. Is the military means proposed practical given the history, political complexity, terrain, population, distribution and forces liable to oppose the action at any place or at any time?

Unless we come to terms with those questions and unless we think through our strategic position on the United Nations, we are in grave danger of imposing an even greater burden on our service men and women that is imposed on them at the moment. Whatever the differences between the two sides of the House, surely we should all agree that our main responsibility must be to ensure that we do not place demands on them that are not matched by the resources that we make available to them.

That, above all, is the accusation that we level at the Government tonight. We shall not vote against the Government's defence estimates. We will not lay ourselves open to any accusation that we shall deprive our service men and women of the resources that they should have, but we will vote for our reasoned amendment because we cannot support a Government strategy where no strategy exists.

9.41 pm

**The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley):** It is a great honour to be winding up this important and wide-ranging debate. It is also a great honour to have been given the responsibilities that come with this position. I have long been aware of the professionalism and dedication of the men and women of our armed forces, not least from my time in Northern Ireland. I look forward to continuing my association with them.

I was most fortunate to have spent two and a half years at Stormont and to have discovered what I regard as the real Northern Ireland—the friendliest and most hospitable people in the world in one of the most beautiful corners of the globe. I wish them all well and assure them that, in leaving, I shall remain an honorary ambassador for the Province.

I feel particularly honoured to be following in the footsteps of my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), who was Minister of State for the Armed Forces during a period of unprecedented change. When he first assumed office, Honecker, Ceaucescu, Husak, Straub and Jaruzelski were still in power across the eastern bloc. The Warsaw pact still posed a massive threat to the security of the United Kingdom and its allies. At the heart of the Warsaw pact, the Soviet Union still adhered, albeit with ever lessening conviction, to the tenets of Marxism and Leninism.

We now live in a world with a different complexion and the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact belong to history. The Berlin wall is down and Germany is reunited. The former Soviet troops have left the territory of their erstwhile Warsaw pact allies, and countries of the former Soviet Union, central and eastern Europe and the Baltic states are seeking to entrench the habits of democracy, which were denied to them for half a century. In short, the cold war is over.

I do not want to suggest that my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell was single-handedly responsible for that victory, but he certainly was one of those who had difficult decisions to make about the way in which our defence policy and force structures needed to evolve to reflect the new strategic setting. He deserves the thanks of the House for the dedication and unfailing good humour that he brought to a job that few others could have carried out with such panache in such turbulent times. I have admired him for many years, but having spent the past three weeks learning how massive his job was I admire him all the more. He is a great man in many respects and his shoes will be very hard to fill. Indeed, at a mere 6ft 4 in, I feel a shrimp beside him in stature.

With the end of the cold war, the benchmark against which we assessed our defence requirements disappeared before our eyes.

The certainty of the cold war, in the shape of a monolithic, ideologically hostile adversary, gave way to uncertainty, and the rationale for the force structures which have served NATO so well for so long were no longer appropriate. In spite of the change for the better, represented by the demise of the communist threat, the future of Europe became unpredictable. No one could be certain about the repercussions of the collapse of central power in the Soviet Union. Festering pockets of ethnic tension broke out across central and eastern Europe, not least in the Caucasus and Yugoslavia. In the wider world, the Gulf was soon to provide evidence of the dangers of petty dictators giving practical expression to their aggressive intent.

I am aware that a number of commentators, in the House and elsewhere, question whether there is a logical and coherent link between defence policy and the size and shape of our armed forces. Some even assert that the size

*[Mr. Jeremy Hanley]*

and shape of our armed forces are determined wholly by continual Treasury demands for reductions in the defence budget. However, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) made clear last Thursday, it would be unrealistic to ignore the question of affordability and, as my hon. Friend the Minister for Defence Procurement said today, that is the dilemma facing defence planners. However, assertions that changes in the armed forces are imposed arbitrarily are based on misunderstandings, sometimes deliberate.

Manpower requirements are kept under review in the light of a number of factors. A key factor is, of course, operational commitments and any changes in those commitments which are currently unforeseen. Other factors include management initiatives to streamline support functions to ensure that they are carried out most cost effectively so that resources can be concentrated on the front line. Such initiatives include civilianisation and contractorisation. As for the front line itself, new technologies will in some cases require less manpower.

There have been about 40 contributions to the debate. One of the more recent was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes), who spoke about overstretch. We have always acknowledged that restructuring would lead to increased demands on service personnel because units amalgamating, relocating and re-roling are temporarily unavailable for emergency tours. The interval between emergency tours is currently 19 months. Following withdrawal from Belize, however, the average interval for infantry will rise to 20 months in 1994-95 and to 29 months in 1995-96 on the basis of our current commitments. Two battalions will be withdrawn from Berlin in 1994, so there will be an increase in the units available for such tours. The prospect may look dark at the moment, but it will get better very much sooner than some people expect.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), in his usual knockabout performance, asked for reassurances about the West Indies guard ship. I can reassure him that, although one of its primary functions is to support the Belize garrison, it is at the same time able to make a useful contribution, for example, to the prevention of drug smuggling and to hurricane aid. As with all defence activities, we keep our commitments under review and our forces are deployed in supporting those which we have undertaken. No change is planned at present.

The Statement on the Defence Estimates contains an essay entitled "Defence Planning in a Changing World". The 1993 Statement on the Defence Estimates, which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State told the House last Thursday would be published early next month, will provide an account of the assumptions underpinning the "Options for Change" review, together with a full assessment of the changes which have taken place since then and their impact on our defence policy. As a newcomer to defence, I can say that the "Options for Change" assumptions and, in particular, its identification of the fundamental need to plan for uncertainty have stood the test of time remarkably well.

As my right hon. and learned Friend told the House last April, he commissioned some months ago a detailed analysis of the way in which our defence assets are and need to be employed to meet our various commitments around the world. The links between policy and the overall tasks that the armed forces are called upon to perform and force structures must be made explicit. The analysis will also examine the demands that different tasks make on resources.

The results of that analysis will also be published in the 1993 White Paper. I refute the suggestion of both the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) that there has been no attempt to match the shape of our forces to threats and risks facing our security and our obligation to the world community and that we are not looking properly at our commitments and resources.

The 1993 statement will show for the mid-1990s how major force elements—such as destroyers, frigates, infantry battalions and combat aircraft—are attributed to policy areas within each of the defence roles, the degree to which forces can be earmarked for more than one task, and how those combine to provide an overall force structure. It will also provide broad order estimated costs of the force elements allocated to a number of policy areas, and set out a number of changes that we plan to make to our force structures and capabilities to reflect changes in the strategic environment.

I believe that the White Paper is a tremendous document, although, of course, the House will have to determine what it thinks of it in time. I believe that there is no need for a defence review as advocated by those on the Opposition Front Bench and others.

I shall answer some of the points that were raised in debate on Thursday and today. First, let me provide a word of comfort for my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin). I call him "gallant" because I am sure that an honorary colonel deserves that epithet—perhaps it is an honorary "gallant." He asked about honorary colonels and whether he would remain one for long. Honorary colonels are appointed to each major Territorial Army unit and also to certain sub-units which are descendants of significant former regiments. They fulfil a similar function to the regular Army's system of colonels-in-chief and colonels of the regiment. They provide a source of advice for commanding officers and fulfil extremely useful functions —not just ceremonial—such as the presentation of awards. More significantly, they seek to use their influence on behalf of their unit with Ministers, politicians and others. The system works well and we have no plans to change the arrangements.

My hon. and gallant Friend also raised the subject of TAVRAs. The territorial, auxiliary and volunteer reserve associations do sterling work in support of the volunteer reserve and cadet forces, although they no longer need be given the statutory duty to provide horses for the reserve forces and their useful function will be reviewed. On many of the other issues, it might be better if I were to write to the hon. Members concerned.

**Mr. Michael Connarty** (Falkirk, East): I am concerned that we are dealing with trivia when we should be dealing with more important matters. Will the Minister comment on the statement made by the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson)—a former Minister—in the recent science and technology debate? He said that this country had overtaxed itself beyond the strength of the economy for four decades for military purposes and that that had

caused a serious distortion in this country's science and technological resources to the detriment of civilian uses. Will the Minister address the question of defence diversification, which is alluded to in the Opposition's proposals?

**Mr. Hanley:** If the hon. Gentleman had not wasted some of the House's time with that question, we might have gone on to some of the "less trivial" matters. The matters that I have raised may very well be trivial to the hon. Gentleman, but they are not trivial to those who raised them.

The hon. Member for South Shields asked about UN troops in the safe areas and whether they were there to protect non-combatants. They are in Bosnia under the authority of UN Security Council resolution 836, which extends their mandate to enable them

"to deter attacks against the safe areas, to monitor the ceasefire, to promote the withdrawal of military or paramilitary units other than those of the Government of the republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to occupy some key points on the ground, in addition to participating in the delivery of humanitarian relief."

The resolution authorises all necessary measures, including the use of air power, to support the UN protection force in the performance of its mandate. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we attach the utmost importance to the safety of our forces in Bosnia. We have therefore made appropriate preparations to deploy additional ground and air assets, should they be required, for the protection of the troops.

The hon. Member for South Shields also asked about the return to the United Kingdom of the 105 mm light artillery which was deployed to the Adriatic in January aboard the RFA Argus. To cut the argument short due to lack of time today, I will say only that the RFA Argus is now back in the United Kingdom with the artillery crews. If necessary, the artillery and the crews can be returned to the theatre by air at short notice.

**Dr. David Clark:** Can the Minister explain to the House why we brought home the RFA Argus, with all the light artillery on it, when the Secretary of State told us two months ago that it would be essential if we had to evacuate our troops from Bosnia? We do not need Sea Harriers —we need cover 24 hours a day. Why did the Secretary of State bring the RFA Argus home?

**Mr. Hanley:** I have explained that point to the hon. Gentleman. The decision was taken in the light of changing circumstances—notably the deployment of the aircraft now enforcing the no-fly zone, an enhancement of the capabilities of the Sea Harrier, the provision of accommodation better able to provide protection, and the arrival of additional men and equipment, to which I have referred. We can deploy them as quickly as we need, certainly within 48 hours, so there is no need to worry on that score.

On the important issue of nuclear testing, the House knows that since 1961 all our nuclear weapons tests have been conducted underground at the United States test site in Nevada. Last October, President Bush signed into law the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act which included certain limitations on nuclear weapons testing in the United States. At the summit in Vancouver in April, Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin agreed that negotiations towards a test ban should begin at an early date, that there should be a moratorium over the next three years and that there would be a maximum of 15 tests, of which three would be British.

The United Kingdom has long supported the ultimate goal of a negotiated and verifiable comprehensive test ban, recognising the potential support for a non-proliferation effort that progress towards that objective could provide. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State said, the House must recognise that a comprehensive test ban would not of itself prevent the production of a relatively crude nuclear weapon without recourse to testing, as has been shown in the recent examples of Iraq and South Africa. We must continue to have the means to maintain the safety of our nuclear weapons at the highest levels of assurance. Over the years, testing has played a central part in that process. However, it is not the only element. Other techniques, such as computer modelling and simulation, play an important and expanding role.

Various Opposition Members have suggested that the Government and especially my Department should interfere in the commercial judgment of defence suppliers by forcing them into other sectors of manufacturing. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley provided a wonderful example. He said that it was disgraceful that the Government were selling arms around the world. Within a few seconds, he then said that it was disgraceful that jobs were being lost in the arms and defence industries. That comment was ridiculous. It may make sense for some of the arms suppliers to diversify, but it is not our place to tell companies how best they can be profitable and competitive. Our interest is in seeing a profitable and competitive defence industry. It sounds fine to call for diversification, but it is not easy to see what role there is for Government in the area. No doubt the hon. Gentleman wants to create as many quangos as possible. However, we believe that we have a defence industry of which we can be proud.

Although the threat to our shores has been dramatically reduced, the world is still a very uncertain and occasionally a dangerous place. Times have changed and we must change with them. We must be ready to deal effectively with the unexpected. I am honoured to have this post. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell said, it is one of the best jobs in Government and the Ministry of Defence is one of the best teams with which to work. In my first few weeks, I have got to know a dazzling array of serving officers, men and women of all ranks, and some of the brightest and most able civil servants I have ever met. What has already etched itself on my mind is their professionalism, their sheer ability, their remarkably high morale and their great sense of humour. I intend to be a champion for the armed forces and I hope to gain their trust. There will be hard decisions to make, but I know that we have a team at the Ministry of Defence who will fight for and with our armed forces.

*Question put*, That the amendment be made:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 228, Noes 277.

**Division No. 301]** **[9.59 pm**

**AYES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Adams, Mrs Irene | Ashton, Joe |
| Ainger, Nick | Austin-Walker, John |
| Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)* | Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)* |
| Allen, Graham | Barron, Kevin |
| Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)* | Battle, John |
| Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)* | Bayley, Hugh |
| Armstrong, Hilary | Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret |

Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Jon Owen Jones and**
**Mr. John Spellar.**

**NOES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward

Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. David Lightbown and**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*
*Main Question put:—*
*The House divided:* Ayes 278, Noes 35.

**Division No. 302]** **[10.14 pm**

**AYES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter

Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Nicholas Baker.**

**NOES**

Adams, Mrs Irene
Austin-Walker, John
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Burden, Richard
Canavan, Dennis
Clapham, Michael
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Mahon, Alice
Mullin, Chris
Parry, Robert
Rooney, Terry
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Watson, Mike
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Bob Cryer and Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992 contained in Cm. 1981.

# Armed Forces (Discipline)

10.26 pm

**The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley):** I beg to move,

That the draft Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 26 May 1993, be approved.

The purpose of the order is to continue in force for a further year the Army and Air Force Acts 1955 and the Naval Discipline Act 1957, which together provide the statutory basis for discipline in the three services. The House will be aware that it is a long-established practice for service discipline to be fully reviewed every five years by means of the consideration of an Armed Forces Bill; and for the disciplinary code as then enacted to be reviewed annually in the intervening years by an Order in Council, which is itself approved by resolution of each House. The House will also be aware that an Armed Forces Bill was considered and duly enacted in 1991. That Act also endorsed the process of annual continuation thereafter by Order in Council. Therefore, I am asking the House tonight to give its annual renewal to the discipline Acts by approving the order.

I should now like to bring the House up to date with the work going forward pursuant to some of the main recommendations of the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill, on which my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement addressed the House a year ago.

The Select Committee recommended that the Ministry of Defence should examine the terms of enlistment for under 18-year-olds to make it easier for them to leave, if they wished to do so. A thorough review of this issue has been undertaken. There is no evidence of widepread dissatisfaction among under 18-year-olds about their terms of service and the advice that they receive on their rights to claim discharge. Any extension of a minor's right to leave would cause real manning difficulties for the services. Nevertheless, the services have reviewed their position. The Navy already had provision to allow discretion to discharge under-18-year-olds who are unable to settle to service life. The other two services have adopted a similar provision.

Those arrangements are in addition to the statutory rights of discharge. Recruiting staff are meticulous in ensuring that recruits and their parents or guardians fully understand the commitment being entered into; and, of course, recruits under 18 require their parents' or guardians' written consent to enlist. They receive a notice paper setting out their terms of enlistment and the earliest date on which they can leave. In addition, the leaflet "Your Rights and Responsibilities", which is given to all new recruits, has been amended to include a note on the right to claim discharge. The leaflet was reissued last autumn.

The Select Committee also suggested that there should be a presumption that under-18s should not be sent on active service overseas unless there was an overriding requirement for their skills or the threat to national security that was sufficient to warrant the conscription of minors. The services' deployment of minors is broadly consistent with the Committee's suggestion. However, we must remember that under-18s are deployed as members of formed units. They have trained and worked together and each makes an important contribution to the efficiency and effectiveness of his or her entire unit. To withdraw them at a crucial time could adversely affect the operational effectiveness of the unit.

On the question of ethnic monitoring, in May 1992 my predecessor announced the decision to introduce in-service monitoring. That will involve the distribution of ethnic origin questionnaires to all serving personnel and the analysis of the completed questionnaires. It is intended to begin the survey later this year.

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): The Minister might not be able to answer my question, but does he perchance know the rank of the most senior black officer serving in the British armed forces?

**Mr. Hanley:** No, but I look forward to meeting him or her—*[Interruption.]* I am giving an honest answer. I do not know, but I shall find out as soon as I get back to the Ministry of Defence. It is a good point to raise because it is distressing that more people from Afro-Caribbean and Indian backgrounds do not join the forces. We intend to continue the ethnic monitoring of applications to the armed forces. It is disappointing that more people from ethnic minorities—who still represent only about 1 per cent. of the total armed forces—do not apply. I hope that the measures we take to encourage people from the ethnic minorities will be effective.

We remain committed to a range of measures aimed at encouraging entry from ethnic minority groups. They include the increased use of black recruiters—role models who I hope will instil additional confidence; better representation of ethnic minority service personnel in recruiting literature; special training for recruiters; the production of brochures in ethnic minority languages to target parents; and the development of contacts with ethnic minority community leaders. I hope that those measures will help.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** The Minister knows that I have time for his views on this matter and that I am not being flippant in asking questions about it. We must go further than what he has said. It is not just a question of trying to encourage more people from ethnic minorities into the armed forces. We must try to ensure that they stay there by eliminating any form of racism within them.

**Mr. Hanley:** I absolutely agree with the hon. Gentleman. I hope that he did not think that I gave him a flippant reply. I gave him an honest reply. I hope that I have shown that we take the matter seriously. We have set out a whole range of initiatives that I hope will help to deal with the problem.

The armed forces are fully integrated organisations and no discrimination is tolerated. Any complaint of racial abuse or discrimination will be thoroughly investigated and, if substantiated, appropriate action will be taken against those found to be involved. The Select Committee recommended that the MOD should consider how best to identify incidents of racial harassment in the armed forces and to keep records accordingly. The Army and the RAF now maintain separate records of complaints involving a racial element and work is continuing in the Royal Navy to identify a suitable method of recording such incidents.

**Mr. Harry Cohen** (Leyton): I remind the Minister that the chief of the American armed forces is Colin Powell, who is a black officer. We have nothing like him in this country. Will the Minister ensure that a promotional fast

*[Mr. Harry Cohen]*

stream is available to ethnic minorities? In the previous debate, the Minister referred to his excellent civil servants in the Ministry of Defence. Will he make sure that members of the ethnic minorities hold high positions in the civil service also, within his Ministry?

**Mr. Hanley:** I will most definitely do that. I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that there are members of the ethnic minorities within the armed forces. It is still a low figure, but I hope that the initiatives that I described tonight will help to redress that situation. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there are representatives of almost each and every ethnic minority within the Ministry of Defence. I stress that we are against any discrimination, which is not tolerated in either the forces or the Ministry. I assure the Select Committee that progress has been made with its recommendation.

Another particularly nasty problem is bullying. A very serious view is taken of bullying, and it is generally made clear throughout the services that bullying and ill treatment will not be permitted. Any allegation or complaint of ill treatment is properly investigated, and, if substantiated, disciplinary action will be taken against the perpetrators. Every effort will be made to eradicate any unacceptable behaviour of that kind.

**Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody** (Crewe and Nantwich): The Minister seems to be saying that a clear complaint must be made at every level. Is he satisfied that the opportunities for ordinary members of the forces of both sexes to make formal complaints is such that they will not be dissuaded from doing so by being encouraged to drop such accusations before they are recorded?

**Mr. Hanley:** I understand the hon. Lady's point. It is important to keep the procedures constantly under review, and to make sure that individuals do not feel threatened against making complaints. The procedures are regularly reviewed.

Another issue dealt with in the Select Committee's report was homosexuality in the armed forces. The Committee acknowledged that the armed forces should not be required to accept homosexuals, but recommended that homosexual activity of a kind that is legal in civilian law should no longer constitute an offence under service law.

That recommendation was accepted, and that change in the law means that a service man who engages in homosexual activity that is legal in civilian law will not be prosecuted under service law but will be administratively discharged. However, that change will not prevent the prosecution under service law of a service man who has committed an otherwise legal homosexual act where the grounds for prosecution were, for example, that the act was to the prejudice of good order and discipline or that it caused military efficiency to be undermined.

The necessary amendment to the law will be made as soon as the legislative programme allows.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** That was said last year.

**Mr. Hanley:** Yes, that was said last year—but any delay in amending the appropriate legislation does not affect our agreement to the Select Committee's recommendation. Accordingly, action has been taken to follow that recommendation administratively until such time as the law is changed. We will not act upon it until the law is changed.

**Mr. Andrew Rowe** (Mid-Kent): I am reassured by my hon. Friend's remarks, but the evidence of recent months is to the contrary. It appears that members of the armed services who, for example, have a homosexual relationship well away from any Army establishment are nevertheless in grave danger of being drummed out of the forces. That is clearly contrary to the spirit in which the original undertaking was given.

**Mr. Hanley:** We have adhered to the Select Committee's recommendation. We have stated that we will change the law in the light of that recommendation, and I am confirming that tonight.

The services continue to believe strongly that the special conditions of service life preclude acceptance of homosexuals and homosexual behaviour. Service personnel, both on and off duty, unavoidably live in close quarters with their colleagues, sometimes under severe stress. Such conditions, and the need for absolute trust and confidence within and between all ranks, require the potentially disruptive influence of homosexual relationships and practices to be excluded.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton** (Epsom and Ewell): It was clear to me that the Select Committee intended that no one should have a criminal record because he had been discharged for committing a homosexual act. However, there is still no doubt that anyone indulging in such an act, whether inside or outside a military camp, will be discharged for so doing.

**Mr. Hanley:** I agree with my right hon. Friend; I am grateful for his intervention.

The Committee recommended that a timetable be given for the closure of the Royal Navy detention quarters and the redeployment of resources to the military corrective training centre. An investment appraisal which examined the possible closure of RNDQs and the transfer of their function to the MCTC has been completed. It demonstrates that significant saving would result from transfer, but closure of the RNDQs still depends on the availability of facilities to accept all naval personnel currently sentenced to detention. No firm timetable has been announced yet.

The Committee also recommended that service courts should ensure that sentencing is equitable between the sexes. Sentencing guidance has been amended, and other relevant regulations are being amended where appropriate.

Finally, the Committee recommended that the Government provide parliamentary time within the next five years for legislation to consolidate service law. I am pleased to say that work is well in hand with the Law Commission, and that it should be completed within the time scale.

I pay tribute to the professionalism and dedication of our armed services. Whether in support of NATO or in other tasks, they have an essential part to play in safeguarding our interests and freedoms. The high quality of our armed forces is due in no small part to their surprisingly good morale. In a military environment, a fair and equitable system of discipline is essential to help to preserve that morale, and to ensure that the high level of efficiency and effectiveness that characterise the three

services is maintained. That is what the service discipline Acts seek to maintain, and I therefore invite the House to approve the order.

10.42 pm

**Dr. John Reid** (Motherwell, North): Perhaps it is easier to describe exactly what we are discussing without being patronising. Every five years, we have what is called a quinquennial review of the Army discipline Acts: we had one last year. In each of the four intervening years we debate them and present our views, but we do not normally table amendments.

Opposition Members will not vote against the Acts; if we did so and there was a possibility that we would win, there would be no discipline or morale in the armed forces. Tonight, we are having an exchange of views rather than anything else. Let me exchange a few views with my new opposite number, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces.

The first concerns capital punishment. When the Armed Forces Bill was debated in 199 , the only issue on which the House divided was a new clause tabled in Committe. It was not a Select Committee, as the Minister said; it was a hybrid Committee—both a Select Committee and a Standing Committee. The only issue on which the Committee divided was whether we should have capital punishment. The Committee decided, by means of a new clause, to remove the death penalty for the five remaining capital offence in service law—as opposed to general civilian law. They are serious misconduct in action, obstructing operations, mutiny or incitement, failure to suppress a mutiny and assisting the enemy.

Although we have been assured that the death penalty does not apply in peacetime, and although we know that it has not been used for a purely military offence since 1946, the Opposition took the view that its retention for these specific offences was iniquitous and unjust. I said in Committee that, if the House wished to retain capital punishment as an ultimate sanction for the most heinous offences, the category of treason, as defined in civilian law, would be more than adequate: that there was no need to specify five offences.

The Opposition believe now, as we believed then, that it is an insult to the dedicated professionals who serve in our armed forces to argue that they need this additional threat hanging over their heads to ensure their disciplined conduct. Most of our NATO allies regard such measures as unnecessary. I believe that our service personnel are more than equal to the best of our allies in NATO.

Let me give you an example, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If, tomorrow night, there were an attack by, say, the Provisional IRA on British service men, and one of the terrorists shot a British service man, he could not be hanged. He would not suffer the death penalty. If, however, during that attack one of our young soldiers panicked for three or four minutes and ran away, he could, under service law, be hanged.

Ministers will of course tell us that that would not happen, and that it has not happened since 1946. If it is not going to happen—if that young soldier would not have to be shot like a dog rather than hanged—why is it necessary to retain it in military law? Why do we face the paradox of a terrorist who cannot be executed for attacking British soldiers while a British soldier can be executed because he panicked for two minutes, ran away and showed cowardice? That is the first issue we raised last year, and I ask the Minister to think about it again.

The second issue, which the Minister hinself raised, is the question of homosexuality. It is a popular question, because the President of the United States has raised it as regards the US armed forces. As I understood the interpretation of the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell of what was agreed in Committee, it was correct. It was an honest and concise statement. What the Committee agreed last year was a compromise: that we would decriminalise homosexual activity in the armed forces. I thought that we had also decriminalised homosexuality.

There is a distinction. The problem that the official Opposition face—I think that certain others do as well—is that in the British armed forces, so far as I can understand it, it is not homosexual practice but homosexuality itself that is the offence. Someone can be dismissed from the British armed forces for homosexuality, even if he does not practise it.

When I asked the general who commands the personnel side of the British armed forces whether it was possible to be a homosexual but not a practising homosexual, he said no. When I asked him what would happen if any member of the armed forces turned up tomorrow and said, "I've suddenly discovered I'm a homosexual, so can I please leave the Army?", I was told that they would not accept his word.

We are left in a peculiar position. What sort of evidence would they want? If homosexuality rather than the practice of homosexuality is the ground for someone being removed from the British Army, and if the armed forces hierarchy will not accept the word of the supposed homosexual, what evidence, pray, can we produce? Photographs? Friends? These are the issues that I do not believe the Government have thought through.

This is a major issue and it was considered during the passage of the Armed Forces Bill about two years ago. The Committee proposed to decriminalise homosexual acts that are legal in civilian law and to ensure that they should no longer be an offence in service law. That proposal commanded cross-party support, so let us not play politics with the issue. Every member of the Committee, across the party divide, supported that.

In his announcement last year, however, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said that the appropriate amendment to the Sexual Offences Act 1967 would be brought before the House as soon as possible. I appreciate that the legislative programme has been very full in the past 12 months, but I hope that the Minister will assure us tonight that the relevant changes will be introduced soon.

I should be interested to know what changes will be made to the Ministry of Defence's guidelines on the treatment of service personnel accused of homosexual conduct. A copy of the current Defence Council instruction was recently passed to me for perusal, and I can only describe it as totally out of line with the spirit of the agreement that was made in Committee, on which the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell and I sat.

Quite apart from the use of offensive and anachronistic terminology to describe consenting homosexual conduct—hoary language such as "unnatural behaviour" and "sexual deviancy"—the instruction outlines procedures such as intrusive medical examinations and the laying of

*[Dr. John Reid]*

charges against those who refuse to undergo such examinations which would be appropriate only in relation to activities that are still criminal.

The agreement reached in Committee was to attempt to decriminalise homosexuality. I hope that the Minister will assure us that the instruction will be changed to reflect the Committee's view that homosexual behaviour that is legal in civilian law will not be regarded as criminal in service life.

I was very pleased and surprised to have the opportunity the other evening to sit on the Front Bench as a Member of the Labour party congratulated the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) on extending trade union rights. I never thought that I would hear that. The hon. Member for Stirling, with some reservations and qualifications——

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): It was an aberration.

**Dr. Reid:** Perhaps, as my hon. Friend says, it was an aberration.

The hon. Member for Stirling extended certain rights to the armed forces, which we welcome. He extended, if I remember correctly, the right to a contract of employment, to maternity leave and several other extensions of democracy. We congratulate the Government on having taken those measures, even if they were introduced by the hon. Member for Stirling.

The Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, which the House considered last week, will extend many welcome employment rights to service personnel. But it remains Labour's view that the interests and rights of those who volunteer to join the armed forces would be better served if they were allowed formal rights of representation through some form of staff federation.

Let me make it clear, lest we be accused of demanding a trade union for the Army, that we have never asked for a trade union for the Army. We have asked, however, for some form of staff federation along the lines allowed, tolerated and, indeed, welcomed for the police—the Police Federation. It would benefit not only members of the armed forces but members of the hierarchy who sometimes have no idea what squaddies think.

No one is suggesting a formal trade union structure. No one is suggesting that they should have the right to take formal industrial action or to strike, but a body similar to the Police Federation would offer a number of benefits to not only squaddies but the hierarchy.

Finally, I turn to ethnic monitoring. We welcome the Government's recognition, however belated, of the fact that an equal opportunities policy depends on the availability of accurate information on the ethnic composition of our armed forces at each level. I am sure that the Minister will wish to reflect on some of his comments, which I think were off-hand and which should not be deployed against him—they were about blacks, lest he forget.

I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us whether the figures will be presented in this year's Statement on the Defence Estimates which, I understand, is due in a fortnight—we shall probably debate it next September. Will there be a breakdown of the figures according to regiment, or at least division, and particularly with reference to the Brigade of Guards? If equal opportunities are to be fully extended, it is essential that they exist throughout the armed forces, including the Brigade of Guards.

Equality is indivisible, and we do not want to end up in a situation in which the opportunities available to those from the ethnic minorities exist at different levels. We need to be assured that, in monitoring the implementation of the equal opportunities policy in the armed forces generally, we do not fail to identify and deal with any continuing pockets of discrimination, no matter how important those pockets might consider themselves in the British Army.

My final point relates to women. Recent press reports have suggested that the Ministry of Defence review of the role of women in the armed forces is on the way, and that a change in Army regulations has been made to allow women to serve on the front line by driving armoured personnel carriers in, for example, Northern Ireland. Will the Minister say whether the reports are accurate, and tell us what other changes are under consideration on the role of women?

The apparent openness of the Government in considering the options is to be welcomed, and I am sure that the House would appreciate being kept informed on all five points.

10.56 pm

**Mrs. Edwina Currie** (Derbyshire, South): It was good to hear the Minister reiterating the Government's intention, as announced in this debate last year, to introduce legislation that will decriminalise homosexual activity in the armed forces, but it was disappointing to hear that it is not to happen yet. I assure him that I and other members of the Conservative Campaign for Homosexual Equality, several of whom are sitting right behind him, will keep at him until it happens. I know that we have the support of Members from all parties, and I look forward to such legislation being introduced as soon as possible.

Leading on from that, the guidance which is still extant and which has already been mentioned does not conform with the spirit of the Government's statement last year; nor is it helpful in the current climate. If the Minister were to read the detailed guidance, as I have, he would share my shock that, in 1993, material is still being handed out which describes rules of behaviour for investigating officers when a disciplinary offence is alleged to have occurred which are so out of date as to be ludicrous and which would make an offence far worse, if indeed an offence had occurred. I shall not speak for long, but I invite the Minister to read the guidance. I do not wish to upset the House by reading aloud some of the details of the examinations that are suggested, which are disgusting and out of date.

The guidance is based on the notion that there is something wrong with homosexuals. That is the philosophy and attitude which we must challenge. I shall read into the record just one anodyne piece from the Royal naval instructions RN IC2. Paragraph 9 begins:

"Officers and senior ratings must be on the alert for any indication of homosexual behaviour among Naval personnel. This applies particularly to those who are known to have unstable backgrounds".

That is how it starts, but it goes further. The implication is that people who are gay or lesbian have unstable backgrounds and must be suffering from a mental illness or psychiatric problem and that, if they are dealt with properly, the problem will go away. That attitude must change.

I am particularly bothered about what happens if the approach recommended in the guidelines is adopted, as I believe it is in some of the services, where an offence has been committed. There is no doubt that offences can be committed, for example under duress or when consent has not been given. As far as I am concerned, no matter whether somebody is gay or lesbian or heterosexual, if consent is not given, it is a serious offence. In those circumstances, disciplinary action must be taken for the good of the services and the individuals concerned. But I feel absolutely certain that if the sort of examinations outlined in the papers are undertaken—if people are locked up and maltreated and if this sort of cruelty is perpetrated on young people—it can only make things worse. I have it in mind that we have young soldiers—both men and women—of 17 and 18. If they are faced with such allegations and treatment, I am not in the least surprised if they find themselves unable to continue to be soldiers. If I had a son who was subjected to such appalling nonsense, I should be extremely angry.

**Mr. Rowe:** My hon. Friend might like to know that when one of my constituents was forced to leave the services, she received her dismissal notice on a form that was still written only for men, without anyone's even having bothered to cross through the "he" and write "she". That is the kind of thoroughly insensitive man management or woman management that needs to be looked at, and is a small indication of the problem.

**Mrs. Currie:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree that there is an awful lot of idiots around in the armed forces, the House and everywhere else. We are trying to take on board the fact that there may well be sexual offences involving members of the armed forces, or members of the armed forces and people with whom they come into contact, which may be inimical to good discipline or to the protection of those concerned. The drafting of the guidance should take that on board in a sophisticated, sensitive and careful fashion. It should not just refer to men or to homosexuals. It ought to refer to all people who can volunteer to serve and defend this nation and whom we ought, on these occasions, to protect.

11.2 pm

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (Fife, North-East): As the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) explained, this is an occasion for an exchange of views. We hold such debates annually. I suppose that, in some senses, it is a throwback to the historical desire of Parliament to ensure that the standing army did not become a feature of the Executive. Those days have past, but I do not think that it is any less significant that we should have the chance every 12 months to reflect the views that some of us feel very strongly about the nature of service discipline.

I am particularly disappointed about the position of those under the age of 18. When that issue was raised by the Select Committee on Defence, it became clear that, although Ministers had, indeed, reviewed the policy, they had not changed it. I do not think that, in times of peace, the policy is likely to be an embarrassment, but any of us thinking back to the Gulf war will remember that there was a substantial upsurge in public opinion against the idea that those who—to put it in tabloid terms, because those were the terms in which it was expressed—were unable to vote for their country none the less might have found themselves dying for their country.

I believe that it is the duty of Parliament and of those who make the law to protect people from themselves. It was perfectly clear from some of the anecdotal evidence that emerged around the time of the Gulf war that young men aged 17 did not want to be parted from their mates: they did not want to be anywhere else other than at the very centre of the action. There were undoubtedly occasions on which public opinion found it very difficult to accept that it was right and proper that people of that age should be exposed to such severe risks.

I accept that there may be instances, although I suspect that they are pretty few and far between, when the presence of a 17-year-old or group of 17-year-olds is absolutely essential for the operational effort that is being carried out. But I also believe that we have a duty to protect people of that age. Even if in times of peace the Government did not find themselves the subject of adverse public opinion, they would do well to realise that, if we are to extend the nature of operations on behalf of the United Nations—a topic that we have discussed extensively during the defence estimates debate—such situations are likely to occur more often in future. It will, of course, always be unacceptable to us if any of our forces are killed.

*[Mr. Menzies Campbell]*

However, I put the matter bluntly: Ministers will not like going to RAF Lyneham to receive body bags. They will like it least of all if the bodies coming back are those of people under the age of 18.

I have always taken the view that the death penalty is entirely inappropriate. I reached that conclusion as much from my professional practice in the High Court in Scotland in cases in which I prosecuted people who would, as a result of my efforts, or, more correctly, as a result of the jury's verdict, have been liable to be hanged as from cases I defended in which, perhaps in spite of my efforts or, some might say, because of my efforts, people were found guilty and would have been liable to be hanged. I am firmly of the view that the death penalty would not operate as a deterrent.

We should think about the circumstances in which the death penalty is offered in military discipline. It can be offered only in the five categories to which reference has been made because of its deterrent effect. If one is a panicking 17-year-old throwing away one's rifle because one simply cannot take what one is facing, I very much doubt whether one will stop for a moment and think, "Are the terms of the Army discipline regulations such that, because of what I am about to do, I may face the death penalty?" I simply do not believe that the death penalty will operate as a deterrent in those circumstances. The Government could demonstrate a measure of sensitivity by removing that penalty from the statute book.

I welcome what has been said about ethnic monitoring, but I believe that it has taken rather a long time coming. I cannot help but put this point. General Colin Powell was born in Jamaica. His parents emigrated to the United States. He is now the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff and is perhaps the single most powerful military figure in the whole world. We must ask ourselves how long it would have taken him to reach a similar position in the British system, to which he might as readily have come as someone born in Jamaica. I immediately concede that that is a slightly fanciful question. However, within the question there lurks a substantial reality, which is that in our armed forces so far we have not found a way to ensure that the talents and the abilities of those of all ethnic backgrounds who wish to enrol are properly exploited.

**Mrs. Currie:** Does the hon. and learned Gentleman consider that it would be impossible for a member of an ethnic minority to become Secretary of State for Defence?

**Mr. Campbell:** A Watsonian member of the Scottish Bar no longer justifies the description of a member of an ethnic minority. The Watsonian point is rather lost on those who are not keen students of the Muriel Spark form of education practised in what we used to call the Athens of the north.

The point is serious. In some respects, it carries over into the issue of racism and bullying. There is quite powerful anecdotal evidence that those who are most subject to bullying are those whose skins happen to be black. Such incidents are wholly unacceptable in the armed forces of the Crown.

I believe that, just as officers are entitled to take responsibility for the achievements of those whom they command, they should also be responsible for what is badly done among or to those for whom they have responsibility. When there has been bullying, one should perhaps look in the first instance at the nature of the command and at the nature of the officers who have been responsible for the unit.

Like others, I want to consider the question of homosexuality. Those who campaign in that regard do not want any special consideration for themselves. They simply wish to be treated on precisely the same footing as those whose sexuality is heterosexual. In armed forces in which women will increasingly play a prominent role, the possibility of harassment or of conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline in the form of sexual harassment or something of that kind will be present.

We will have to rely on the nature of the discipline, morale and self-control of those whom we place in such circumstances. Those who argue for equality before the law in respect of homosexuals are simply arguing to be allowed to enjoy the same rights as other people whose sexuality happens to be different.

I welcome the fact that the Government decided—and this was announced during the corresponding debate last year—to seek to ensure that, within the services, the position with regard to criminal behaviour would be the same as that in civilian life. However, it still remains a ground for administrative discharge if a person admits to being homosexual. If a person attends an interview and applies to join one of the services and admits to being homosexual, that is a ground for refusing that application.

This is 1993. People's attitudes are entirely different. However, it sometimes seems that those in senior positions in the armed forces are unwilling to accept or understand how the climate of opinion has changed outside the services. I genuinely believe that this is an issue upon which the Government should be able to make what for senior commanders might be seen to be a radical departure but what the public would see as nothing more than a recognition of what the public see, experience and understand in civilian life.

The fact that these rather curious procedures are set out in a document as forming the basis upon which investigations should be carried out should be abhorrent to all hon. Members. If one is looking for evidence, apart from the invasive procedure and procedures such as tapping telephones and bringing people in and subjecting them to such pressure that eventually obtains a confession, and so long as the possibility of discharge remains, the risk of excessive zeal on the part of military policemen or similar is enhanced to an unacceptable degree.

**Mr. Rowe:** Is not the question one of self-control? Any soldier or member of the armed services who is sufficiently self-disciplined to exercise self-control is an asset, or is likely to be an asset, to the armed services. There is every bit as great a likelihood of undermining discipline by promiscuous heterosexual activity—and I know of no code of conduct for examining people for promiscuous heterosexual activity—as there is of any other danger. What is missing in the armed services' view of homosexuality is any concept that a number of homosexuals are notoriously well-disciplined and self-controlled. If they choose to exercise their own sexual proclivities well away from any military activity, that is their business. It is quite wrong to make it a military offence.

**Mr. Campbell:** I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman. The issue—the Minister raised it also—is whether the conduct is prejudicial to good order and discipline. The mere fact of being homosexual in the armed forces does not justify that conclusion. As the hon. Gentleman properly says, heterosexual promiscuity might be extremely damaging, especially if, for example, efforts are made to take advantage of rank, close proximity, or such matters.

In the end, it is a matter of self control, but fundamentally it is a matter of equality before the law. Before the law of the armed services, heterosexuals and homosexuals should enjoy that equality. I hope that the Government will accept that, if not tonight, then on some future early occasion.

11.14 pm

**Mr. Julian Brazier** (Canterbury): I agreed with very little that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said, although I always listen to his speeches with interest. However, I am grateful to him for explaining very clearly the difference between the criminal offence which the Government are committed to abolishing and the administrative process which will remain.

My hon. Friends the Members for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) and for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) asked why, in 1993, we should remain opposed to having homosexual members of the armed forces. It is absolutely right that the Government should stand firm on that point. There is nothing disgraceful about an administrative discharge, but I firmly believe that it is in the armed forces' interests that homosexuals should not serve in their ranks. [HON. MEMBERS: "Tell us."] I am about to do so, if Opposition Members would like to wait for a moment.

It is very easy indeed to say that trends in civilian life should be instantly mirrored in the armed forces. In another connection tonight, we heard much mention of the difficulties of a totally different category of people who would be horrified to have any comparison made with the difficulties that ethnic people have had in this country and in other countries in rising to senior positions. It is very interesting that Colin Powell stated publicly how revolted he was at the very idea of any comparison at all being drawn between the position of black people in the American armed forces and that of homosexuals in the armed forces. He believes and has made it clear in the strongest possible terms that it would be profoundly wrong to have homosexuals in the American armed forces, for reasons which translate directly in this country. I shall mention only two.

The first reason is that in the armed forces there are large numbers of young people over whom their superiors have powers which are not mirrored in any walk of civilian life. Sometimes those powers extend to life and death, whether or not we abolish the death penalty. A sergeant, a captain, a colonel or a general has power to make a decision which might result in people under his command being killed and others being in safety. Are we really saying that if a platoon commander has among the soldiers serving under him someone with whom he is having a homosexual relationship and he has to choose between putting one section in a dangerous forward position and another section in a rear position, and he sends the section which has his homosexual boyfriend in it to the safer of the two positions, the people in the other section are not going to comment on it?

**Mrs. Currie:** Nobody is suggesting that there are no possible circumstances in which there may be offences that are damaging to Army discipline. The circumstance that my hon. Friend describes is exactly one of those! It might as well happen in a mixed company, and we are to have those in future as well. Is my hon. Friend saying that we should not have heterosexuals in the armed forces, either?

**Mr. Brazier:** On the second point, I have always made it clear that I am profoundly opposed to having women serving in combat units, among many other reasons, because of the divisions that it brings in families in the service world. We have seen examples of that already with, for example, the incident that occurred on a Royal Navy ship only a year after a firm Government pledge that we would not have women on combat ships.

As for my hon. Friend's first point, she said that in such circumstances an offence would have occurred. Would she like to tell the House what the offence would have been?

**Mrs. Currie:** With due respect, my hon. Friend should show what offences he thinks would occur. There are many circumstances in which both duress and undue pressure may occur and individual relationships—it could easily be a relationship of a gambling debt or any sort of mistake —may destroy Army discipline. That should be the offence and there should be many grounds for it. It should not be restricted or enhanced if it involves homosexuality.

**Mr. Brazier:** My hon. Friend appears to have wholly missed my point, which is that there cannot be a sexual relationship between two members of a unit, especially if one is serving directly under the other, without it being prejudicial to the fighting capacity of the unit. There is no question whether a specific offence has occurred. When people's lives are in danger, there must not be an appearance of unfairness, and it is impossible to avoid that.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Brazier:** I shall give way in a moment.

That is why people such as Colin Powell in America and those at all levels of the armed forces in the United Kingdom are overwhelmingly opposed to homosexuals serving in the armed forces and a substantial proportion of people in the armed forces are opposed to women being in certain categories of combat unit—for example, serving on combat ships or in infantry units.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** What would happen if the commanding officer had a second cousin or some other relative in his brigade or whatever? Would the hon. Gentleman say that if the officer had any feelings about anyone his professional judgment would be clouded? The argument can be reduced to the absurd and I suspect that the hon. Gentleman is well on the way to doing that.

**Mr. Brazier:** There is no comparison at all with someone who has a second cousin in his unit. Two members of a unit having a sexual relationship, especially when one is serving under the other, is prejudicial to a unit in action. I simply claim as testimony the voices of many people who have served in action and who have written to the newspapers on this issue over the years. I cannot

*[Mr. Brazier]*

remember the last time a person who, having served in a dangerous position in the armed forces, wrote to a newspaper and took the position that we should have homosexuals in the armed forces.

I shall move on because I do not wish to detain the House for long. Having homosexuals in the armed forces is not simply prejudicial to the fighting capability of units. When a large number of young people are involved in a unit, the armed forces have a duty to ensure that they are protected from unfair and unreasonable influences. An officer or NCO with control of a 17 or 18-year-old in a unit has a disproportionate amount of power.

I shall conclude on a point of particular interest to me because, although I have never met the man, a large number of people whom I know have done so. There is an officer—it would not be fair to give his name as he is still alive—who served in the last war in the same regiment as that in which I served. During that war, he was decorated no fewer than four times for gallantry. He was not only a brave officer, but an extremely imaginative one. His concept of operations contributed a great deal towards Bill Slim's victories against the Japanese.

Immediately after the war, as a result of an extremely shabby investigation which would have made my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) go apoplectic, he was discovered to be homosexual—he was having a relationship with a young boy—and was thrown out of the Army. Because of his distinguished record, he was not cashiered—he was simply quietly given the opportunity to resign, whereas almost any other officer in the same circumstances would have been cashiered. Of the people with whom I have discussed this man's case —I know a number of people who served with him—I have yet to meet one who did not, after saying how sad they were that the Army lost his services, nevertheless continue to take the view that it would be disastrous to have homosexuals in uniform in the British Army.

11.24 pm

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): I should like to know how many gay soldiers laid down their lives during the last war. No one knew that they were gay. The hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) ought to bear that in mind when he quotes that story as an argument to support his views, which I find wholly unacceptable and unpersuasive.

The Minister referred to ethnic monitoring. I believe that it is right that we should have ethnic monitoring in the armed forces. It is good to see that the Government have come round to that way of thinking. But unless one can know what ranks are reached by those of Afro-Caribbean and Asian origin, one cannot work out what on earth ethnic monitoring is all about. The measure of success is whether such people rise through the ranks year by year. That would show that the policies were working.

There should be ethnic monitoring of soldiers not only on the way into the armed forces but on leaving the armed forces. We still hear of officers and rankers leaving the armed services because they feel oppressed by racial harassment. A considerable amount of debriefing is also necessary so that the procedures can be further improved.

The Minister mentioned that one of the great deterrents that prevents those of Afro Caribbean and Asian origin from joining and staying in the armed services is racism within the services. It happens in the police too. It is vital that statements are made at the highest level by those in control that under no circumstances will racism, racial abuse or racial intolerance be tolerated in the armed forces. We are pleased that the new Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has made clear his position in respect of racial harassment and intolerance within the Metropolitan police. We want to see that echoed in the armed forces. Racial intolerance is the real deterrent to more of the Afro Caribbean and Asian communities volunteering to serve in the armed forces.

I remember the recommendation made by the Select Committee in May 1991 and the welcome decision by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement last year to accept the recommendation but to introduce legislation only when the timetable allowed. We must ask for a specific date. It could be interpreted as dragging of feet if we heard one year after another that, as soon as the timetable allowed, legislation would be introduced. The Sexual Offences Act 1967 will need to be amended.

It remains Ministry of Defence policy neither to recruit nor to retain any person who admits to being homosexual, lesbian or gay. It is a ground for instant dismissal. My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) said that that was absurd. The special investigation bureau routinely investigates allegations of homosexuality. Suspects are interrogated and asked to name names. Their rooms are searched. Their letters and diaries are read. Any leads are followed up.

As a result of what can only be described as witch hunts, about 75 people a year are administratively discharged. They lose their careers. They find it difficult to find new employment. Indeed, they lose their pension rights. I understand that Robert Ely, the man who gave evidence to the Select Committee which made that recommendation, has lost considerable amounts in pension payments. It is intolerable for someone who assisted the House to lose pension payments as a result of what happened subsequently.

In 1991, the Prime Minister announced that, in view of changing social attitudes, homosexuality would no longer be a bar to security clearances for members of the civil service. Given the circumstances, that policy should also be extended to the armed services.

The hon. Member for Derby, South——

**Mrs. Currie:** Derbyshire, South.

**Mr. Banks:** I apologise. I would not like to truncate the hon. Lady or her constituency. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) made a characteristically strong speech with which I entirely agreed. She mentioned the instructions to the Defence Council. They are absurd and it is worth reading them into the record. They are, however, distasteful, so I shall quote just some of them.

Experienced medics are told that men suspected of being passive partners in a gay sex act can be spotted by their "feminine gestures", clothes and make up. No doubt they go around saying, "Give us a kiss, sailor." It is absurd that such guidelines are issued as a means of identifying people. The instructions on the medical examination state:

"For evidence whether the man may have played the passive role:

(a) Note the general appearance. Look for feminine gestures, nature of clothing and use of cosmetics etc.

(b) Examine the anus externally for:
Appearance of bruising or inflammation.
Presence of redundance or thickening of the skin.
Evidence of irritation, inflammation or presence of thread worms.
Recent tears, lacerations, fissures and piles, old scars due to previous ulceration or any other physical signs associated with conditions causing dilation or relaxation of the anal sphincter.

(c) Examine the anus for size and elasticity (it is useful to measure the size of the opening by some standard measure such as the number of fingers). Note any discomfort or otherwise during the examination. A speculum may be used."

That is what follows when someone suspects that a member of the armed services may be homosexual. It is wholly repugnant that anyone should be subjected to such an examination.

**Mrs. Currie:** The hon. Gentleman did what I could not bring myself to do, and he has demonstrated to the House why. Does he agree that if such an examination were carried out in civilian life it would almost certainly constitute an offence in itself?

**Mr. Banks:** I agree that an assault on the person would be committed by such an examination. Conservative Members may feel that it is wrong for homosexuals to serve in the armed forces, but surely they would accept that to commit such an assault on a person, on the ground of his being suspected of having homosexual tendencies, is wholly unacceptable in the British armed forces of 1993.

**Mr. Cohen:** Does my hon. Friend also appreciate that if a member of the armed forces refuses to undergo such an examination, a further disciplinary charge can be brought against him?

**Mr. Banks:** According to the instructions, that can, apparently, happen. Whatever the decision reached, the military career of that individual is lost.

We should bear in mind that we are talking about people who want to serve in the armed forces. They want to serve Queen and country. Some of us may find that concept strange at times, but that is what they want to do. It is appalling that those people should be indicted on the grounds of their sexual orientation.

Other countries have a far more civilised approach to this matter. I would not mind if we were asking the House to step into the unknown and to do something that is not done anywhere else. In the majority of the armed services of NATO countries, however, being homosexual is not an offence, as it is in the British armed forces.

Ireland and the United States are in the process of changing their laws to allow lesbians and gays to serve in their armed forces. Australia ended its ban on homosexuals serving in its armed forces in November 1992; Canada did the same in October 1992. The armed forces of Austria and Belgium are open to lesbians and gay men. Denmark has allowed lesbians and gay men to serve in its armed forces since 1979. The armed forces of Finland, France and Germany are all open to lesbians and gays—in Germany, homosexuals have been allowed in the armed forces for the past 10 years.

The Netherlands allows members of its armed forces of the opposite and same sex to engage in sexual relationships together so long as they are off base and off duty. I saw an interesting television programme about a Dutch lieutenant-colonel who was openly gay—one does not have to hide anything in the Netherlands. Members of his regiment were asked what they thought of that man and they were entirely supportive of him. They recognised him as a professional officer, who put his profession first, before his sexual orientation.

Norway has no ban, and has instructed doctors in the service to do all that they can to free homosexuals from discrimination. Spain ended its ban in 1984, and Switzerland has opened all its services to lesbians and gays. Ireland has just started a review and has undertaken to allow entry. New Zealand has ceased to enforce its ban since December 1992, and the United States is due formally to lift its ban on 15 July this year. That is the evidence. All the Governments of those countries are as concerned about the defence of their countries as the British Government are about the defence of this country. They are all just as interested in morale and discipline in their armed forces as we are. If they can do it, so should we.

11.35 pm

**Mr. Roger Evans** (Monmouth): I am driven to speak by my hon. Friend the Minister raising in a serious debate a matter that I believe will cause great disquiet in the Conservative party and the country and among our voters, on an issue that was not in the Conservative manifesto, and that most of us did not raise in the general election campaign. If it is a question of awarding the Hillary Clinton prize for political correctness, it does not go to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) but to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), for suggesting that mutiny can be adequately dealt with by community service orders. That is what I take to be the logic of his ludicrous and absurd position.

What I have to say to my hon. Friend the Minister is rather more serious. He opened the debate as though this were some relatively minor administrative procedure, upon which a number of interesting matters might be raised by himself and other Members of this honourable House. That it utterly mistaken. The message and the great British achievement of constitutional government rests upon two matters arising out of our Glorious Revolution in 1688. The first is the rule of law, and that Ministers obey the law. The second is that the service discipline measures have to be renewed on an annual basis. That is the fundamental to which we owe our constitutional liberty. President Aylwin of Chile goes abroad and General Pinochet marches some soldiers through Santiago, and there is a whisper of a coup d'etat, which has to be denied. We have never had that threat from our armed services because of the seriousness and importance of this annual debate. That is why the debate is important, and why a number of issues raised tonight are, in that context, relatively trivial.

My hon. Friend the Minister may or may not have said something that is at least as fundamental. I seek clarification—this is the only point of substance that I make in this speech to him—on one point. Unless and until the law of the land is changed by statute, I trust that he will give an assurance that the present law will be enforced among the armed services. Some of his words suggested that it might be administratively convenient not to do so, or that a comfortable agreement between both sides of the Select Committee might suggest a changing climate of opinion. Unless and until an Act of Parliament

*[Mr. Roger Evans]*

has been passed, the law is the law of the land and the rule of the law is paramount, and my hon. Friend is bound by it. I trust that he will give a clear assurance to that effect.

11.37 pm

**Mr. Mike Watson** (Glasgow Central): We had been having a temperate debate until the contribution of the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans). He seemed to have been driven by hatred against people whom he sees as being unnatural in some way.

The position as outlined by the Minister is clear. The Opposition feel that the Government have not gone far enough. I want the Minister to say that the proposal to change the law—a necessary move that has been outlined by those who have spoken—will be carried through, and that there will be an appropriate commitment in the Queen's Speech when Parliament resumes later this year.

The Minister stressed the need to outlaw discrimination and went into some detail on the steps taken on ethnic monitoring, but he was rather weak about ways to tackle the discrimination against homosexuals and lesbians in the armed forces. It is not good enough. He did not show anything like the urgency that is necessary, and that should be in evidence following the remarks of the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. A year has passed since he made those remarks, and we are entitled to expect some firm instructions.

The Defence Council instructions have been referred to already. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) referred to them but declined to comment in detail, whereas my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) went into detail. I want to refer to some aspects of those instructions so that they appear on the record. The people of this country should have some knowledge of what is involved. The instructions, which the Ministry of Defence has confirmed are still operative, are based on the premise that the law has not been changed and that there is no intention to do so. Indeed, the instruction that sets out the rules for investigating a homosexual is clearly based on the assumption that the criminal law is still operative.

I want to highlight two or three incredible aspects of those instructions. First, I want to deal with what is termed "unnatural behaviour". What is unnatural behaviour? How can it be defined? I do not know what the Minister does in the privacy of his bedroom or who he does it with. I do not know whether it is natural. I suspect that it is different from what I do in similar circumstances. That does not mean that he is natural and I am unnatural, or vice versa. For heaven's sake, what is unnatural behaviour?

**Mr. Tony Banks:** Voting Tory.

**Mr. Watson:** Unfortunately, that is not quite unnatural enough.

The instructions state that there are

"important differences in law in respect of unnatural behaviour other than homosexuality."

Cases are not necessarily offences under the Sexual Offences Act 1967, yet they can still constitute a reason for discharge from the armed forces. "Transvestism" and "other forms of sexual deviancy" are listed.

The instructions refer to why homosexual practices may occur:

"In many cases excessive alcohol, emotional upsets or family problems play a part in leading to involvement in homosexual practices, especially by those who are not true homosexuals."

How can the Minister define what is a true homosexual? How can Army officers, even medical officers, define that? It is an absolute nonsense, yet that is how such practices are investigated.

The instructions talk of treating those who are accused of indulging in homosexual activity as deviant, not just in their actions but mentally. They state:

"Initially a Naval Psychiatrist should only be consulted at the discretion of the examining Medical Officer, and his task then would be mainly to establish whether there is associated mental illness and a need for psychiatric treatment."

The assumption is that we are dealing with lunatics, not people indulging in activities to which their sexual orientation leads them and which may or may not be unnatural, depending on who is judging them.

I do not need to refer to the medical examinations as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West has done so. I merely want to repeat that the instructions state that if the order to undergo a medical examination is not abided by, force should not be used. However, a further disciplinary charge can be brought against that individual. That is unwarranted coercion. If there is an examination, that could be considered to amount to an assault.

Where is the evidence that lesbians or gay men present any security risk, as is suggested in the instructions? Will the Minister outline those risks? It is important to know because it is not clear why a risk for an individual who happens to be homosexual is not a risk for an individual who happens to be heterosexual. The Minister referred to a potentially disruptive influence. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South eloquently explained that heterosexuals have difficulties, differences and jealousies. It is increasingly common for members of the opposite sexes to come into contact in the armed forces. Why should not that be a source of concern and a potential security risk? People who are not homosexual or lesbian fall out; there is animosity and therefore potential difficulties in the way that they carry out their duties as members of the armed forces. All sorts of subjective judgments are being made. The Minister should not make them and he should not allow the armed forces to do so.

Mention has been made of the situation in the United States of America, and General Colin Powell was quoted. I am not aware of any research undertaken in the United Kingdom, but Pentagon reports published in 1988 and 1989 found that

"Studies of homosexual veterans make clear that having a same gender or an opposite gender orientation is unrelated to job performance in the same way as being left or right handed."

That finding, the result of American army research, was published by the United States defence personnel security research and education centre in 1988. Why should contrary evidence be found in respect of this country's armed forces?

There is a heavy onus on the Ministry of Defence to justify the treatment that it continues to mete out to homosexuals. I echo the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid). It is important to decriminalise homosexual acts that are not illegal in civilian law. It is intolerable that such a distinction should be made. A year ago, we were given an assurance by another Minister, and the Minister said tonight that a change to the law will be introduced. Why not this year?

Goodness knows how we would have filled the parliamentary programme had it not been for the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. We are already operating only two or three days a week, and there is no reason to believe that the parliamentary programme will be any heavier after the summer recess. I invite the Minister to make a commitment now that this year's Queen's Speech will include the necessary proposals to ensure that the law for the armed forces is brought into line with civilian law. That commitment should be acted upon.

11.46 pm

**Dr. Reid:** Tonight, the House has been debating the Army discipline Acts—*[Interruption.]* With the permission of the House——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. The hon. Gentleman means, with the leave of the House.

**Dr. Reid:** With the leave of the House. I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am neither a Tory, rich, nor a Queen's Counsel. I understand that such people know about such things better than me.

**Mr. Henry Bellingham** (Norfolk, North-West): I can see an hon. and learned Member who is rich and a Queen's Counsel.

**Dr. Reid:** It seems that I have touched a button.

The House has debated also the discipline Acts that apply to the Navy and the Royal Air Force. While we have been discussing how to impose discipline on our service men and women, we all know that—as my father used to say—there is only one form of discipline, which is self-discipline. We are greatly privileged to have armed forces that exercise self-discipline, sometimes in the most difficult situations—Bosnia was mentioned earlier—but debating discipline in our armed forces is not to suggest that they need that form of discipline.

11.47 pm

**Mr. Hanley:** With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will begin by reminding right hon. and hon. Members that women in the armed forces have always undertaken a wide variety of duties. Over the past three to four years, we have announced decisions further to widen their employment opportunities and to recruit many more of them. Over the past five years, the number of women in the services has increased from 16,000 to 19,000.

Right hon. and hon. Members may have read newspaper reports of the tasks for which women in the armed forces are now qualified. They can train as air crew in all three services. The Royal Navy has two women training as observers, the Army has three trained female pilots, and the RAF has two trained female pilots and a further 28 in training, plus nine trained navigators and 14 women undergoing navigator training. Considerable progress is being made.

I could list many other examples of progress in respect of women in the armed forces. It is extremely important that they should be given the opportunity to prove their worth. There is no doubt that they are of high quality and have dedication as great as that of their male counterparts.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) mentioned capital punishment. As he knows, the death penalty is retained as a non-mandatory sentence for the five offences that he listed, all of which are positive acts of treachery involving the enemy; but the policy is that such sentences should never be carried out in peace time. Incidents such as those to which the hon. Gentleman referred would not result in capital punishment.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) mentioned recruits under 18. Thirty-five per cent. of all recruits are under 18. If those under 18 could not be deployed with their units overseas on active service, many would become disappointed and disillusioned. Many have trained with specific colleagues and want to be with those colleagues; such action could lead to retention problems, and it might be impossible to redeploy men in the work for which they had trained. It would be a great waste of expensive training, and would lead to the deterioration not only of their morale but of their skills. That, too, could lead to retention problems.

To restrict recruitment to those aged 18 and over would create severe manning difficulties for the services. It would also cause great disappointment to young people under 18 who wish to enter the services. If 16 and 17-year-olds could not join the services, many would be likely to take up other employment, and would be permanently lost to the services.

The hon. and learned Gentleman may welcome the information that our service men serving on the streets in Northern Ireland must be at least 18—as, indeed, are service women—except those in barracks, who must be at least seventeen and a half.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** Let me put the record straight. I am not arguing against the recruitment of those under 18; I am merely asking whether it is wise, in the light of past public opinion—particularly in relation to the Gulf war—to allow those under 18 to serve in theatres in which their lives are at risk.

**Mr. Hanley:** I have expressed our view, and the record will stand.

I am not sure what the hon. Member for Motherwell, North meant when he mentioned my comments about ethnic minorities. They were all positive, and I believe that they will be welcomed by those whom they affect. Either the hon. Gentleman was not listening, or he missed the point of what I was saying. I am happy to set it out again—or perhaps he will read *Hansard* tomorrow. If he does so, I think he will agree that what I said was entirely positive. Those who know me are aware that I would never say anything that the ethnic minorities would find upsetting.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East suggested that ethnic minority personnel suffered from bullying more than their white colleagues. I have no evidence of that, but, as I said in my speech, we regard any form of racial discrimination as utterly unacceptable.

**Mr. John Marshall** (Hendon, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that the comments of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) can scarcely have been designed to encourage ethnic minorities to join the armed forces—which is what he set out to do?

**Mr. Hanley:** I note my hon. Friend's comment. Let me return to the subject of ethnic monitoring.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, North asked whether we would publish a breakdown of the ethnic origins of serving personnel by unit and regiment, including the Brigade of Guards. I can confirm that all

*[Mr. Hanley]*

corps, regiments and branches of the services will be included in the ethnic origins survey of serving personnel. We plan to publish an analysis of the ethnic origins of serving personnel by services, and between officers and other ranks, and we fully intend the ethnic origins of serving personnel to be listed in terms of both rank and gender. The results of the ethnic monitoring of recruits will be published in "Defence Statistics", the publication that has replaced Vol. 2 of the statement of defence estimates. We are absolutely committed to publishing a breakdown, to make sure that we have figures for the House to consider and for it then to judge progress over the years.

As for trade unions, the Select Committee which considered the Armed Forces Bill in 1991 recommended that we should clarify the role that service personnel are permitted to play in trade union activities, for the position is vague. We have decided to issue new instructions, explaining that service personnel may become members of trade unions and professional bodies in order to enhance their trade skills and professional knowledge and as an aid to resettlement into civilian life, if necessary. They may not take part in any activity of a political nature, or in industrial action organised by a trade union or professional body. I hope, however, that the House agrees that that represents some progress.

The larger part of the debate on the order covered the subject of homosexuality. Various hon. Members raised the question of the so-called guidance. That was written in 1987. Hon. Members quoted from that publication. It is not current. It has become time expired. It has not been in force since the beginning of 1992, but new guidelines are being reviewed and new ones will be published, after careful consideration.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) said how disgraceful it was that the law was being broken and that nothing was said about this issue in the manifesto. No one doubts that the law exists, and that it cannot be changed except by the House, but my hon. Friend must be aware that the prosecuting authorities have discretion over whether to prosecute. That is the practice to which we adhere.

**Mr. Roger Evans:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Hanley:** No, I shall not give way, because——

*It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion,* MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

*Question agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the draft Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order 1993, which was laid before the House on 26th May, be approved.

## ESTIMATES

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 131 (Liaison Committee).*

That this House agrees with the Report [15th June] of the Liaison Committee.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

### FISHING VESSELS (SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS)

That the Fishing Vessels (Safety Improvements) (Grants) Scheme 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1325), dated 20th May, a copy of which was laid before this House on 21st May, be approved.

### HOUSING ACTION TRUSTS

That the draft Tower Hamlets Housing Action Trust (Area and Constitution) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 12th May, be approved.

That the draft Castle Vale Housing Action Trust (Area and Constitution) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 12th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## TRANSPORT

*Ordered,*

That Mr. Paul Channon be added to the Transport Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

## PETITION

## Channel Tunnel Rail Link

11.51 pm

**Mr. Andrew Mackinlay** (Thurrock): It is both my duty and my privilege to present a petition on behalf of Councillors Millane and Aberdein, residents of Thurrock and other people in Essex—the petition contains more than 3,000 signatures—against the proposed Channel tunnel rail link to London. The petition

Sheweth that the proposed route for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link to London announced by the Secretary of State for Transport, in Parliament on 22nd March 1993, will significantly damage and blight the lives and property of residents in a large area of the Borough of Thurrock, as well as creating noise pollution, detracting from the visual amenity, whilst destroying jobs and industry.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that the Honourable House shall seek to persuade the Secretary of State that before determining the precise line of the Channel Tunnel rail link route and the introduction of a Bill in Parliament, shall commission an independent public enquiry charged with examining the advantages and disadvantages of ALL the alternative route options, including those entering London South of the River Thames.

And your petitioners, as in duty will ever pray, &c.

*To lie upon the Table.*

## Water Privatisation

11.58 pm

**Mr. Gordon McMaster** (Paisley, South): This petition contains some 33,000 signatures from people throughout the length and breadth of Scotland. It shows their complete dissatisfaction with and total opposition to the Government's proposals to privatise the water and sewerage services in Scotland. It supplements a petition containing about 85,000 names which has already been delivered to the Scottish Office. People throughout Scotland were willing to queue up to have the opportunity to sign this petition.

Now that I have described the petition, I shall read it.

The petition

Sheweth

That the privatisation of water and sewerage services in England and Wales has led to higher charges and increased numbers of disconnections of domestic water supplies. That water is an important natural asset, vital to the maintenance of public health.

That the provision of water and sewerage services must be affordable to all and that this is best ensured if those services remain in public ownership.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House does not pass legislation to remove water and sewerage services in Scotland from public ownership.

*To lie upon the Table.*

## Middle East Hostages

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

11.59 pm

**Mr. John Marshall** (Hendon, South) *rose*—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. Before the hon. Gentleman commences, I understand from a note that was left for me that he proposes to give way to three other hon. Members. It is a tradition that an Adjournment debate is, on the whole, for a single Member. Occasionally, a colleague or somebody who has a specific interest is allowed to intervene. It is not a general debate and therefore, on the whole, the Chair does not welcome the hon. Member giving way to more than one colleague.

**Mr. Marshall:** I hope that we can conduct this debate in a fruitful way. The subject is the future of hostages in the middle east and the peace process. One could talk about a large number of specific cases. The first one that I refer to the House is that of Zakaria Baumel, whose fate has been shrouded in mystery since 1982.

I speak with some feeling about this case, because his parents first came to see me in 1985, at which time they did not know what had happened to their son—and they still do not. They know that he was captured on 11 June 1982 and that the next day he was paraded around Damascus and displayed to locals. Since then, there has been a complete news blackout—no letter, no photograph, nothing. His father has gone to the United Nations, to Tunis, to London, but is still no wiser about the fate of his son, who disappeared more than 11 years ago. If he is alive, he should be reunited with his family, and if he is dead his body should be returned for a decent burial. At the very least, his parents have a right to know what has happened to their son.

The second case is that of Joseph Fink whose parents come from Manchester, and whom I met in the House. He again was captured in 1986, after which things were shrouded in a veil of mystery and silence. His parents never heard anything from him—not a letter, not a photograph. Until 1991, no one knew what had happened, and then irrefutable evidence was given through the good offices of the United Nations that young Joseph Fink had died in captivity. Eighteen months later, he is still denied a proper burial, and for the past seven years his parents have experienced a living hell. For years, their lives alternated between feelings of hope and despair. Now, they know that they will never see their son again, but surely they have the right to give him a decent burial.

The third case is that of Ron Arad, which has troubled many hon. Members. The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) are both abroad on Select Committee business, otherwise they would have been here and would have tried to speak briefly in the debate. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), who is sitting on the Government Front Bench, has been active in private, although in public he has been subject to the Trappist vows of the Whips Office. I should like to thank him for the concern that he has expressed about the case. I know that all my colleagues in Barnet have received many letters and have responded sympathetically to them. I hope that the

*[Mr. Marshall]*

united voice of a number of colleagues in the House may help to renuite Ron Arad with his loving and anxious family.

Certain facts are beyond dispute. The first is that Ron Arad was captured in October 1986, nearly seven years ago. The second is that he has been alive in captivity because his family received photographs of him alive in 1987. Since then, he has been covered in a veil of silence. Nothing official has been heard for six years, although it is believed that he is still alive.

One must ask his captors some questions. Why have they broken the Geneva convention? Ron Arad is a prisoner of war. He should be treated accordingly and given the rights of a prisoner of war. Why have his captors held him incommunicado? Why have they prevented visits from the Red Cross? Why have they not allowed him to write to his relatives or to receive letters from them? They are clearly a group of very heartless men. His mother, Batya, is a widow. Why, in the evening of her life, do they deprive her of the company of her eldest son? Instead of enjoying his companionship, she has scoured the world seeking to mobilise international public opinion to secure his release.

Ron Arad's daughter was one year old when he was captured. Yesterday it was father's day in the United Kingdom. For Yuval Arad, "father" is the name of an absentee parent. It means someone of whom others talk but whom she does not know. For seven of her eight years, father has been somewhere in the middle east. What sort of people deprive a young child of the companionship and love of her father?

Life is extremely difficult for Ron Arad's wife. For most of her married life, he has been in captivity. She has heard nothing since 1987; not a letter, not a card, not a photograph, not a word. She has had to bring up her daughter on her own, not knowing whether her husband is dead or alive, not knowing where he might be held, not knowing who might be holding him. All that she knows is that, if he is alive, he is being held in pretty insalubrious conditions.

Why do Ron Arad's captors refuse the Red Cross access to him? Is it because they are ashamed of the conditions in which they are holding him? Why do they deprive his loved ones of news about his fate? Why do they deprive his elderly mother of her son? Why do they deprive an eight-year-old girl of the love, companionship and friendship of her father? Why do they deprive Tami of her husband's presence? Ron Arad has been a prisoner for longer than anyone in the second world war. Why should he be treated worse than the prisoners of war in Korea?

Concern is not limited to hon. Members. When Ron Arad's brothers visited London recently, Baroness Thatcher met them both and expressed her grave concern about the way he has been treated. The European Parliament has also passed a resolution condemning the treatment of Ron Arad. Amnesty International has also shown a deep interest in this case, and officers of the United Nations have expressed concern. Interest in the case is purely humanitarian.

The exact location of Ron Arad's captivity is not known, but it is known that the Iranian people have a substantial influence over his captors. That is why I welcome the meeting that took place between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the Iranian chargé d'affaires. The captors of Ron Arad have the opportunity to right a grievous wrong, but also to put in train the peace process in the middle east.

Hopes of peace in the middle east are greater than at any time since Camp David. The Israeli Government are committed to peace and compromise. The American Government have offered to underwrite a settlement over Golan by placing United States troops there.

Peace in the middle east will come in the form of a series of building blocks which generate mutual trust.

The Israelis have shown that they are willing to compromise and to concede territory. It is not unreasonable for them to ask others to make a similar compromise. Each individual concession may be small in itself but together they create the climate of opinion in which there can be mutual trust instead of mutual suspicion—and without that trust, we will never get peace in the middle east.

Having been re-elected by the Iranian people, President Rafsanjani has an unparalleled opportunity to help peace in the middle east by using his substantial influence over the captors of Ron Arad, and to end his living nightmare. The Iranians have a chance to reunite him with his family and, in doing so, to help to secure peace in the middle east.

When we ask ourselves why John McCarthy and Terry Waite are living in freedom today, one of the answers that we must give is that Israel helped to unravel the log jam in the middle east by releasing 100 prisoners in 1991, through the mediation of Jacques Picco, who was then assistant United Nations Secretary-General. The release of the prisoners at the start of that exchange led to the freedom of John McCarthy and Terry Waite.

There was clearly an unwritten understanding that, if Israel released prisoners, she would receive some of her hostages back. What did she receive? Merely the remains of one Druze soldier. She was told that two of her hostages were dead, but their parents were denied the right to receive their bodies back. No word was given of the fate of Baumel, Feldman and Katz. Most galling of all, Ron Arad, who is certainly alive, was maintained in captivity. The west rejoiced at the freedom of Terry Waite and John McCarthy. We in the west should recognise that we have a debt of honour to the people of Israel and should campaign to ensure that Ron Arad enjoys his freedom.

Israel showed remarkable self-restraint when the Scud missiles were thundering down on her towns in 1991. She showed remarkable trust when she released prisoners in 1991. She should surely be rewarded in 1993.

This debate is about hostages in the middle east, and it would be negligent of the House not to refer to the plight of Michael Wainwright, Paul Ride and Simon Dunn, who are all imprisoned in Iraq. They all strayed into Iraq unwittingly. The border between Iraq and Kuwait is not exactly the clearest border on the international map. All of them were innocents abroad, and I ask the regime in Iraq to think of the hardship that is being imposed on their families by their continued incarceration in that country.

If Iraq is concerned about her reputation in the world, she will speedily ensure that those innocent men, who did not deliberately set out to go into Iraq illegally, are freed and allowed to rejoin their families. If Iraq wants to return to the international family, she should release those prisoners immediately.

12.13 am

**Sir John Wheeler** (Westminster, North): You have already advised the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is not normally the custom for further speeches to be made in an Adjournment debate. I therefore rise at the bidding of my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), because of the circumstances of the debate, and perhaps to enable me to say a word on behalf of the other hon. Members present this evening in support of what my hon. Friend has said.

My hon. Friend has addressed the House in a way that illustrates his love of humanity and concern for people who are unjustly held in custody in appalling circumstances—whether as a result of military action or as a result of seizure because they have strayed across the border between Kuwait and Iraq.

What matters to the House tonight is that hon. Members should demonstrate their concern about those injustices and show their sympathy to people in Israel and elsewhere, including the United Kingdom, for the well-being of those unfortunate people. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will shortly reply. I hope that he can take the voice and view of the House tonight as part of his case to the United Nations when he urges the Secretary-General's office to redouble its splendid effort to help to recover these hostages and prisoners.

We know that the United Nations has a considerable track record in this regard and I know that the House hopes that Mr. Picco's successor, Mr. Sevan, will continue to use all his best endeavours to obtain the release of Ron Arad and of the others to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South has referred so well in this debate. We owe my hon. Friend a great debt of gratitude for obtaining the debate and for bringing the plight of these unfortunate people to the attention of the House and of my hon. Friend the Minister.

12.15 am

**Mr. David Sumberg** (Bury, South): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) and to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make a brief intervention to support his eloquent plea on behalf of the family of Joseph Spink, who comes from Manchester, and on behalf of the campaign for the freedom of the Israeli, Ron Arad. I had the great privilege of meeting Ron Arad's family when they visited the House a few weeks ago. I and other hon. Members assured the family then that we would do all in our power to prevail on our Government to persuade his captors to release him. This debate is part fulfilment of that promise.

I speak tonight not only on behalf of Ron Arad, but on behalf of many of my constituents who are actively involved in the campaign to secure his freedom. That campaign is strongly supported by the *Manchester Jewish Press*, which is based in my constituency and which has been tireless in its efforts to remind us of Ron Arad's plight. I pay tribute to all those dedicated campaigners.

A few years ago, when many of us were battling away for the release from the former Soviet Union of those who wished to make a new life in the west and in Israel, we used to refer to the would-be emigrants as prisoners of conscience. Today, Ron Arad is a prisoner of conscience. He believes, and we believe, that he should have been freed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South said, when the other western hostages, Terry Waite, John McCarthy and all the rest of them, came home. He was part of that deal. The fact that he remains in prison is a matter for the conscience of the west.

The time has come for Ron Arad to return home, and the time has come, too, for western Governments, including our own, to fight for his release. The time has come for the world to observe in the case of Ron Arad the biblical injunction to undo the heavy burden and to let the oppressed go free.

12.18 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd):** I am glad to add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who has raised the subject of the future of the hostages in the middle east and the peace process. He, our right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) and our hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) are all familiar with the problems of the middle east and they have always successfully articulated the hopes and frustrations of their constituents about that troubled area.

I am also pleased to see in the Chamber this evening my hon. Friends the Members for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) and for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes). All my hon. Friends, including those who have not spoken tonight, have throughout their parliamentary careers been constant in their endeavours by letters, by questions, by debate where possible and by representations to Ministers to bring understanding to the problems that we are debating tonight.

I want to make a few preliminary remarks about the peace process generally. The parties returned last week to Washington for what is likely to be a crucial round of negotiations. While it is true that the last round produced no major breakthrough, we should not dismiss the importance of the fact that the parties are continuing their discussions.

There has been real progress in the discussions between Israel and Jordan and in those between Israel and the Lebanon. The differences between the negotiating positions of Israel and Syria have narrowed to one central issue of definition of the terms of the Israeli withdrawal from the Golan and the terms of the peace which Israel could then expect. Much waits on progress in the Israeli-Palestinian track.

There have been some public exchanges on the extent of the difficulties, but the positive point is this: for the first time, the two sides are engaged in detailed discussion of substance, for example on the transfer of powers to Palestinian authorities during the interim period. This in itself is very helpful. Indeed, there are signs that the differences are narrowing.

If sometimes the progress in the Washington talks looks slow, we should remember how much has been achieved in this respect since Madrid. The whole process since then has undoubtedly broken down some of the barriers of misunderstanding.

The new round in Washington is crucial because speed is essential. There is, I believe, a window of opportunity at present, but it may not remain open for very much longer. There are those in the region who oppose the process and are out to damage it. The longer the process fails to

*[Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd]*

produce concrete progress for all to see, the greater is the potential for disillusion, and the greater the opportunities for mischief.

There is already some disillusion about the situation in the occupied territories. Much as we welcome the evident will of the Israeli Government to pursue the negotiating process, there is too little evidence of a matching determination to lighten the burdens of occupation.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, is on record as having criticised some of the excesses of the Israeli defence forces in the occupied territories. The economic situation there is dire, and is deteriorating further in the wake of the restrictions placed on movements across the green line.

The social and economic effects of cutting off the west bank from Jerusalem are particularly serious. On the other side, the continued acts of violence against Israelis, both in the occupied territories and in Israel, have served only to damage the prospects for peace. Some at least of those acts are perpetrated by those who are actively trying to destroy the process.

It is essential that Palestinians recognise that Israel has legitimate security requirements, which must be met and which are increasingly acknowledged and accepted across the world. The Israeli people will accept the need for comprises only if they are convinced that these will maintain or enhance their security. In that context, I understand why my hon. Friends have raised their questions in this debate.

I want now to refer to the hostages in the middle east. Throughout the hostage saga, the United Kingdom Government have maintained that all those held outside the due process of law should be released. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South has reminded us, Israel released 100 detainees during the negotiations and that led to the release of the western hostages. It is very much to be regretted that that has not been reciprocated.

The practice of hostage-taking cannot be condoned under any circumstances. Our views on that have been made clear to all concerned. The United Nations Secretary-General remains committed to pursuing those cases that remain unresolved, and Her Majesty's Government will provide any assistance that they can.

The case of Ron Arad continues to cause the gravest concern. We have great sympathy for his family and the families of all those detained. We have raised the matter with the Iranian authorities, but our ability to achieve results by that route is limited.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South mentioned the United Nations Secretary-General. The best hope for a solution lies with the efforts of his representative, Benon Sevan, whose predecessor was instrumental in securing the release of British hostages held in the Lebanon. He has shown what can be achieved through quiet but firm diplomacy. In that context, the Israeli Government have said that they will release Sheikh Obeid and others if Ron Arad is released. We would like to see all those men freed.

Mention has been made of Private Yossi Fink, who was captured with a colleague while on patrol in southern Lebanon in 1986. In September 1991, the Israelis received information confirming his death. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State has written to his parents a letter of sympathy. Israeli efforts to recover his body continue. There has been no news about Sergeant Zakaria Baumel, who was a member of a tank crew of three reported missing after a battle with Syrian forces during the Israeli invasion of the Lebanon in 1982.

My hon. Friend mentioned three other innocents—Mr. Simon Dunn, Mr. Michael Wainwright and Mr. Paul Ride—on whose behalf I am personally deeply concerned as the Minister responsible. We have raised our concern at the highest possible level and in the strongest possible terms about those three cases, including with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and through a number of Governments with links to the Baghdad regime. European Community Foreign Ministers have issued a statement condemning the continued detention of those men and publicly calling for their release.

In the peace process, as I said earlier, there is a need for speed. I confess to being anxious that further disintegration of the situation on the ground or some outrage could do serious damage to the process. We all look to both sides now to engage in discussion of the details of the transfer of powers in the occupied territories to the Palestinians during the interim period.

There will need to be compromises at the interim stage, and there cannot be agreements which fully meet the hopes and aspirations of both sides, but to an outsider there seems no reason at all why agreements at this stage should involve either side prejudicing basic principles. No one is being asked to do that.

The problem, of course, for both sides is that it is difficult to agree a timetable without any guarantees of the eventual outcome of the negotiations on the final settlement—whether the Palestinians will achieve self-determination, whether the Israelis will achieve full peace and security. There is no risk-free course for either side, but there are enormous risks if the process fails. It is very clear indeed that a breakdown of the process would risk destabilising the entire region. It would be seen as the failure of moderation. It would create opportunities for extremists. It would be likely to perpetuate the burden of occupation, the suffering of the Palestinians, and the pressures on Israeli society.

I do not pretend that the British Government have a central role in the peace process—they are not in the lead—but we welcomed the American initiative under President Bush. We are in no doubt at all that the Clinton Administration are very serious in their determination to see the process through. Along with our European partners, we will continue to help as best we can. Difficult decisions will have to be taken by all sides, and the parties will need all the support and encouragement that they can get to help them to take those decisions. We stand ready to do whatever we can in that process.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Twelve midnight.*

# House of Commons

*Tuesday 22 June 1993*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

ALLIED IRISH BANKS BILL
*Considered; to be read the Third time.*

UNIBANK BILL *[LORDS]*
*Read a Second, time and committed.*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## DEFENCE

### Helicopter Carrier

1. **Mr. Mark Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the defence gains from the recent award of the contract for a helicopter carrier for the Royal Navy.

**The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken):** The new helicopter carrier will significantly enhance the Royal Navy's amphibious capabilities. It will give an amphibious task force the helicopter support needed to deploy or reinforce troops quickly.

**Mr. Robinson:** The decision to award the contract is widely welcomed. Does my hon. Friend agree that the new helicopter platform ship will serve as a pad for the new EH101 helicopter when it comes into service? Will he encourage the Royal Air Force to follow the lead of the Royal Navy and place orders for the helicopter which will do so much to safeguard jobs in the defence industry in the south-west?

**Mr. Aitken:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for paying tribute to the important order which will indeed enhance our defence capabilities for many years to come. What helicopters will fly from it must depend on the outcome of current studies into the support helicopter requirements. However, I am well aware of my hon. Friend's and many others' strong support and enthusiasm for the EH101. I very much hope that, if the price is right, it may turn out to be our choice, just as the Merlin version was our choice for the Royal Navy.

**Mr. Hutton:** I welcome the Government's decision to place a contract for the new helicopter carrier with Vickers Shipbuilders and Engineering Ltd. in my constituency, but will the Minister take this opportunity to confirm that, if the Royal Navy is to have a fully effective and operational amphibious capability, the Government will need to place further orders for the replacement for HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid? When will those orders be placed?

**Mr. Aitken:** The hon. Gentleman is correct. If we are to have a proper amphibious warfare capability, we shall need additional amphibious shipping to go with the LPH in the longer term. I know that his constituents will be delighted that the LPH order has gone to VSEL in his constituency. As for the landing platform dock replacements, I can tell him that project definition studies into the replacements for HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid are being undertaken now. The timing of an order will be subject to the successful outcome of the project definition phase and the subsequent tender process.

### Nuclear Weapons

2. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those countries which possess nuclear weapons capable of being delivered to targets in the United Kingdom.

**The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley):** Such weapons are possessed by Russia, China, France and the United States. Some weapons are also possessed by Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus, but these are controlled by the Commonwealth of Indpendent States.

**Mr. Evans:** Is the Minister aware that the list is growing ever longer, with the Ukraine selling missiles to whoever is prepared to pay for them? Does not that mean that this country's safety is threatened even more? Does he agree it is important that the Walworth road is protected because we want our children and grandchildren not only to read about the demise of socialism in libraries and schools but to be able to go down the Walworth road to see for themselves where the last of the Bolsheviks lived and worked? Does he agree that the Walworth road should be a nuclear-free zone because the safety of that lot is in our interests?

**Mr. Hanley:** I am pleased to reassure my hon. Friend that all tactical nuclear weapons have been withdrawn from the Ukraine and, as I said, strategic weapons are not under its control. I am sure you will agree, Madam Speaker, that it is just possible that if we had four seagoing versions of my hon. Friend, we would probably need no other equipment. However, in the absence of three clones of my hon. Friend, I think we perhaps need to maintain our minimum deterrent.

**Mr. McAllion:** Will the Minister now list all the countries in the world that can be hit by nuclear weapons? Does he accept that, if Britain argues that nuclear deterrence is essential for our defence, so can the Government of every other country in the world? Is not the logic of the Government's position that the entire world should now embark on a policy of nuclear expansion, because there is no other defence against countries that have nuclear weapons?

**Mr. Hanley:** Updating our minimum deterrent is entirely consistent with our obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Furthermore, I would say that we have adhered closely to our responsibilities. After all, in recent years, the United Kingdom has cut its RAF nuclear

strike squadrons from 11 to eight; we have given up nuclear artillery and Lance missile roles; we have announced a reduction of more than half in the WE177 bomb stockpile; and on 15 June last year, we announced the elimination of our maritime tactical nuclear weapon capability—in that area, we have felt able to go further than other nuclear powers. I believe that our record is good, but, for the safety of the world, we need to maintain our minimum nuclear deterrent.

**Mr. Fabricant:** Does my hon. Friend agree that we also need a sub-strategic nuclear weapon? Does he not believe that for a deterrent to be effective, people such as Saddam Hussein have to believe that, if they use nuclear weapons, we have something with which to strike back?

**Mr. Hanley:** My hon. Friend is right. The Government have been examining a range of options for providing the United Kingdom's long-term sub-strategic capability, and we expect to be in a position to make our intentions clear in the near future.

**Dr. David Clark:** Does not the Minister accept that one of the surest ways to reduce the threat of any nuclear attack on Britain is to limit the number of countries that possess nuclear weapons by ensuring that the non-proliferation treaty is renewed? The Secretary of State acknowledged to me in a letter dated 14 June that various signatories to the non-proliferation treaty see a direct link between its renewal and progress on a comprehensive test ban treaty. Bearing that in mind, will Britain now join France, Russia and the United States in supporting a moratorium on nuclear testing?

**Mr. Hanley:** The hon. Gentleman well knows why we believe that nuclear testing is possibly desirable: it maintains both our credibility and the safety of our nuclear stockpile. The matter is being discussed in the United States, perhaps at this very moment, and I believe that the President knows our views.

I have already said that we are fully signed up to the long-term aims of the non-proliferation treaty, and we have made great progress ourselves. We are therefore ensuring that our position of strength helps to encourage other countries not to possess nuclear weapons, and we are taking great pains to ensure that countries do not possess nuclear weapons of any sort.

## Spending Levels

3. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations his Department has received over the past decade regarding defence spending levels.

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind):** Over the past decade, my Department has received a number of representations on defence spending levels from hon. Members and from members of the public.

**Mr. Oppenheim:** Bearing in mind the fact that many of those who, at the height of the cold war, urged us to abandon nuclear weapons as immoral and to slash defence spending have apparently come to the conclusion, now that the cold war is over, that we need nuclear weapons after all, that we must save every regiment and even bomb Serbia, and bearing in mind the fact that the leading politician who opposed Trident as militarily unacceptable is now lobbying for Trident refit work in his constituency, does my right hon. and learned Friend feel that that represents a genuine change of heart, or is it the usual unholy mixture of hyprocisy, opportunism, and pork-barrel politics?

**Mr. Rifkind:** It is certainly one of the lasting mysteries about the Opposition that they were unable to support our nuclear deterrent during the cold war, but that they claim that Trident will be safe in their hands now, when the Soviet Union no longer exists.

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** The Secretary of State is currently spending money completing three type 23 frigates at Swan Hunter on Tyneside. Will he now give an assurance that those three frigates will be finished on Tyneside by the work force at Swan Hunter, under the control of the existing management?

**Mr. Rifkind:** We have said that we very much hope that it will be possible to complete the frigates at Swan Hunter. I am cautiously optimistic that that will indeed prove possible, but the discussions that are taking place are not yet complete.

**Mr. John Greenway:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that all those people working in the defence industries and in our armed forces should be glad that the Conservative party won the election last year and not either of the rabbles opposite—one of which proposes a cut in spending of 6 per cent. and the other a cut of 50 per cent? Will he assure the many MOD and armed forces personnel working in North Yorkshire that, so long as this Government remain in power, our commitment to a strong defence of Britain remains totally in place?

**Mr. Rifkind:** My hon. Friend is right to remind the House that both the Labour party and the Liberal party are committed, by their party conferences, to massive reductions in defence expenditure. Indeed, I understand that the Liberal party is committed to reducing the size of our Army from 160,000 to approximately 70,000. That compares rather unfavourably with the view of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who seeks to oppose any amalgamations during the current exercise.

## Yugoslavia

4. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the latest situation regarding British forces in former Yugoslavia.

**Mr. Rifkind:** British forces continue to make an important contribution to the United Nations humanitarian relief effort in Bosnia, having successfully escorted over 42,000 tonnes of aid since operations began. The events of recent weeks in central Bosnia have demonstrated the dangerous conditions under which our troops are working, and, as I am sure the House will agree, they have reacted to circumstances with outstanding professionalism.

**Mr. Winnick:** I agree with the latter part of the Secretary of State's response: there is undoubtedly much admiration in the House and in the country for the way in which British forces have operated in the former Yugoslavia.

However, would there not be a case for the rules of engagement to be changed—obviously that would have to be done by the Security Council—so that allied troops could assist civilians fleeing terror and destruction? Is it not the case—this is no reflection on the Secretary of State—that, to a large extent, even humanitarian relief often depends on Serbian and Croatian commanders, who are carrying out what can only be described as a murderous pogrom against the Muslim population in Bosnia?

**Mr. Rifkind:** We do not believe that the current rules of engagement need to be changed to assist the United Nations in its humanitarian efforts. Clearly, if a new mandate were to be considered for United Nations personnel, that would open up the question whether the rules of engagement were appropriate. However, it is crucial to emphasise that we do not consider it sensible or desirable that the United Nations should be asked to adopt a combat role in Bosnia. United Nations personnel are doing a superb job, saving many tens of thousands of lives at present. That in itself is justification for their presence.

**Mr. Cormack:** Is my right hon. and learned Friend confident that the rules of engagement are sufficient to protect the safe havens which the United Nations has declared should be safe havens? Are they truly safe, or can they be made truly safe, for the civilian population?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The Secretary-General is at present seeking to put together a number of forces from various contributors who would be present within the safe havens. The United Kingdom has said that its contribution will be to continue to help deal with the situation in the Vitez area in central Bosnia, where there is tremendous tension between Croats and Muslims. We believe that the current rules of engagement are suitable for the task that British forces have been asked to do.

**Dr. David Clark:** Does the Secretary of State recall that, on 14 January, when announcing the deployment of our naval task force in the Adriatic, he said that his overriding concern was for the safety of our forces, and added:—

"the provision of artillery in particular"—

in particular—

"will enable us to respond to attacks"?—[*Official Report*, 14 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 1058.]

Will he now confirm that at, the very time when our troops in Bosnia are, in the Secretary of State's words, "facing the greatest risk", he has withdrawn the RFA Argus, which is loaded with the same artillery? Does he accept that his meek surrender to Treasury penny-pinching could well put our troops in Bosnia at risk?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman gets sillier as every day passes. As the decision to transfer the artillery back to the United Kingdom was taken on the advice of the Chief of the General Staff and not at the request of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, he might have chosen to check his facts before making such a fool of himself.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is not only the soldiers escorting the convoys that come under shellfire and sniping but also the civilian truck drivers, who are sent out to Bosnia by the Crown Agents based in my constituency? Four truck drivers have now been awarded the MBE in the Queen's birthday honours. Would my right hon. and learned Friend extend to them the same tributes that we have extended to our soldiers?

**Mr. Rifkind:** My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the remarkable contribution that has been made not only by uniformed personnel but by many thousands of civilians—including many British citizens—who have done a superb job, often in the most dangerous and difficult circumstances, to provide food, medical aid and other forms of assistance to people who so desperately need them.

## Yugoslavia

5. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has made any further review of Britain's defence commitments in the light of Britain's peacekeeping role in former Yugoslavia.

**Mr. Rifkind:** Britain's armed forces have a number of overseas commitments, which they are well placed to meet. We keep such commitments, and the forces required to meet them, under review.

**Mr. Evans:** Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that the excellent role played by Britain's superb forces in the former Yugoslavia shows that Britain's future military role will increasingly be as part of a United Nations peacekeeping or even peacemaking force? In view of that, is it not time that the Government recognised that, in future, there will be little demand from the United Nations peacekeepers for crippling expensive submarines and nuclear weapons?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman would be very unwise to believe that Britain's future military requirements will be limited to some form of gendarmerie role on behalf of the United Nations. Of course our contribution to that role is important, but we must retain the capacity for high-intensity conflict, because, as we have seen twice in the past 12 years, there could be attacks on British interests which require a response not only with manpower but with sophisticated equipment. Submarines have played a very viable role for the United Kingdom over the years.

**Mr. Allason:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, during the past two years, Britain's defence commitments have increased, not decreased, and that there is a good argument for a general review of Britain's defence commitments around the world to ensure a direct match of commitments and resources?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I accept the principle that my hon. Friend has enunciated, but I do not accept his description of what has happened over the past three years. The single biggest change over that period has been the reduction of our forces in Germany from 60,000 to about 30,000. That is a far greater reduction in our commitment than any relatively modest contribution we have made in Bosnia, Cambodia and one or two other territories elsewhere.

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** In the light of our experience in Bosnia, is there not a case for putting the United Nations interventionist role on a formal footing, with financial backing, in properly established headquarters? If so, who would be prepared to pay, given that the major contributing nations are in an adverse financial position?

**Mr. Rifkind:** If the hon. Gentleman is referring to proper military headquarters in New York to ensure that the United Nations can properly co-ordinate and plan the substantially increased number of military operations for which it is responsible, he makes an important point. The large increase in United Nations activities means that the small staff at present responsible for those matters find it almost impossible to carry out their responsibilities in a proper and coherent fashion.

### Bosnia (Ambush)

6. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made in equipping AFVs deployed in Bosnia with state-of-the-art surveillance systems to counter threats of ambush; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** The armoured vehicles deployed in Bosnia are already fitted with sophisticated surveillance systems, but we keep the situation under review to ensure that the personnel deployed have the equipment most appropriate to their role and environmental conditions.

**Mr. Richards:** Is my hon. Friend aware that Pilkington Optronics in my constituency designed and fitted the thermal observation and gunnery sight—TOGS—to the Chieftain and Challenger tanks, which performed so well in the Gulf war? Is he further aware that Pilkington has offered to fit the TOGS system to the Scimitar AFV, which is currently deployed in Bosnia, at a very reasonable price?

**Mr. Hanley:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend; any saving is helpful. The TOGS proposal is one of the ideas considered as part of the life-extension programme for tracked combat reconnaissance vehicles. We already have very sophisticated equipment in them, including thermal image sights, which can be fitted on top of the commander's sight. Troops are also issued with image intensifying night vision goggles. The Scimitar family of vehicles will be upgraded in due course.

### Trident Refit

7. **Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what examination he has made of the decision-taking process on the Trident refitting contract with a view to improving the consistency and orderliness of such processes.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The issues involved are complex, and involve significant sums of public money. A wide range of factors bear on the issues, and I am satisfied that the assessment is being properly conducted.

**Mr. Tyler:** Is that not the most extraordinarily complacent reply? It is 13 months since the bids had to be in from the two yards. Before Christmas, the Minister of State told me from the Dispatch Box that the decision would be out in a matter of days, perhaps weeks. The loyal work forces at Rosyth and Devonport have waited patiently for months. They are on tenterhooks—their livelihoods are at stake and their families do not know what will happen. The whole economy of that area of Scotland and the south-west of England has been waiting for this hide-and-seek game to end.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I understand the points made by the hon. Gentleman, but I make no apology for the time that it is taking to reach the proper conclusion. That time has already resulted in savings to the taxpayer and the Royal Navy that are likely to be in excess of £250 million, compared to what the original cost of the nuclear refitting was expected to be. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the Royal Navy will benefit substantially from those savings, so it is right and proper that we should address those matters in that way.

**Mr. Streeter:** As someone who has always supported Trident, may I ask whether my right hon. and learned Friend is aware that the delay in awarding the contract is seriously undermining the morale of my constituents, and holding back the recovery that would otherwise be bursting forth in the south-west? Is he aware of what the people of Rosyth and Plymouth are going through while we await the decision? When will it be made?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I appreciate the points made by my hon. Friend. He will appreciate that the two companies involved—one in Plymouth and one in Rosyth—have, over the past six months, sent several refinements of their proposals, which inevitably have required time for consideration. Ministers are now considering the conclusions that should be reached, and I hope that an announcement can be made in the near future. It is important that the matters are properly addressed. I am anxious, as is my hon. Friend, to bring the uncertainty to an end.

**Mr. Foulkes:** The Secretary of State must realise that it is now over four months since he announced in a written answer that he planned to continue with two dockyards, but without saying how that would be achieved. As the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) rightly said, that is causing dismay and increasing division between Scotland and the south-west of England.

Can the Secretary of State at least say, first, that he will continue a submarine refitting capability at both yards and, secondly, that the yard that does not get the Trident refit will get at least 10 years' guarantee of submarine and surface refitting? It is in the strategic and employment interests of the United Kingdom to keep both yards fully operational.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am glad that the hon. Gentleman shares our desire to see a decision on this matter, which hopefully will be possible. I simply do not believe that it is possible to continue nuclear submarine refitting at both yards. The cost of the Trident work is so substantial that the expenditure required to provide a nuclear submarine refitting capability at both yards would be a gross waste of public funds, and I cannot endorse the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

**Mr. Gallie:** Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm the wisdom of the last four Conservative Secretaries of State for Defence, who assured Rosyth's future based on the successful achievements in the refitting and servicing of Britain's nuclear deterrent fleet?

**Mr. Rifkind:** Both Rosyth's and Devonport's future are assured, because some time ago we said that, in the interests of ensuring competition and therefore the best benefit to the taxpayer, we proposed to continue with two royal dockyards. I know that that will give great pleasure not only to my hon. Friend but to those who are anxious

to ensure that the taxpayer and the Royal Navy get the most competitive bids not only for its submarine work but for its surface ship work.

### Eurofighter

8. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the development stage of the Eurofighter project to be completed.

**Mr. Aitken:** The development stage of Eurofighter 2000 will largely be completed by 1995, when the production stage is due to begin. However, as is usual with new aircraft, some development activity will continue into the early years of production. It is expected that the final phase of the development stage will be completed in 2001.

**Mr. Ainsworth:** Is the Minister aware of the consternation that was caused in the industry when he announced the delays in the programme on 25 February? Will he give the House an explanation of the escalation of the costs that was announced then? How much of that escalation was caused by his Department's late changes to the specification?

**Mr. Aitken:** The hon. Gentleman is being somewhat unfair and churlish. The real increase in development costs since we committed ourselves to this phase in 1988 is a little more than 10 per cent. For the project as a whole, it is a little less than 10 per cent. Production costs are all hypothetical at this stage, but a 10 per cent. increase in a project of this complexity and magnitude, although not welcome, is by no means unusual. It is within the normal tolerances. As for the hon. Gentleman's points about delays, those are matters caused by some of the industrial decisions—not Government decisions. The Government could not have done more to support the project whole-heartedly and effectively.

**Mr. Martlew:** Is not it a fact that 10 per cent. represents £250 million, which will have to come from somewhere else in the defence estimates? Yesterday, the Minister gave us an assurance that the Eurofighter would make its test flight this year. We welcome that. But he was vague on how the work would be shared out between the countries. It looks as if the Royal Air Force will place orders for 50 per cent. of the production. Does that mean that 50 per cent. of the work will be carried out in United Kingdom factories?

**Mr. Aitken:** On the work-share point, the hon. Gentleman's questions are premature at this stage, because no decisions have yet been reached between the four partners on precisely which numbers will be used in the production phase. Development work-shares were agreed in 1988 and ours was 33 per cent. There is no suggestion that those should change, but, ultimately, they will depend on the final orders placed by each of the partners.

### RAF Training Bases

9. **Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in his Department's review of RAF training bases.

**Mr. Hanley:** The RAF's flying training study is progressing satisfactorily. We are continuing to collate and assess the detailed information gathered from the seven flying training stations under study, and the study team expects to report by the end of the year as planned.

**Mr. Harvey:** Is the Minister aware of the widespread anxiety that the review is causing in north Devon, where RAF Chivenor is a warmly regarded feature of the local community on which businesses, jobs, schools and other services are heavily dependent? Does he agree that RAF Chivenor is uniquely well suited to provide RAF training on account of its favourable geography, weather patterns and topography? Would it not be the economics of the madhouse to close a base at which £12 million has been spent on modernisation and which, because of its location, is not attractive for alternative commercial uses? On account of its technologically modern state, it could be maintained for years to come at minimal expense.

**Mr. Hanley:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am well aware of those factors and, indeed, have discussed the matter with my predecessor. We are in the middle of the study. There is still a great deal of collation of information to come. But all seven of the flying training stations involved in the study are being assessed absolutely equally, taking into account a wide range of factors, including those to which the hon. Gentleman referred. However, of course, the main factors will be operations, tasking, facilities, costs, manning and meeting the needs of our Royal Air Force for the future.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** In his statement last Thursday, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State mentioned that there were significant changes to be implemented in the Royal Air Force and the Royal Naval Reserve. However, in that statement he made no observations about the future of the Maritime Headquarters Unit. No. 1 Maritime Headquarters Unit is located in my constituency at RAF Northolt and trains there. Can my hon. Friend confirm that the MHU and Royal Auxiliary Air Force have an assured and valued future?

**Mr. Hanley:** I thank my hon. Friend for his question. As far as I am aware, we have no current plans to change the role of the facilities to which he refers.

**Mr. Hardy:** As the question did not specify purely flying bases, may I ask the Minister to ensure that there is no further contraction of the RAF training capacity until the Government have ensured that contractors, especially those engaged in technological activity, make proper provision for the maintenance of adequate training so that the service is properly provided for in the future? Will he accept that to do otherwise would be to act in the most short-sighted manner, and we have seen quite enough of that in recent years?

**Mr. Hanley:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that all factors are being taken into account, and I cannot add to that at this stage. The review is taking time because it is so comprehensive and, as I say, all factors are being taken into account. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman welcomes that.

**Mr. David Nicholson:** Will my hon. Friend consider carefully, in addition to the advantages that the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) mentioned, the role that RAF Chivenor plays in very adverse, including snowy, winter conditions on Exmoor in my constituency rescuing sick people and animals? What implications, if any, will the review have for low-flying training, because

my hon. Friend will be aware from the correspondence files in his Department that that has also caused certain problems?

**Mr. Hanley:** I am aware of those matters and there is no doubt that RAF Chivenor provides an excellent service. I am also aware, I hasten to add, of a famous thing called the Chivenor gap, of which I had not heard previously but find fascinating. I am looking forward to studying that phenomenon. In other words, everything is being considered and we shall reach a result on the review by the end of the year.

### NATO Nuclear Doctrine

10. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet the Secretary-General of NATO; and if he proposes to discuss with him NATO's nuclear doctrine.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I expect to meet the NATO Secretary-General at a regular meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in the autumn. As is usual on these occasions, a wide range of Alliance issues will be discussed.

**Mr. Campbell:** Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman consider that it may be time, in the interests of economy and security, to seek greater co-operation between ourselves, the French and the United States? Would it not be consistent with the doctrine of minimum nuclear deterrence to seek to achieve operational arrangements which, while providing a constant nuclear capability for NATO, may be provided at a lower level than at present?

**Mr. Rifkind:** There are many indications that the French Government are interested in closer dialogue with the United Kingdom on nuclear and other matters of mutual interest. It is right and proper that all the nuclear countries of the NATO alliance—the United States, France and ourselves—should co-operate to the maximum extent possible, and I believe that in the post-cold war situation, Paris is showing more interest in doing that than has perhaps been the case for a number of years.

**Mr. Dickens:** When my right hon. and learned Friend next meets the Secretary-General of the United Nations, will he remind him of the excellent news today that Vickers has won more orders for the excellent Challenger tank, which is very good news indeed? Are we not the inventors of the world, with television having been born out of radar, a British design, and the jet engine, also a British design, having made the world smaller? Let us tell the world that when you buy British, you buy the best.

**Mr. Rifkind:** My hon. Friend is correct, and he might have added that our Prime Minister signed that deal with the Sultan of Oman on his visit. That was a great achievement for British sales and British industry.

### Infantry Regiments (Manpower)

11. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to review the manpower of infantry regiments.

**Mr. Hanley:** We continue to keep Army manpower under review. While we will make adjustments if necessary —as we did with the measures announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 3 February—we have no current plans for further changes.

**Mr. Clarke:** May I belatedly congratulate the Minister on his appointment? This is the first opportunity that I have had to do that. He said in yesterday's debate that the time between emergency tours by the Army was 19 months. His statement to that effect appears at column 111 of the *Official Report*. That is not the figure given to me by members of the infantry battalions and others to whom I have spoken. Will he reconsider the matter, remembering that it has a great effect on the families and personnel involved?

Is the Minister aware of a further problem concerning in-service training because of a shortage of manpower? It seems that in-service training and similar activities are being delayed, so will he conduct an in-depth study into that matter, too?

**Mr. Hanley:** I thank the hon. Gentleman warmly for his kind remarks. I confirm the figures that I gave last night in the debate. On the basis of current emergency tour commitments, the average emergency tour intervals for infantry are likely to meet the target of 24 months by 1995. The average emergency tour interval for the current year is 19 months. I stress that that is an average figure—some forces are able to be deployed while some are not; some are reorganising and re-roling, so are not available for use. We aim to reach the target of 24 months soon. With the withdrawal from Belize and the withdrawal of two battalions from Berlin, there will be more forces available for us.

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** I, too, belatedly congratulate my hon. Friend. Is he aware that there is concern among those who take a genuine interest in such matters that manpower constraints are making it difficult for Britain to meet its international obligations? Will my hon. Friend quietly consider in the weeks ahead rescinding the decision to merge my old regiment, the Gordon Highlanders with the Queen's Own Highlanders and, at a stroke, find a cost-effective solution to those constraints, as well as providing a future for two of the finest infantry regiments of the British Army?

**Mr. Hanley:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The Army is large enough to keep all its commitments following the reduction in threat due to the change in the strategic environment. As we often say, the post-"Options" Army will be smaller but fully manned, well equipped and properly supported. I believe that the House will be proud of the commitments that we shall continue to carry out throughout the world. However, those commitments must be balanced—we cannot, and should not, do everything. We should not put our men and women at unnecessary risk. I have looked at the issue in the past few weeks and believe that Scottish regiments were not treated unfairly in the restructuring process. It was not possible to exempt the Scottish regiments from the inescapable need for certain cuts. I realise that many people with Scottish regimental associations have strong feelings about the restructuring, but equal pain was felt by all regiments—whether Scottish, British, Welsh or Irish.

**Dr. Reid:** As the Minister embarks on his new portfolio, I plead with him that, if he will not take my advice, he should take the advice expressed, not only by my hon.

Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke), but the Minister's hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) and undertake a full defence review specifically to deal with the issues raised about the infantry.

The Minister may wish to ask his civil servants about the following issue. Since the beginning of the operation called "Options for Change", the Government have made a net increase in the number of battalion tasks of 10—an extra two in Northern Ireland, plus one in Bosnia, minus one in Belize, times five—but they have increased the number of infantry battalions by only two. Is it not clear to the Minister, as it is to the Opposition, that the tasks of the infantry cannot be increased by 10 and the numbers by two without creating a mismatch between resources and commitments? As he embarks on his new ministerial position, will the Minister do what his Front-Bench predecessors at the Ministry of Defence refused to do: carry out a genuine review so that we do not place burdens on our soldiers and service men which they cannot meet because they lack resources?

**Mr. Hanley:** The hon. Gentleman is a friendly soul and I shall willingly take advice from him, except on this matter—for the simple reason that there is no need for a full defence review. I know that the hon. Gentleman will be sitting on the edge of his seat waiting for the White Paper to be published in the next few weeks. I think that even he will be so impressed with that document that he will feel that the need for the review has gone out of the window. We keep Army manpower closely under review—the increase in tasks for existing manpower shows the efficiency and effectiveness of our armed forces.

**Mrs. Currie:** Is my hon. Friend aware that one third of all recruits to the armed forces are youngsters under the age of 18? Given the increasing complexity of modern warfare, is it any longer sensible to take on young people with only minimum basic education? Should we not in future consider recruiting only youngsters over the age of 18, thereby avoiding the current problem of sending them to difficult areas—as with, for example, those in my local regiment, the Staffordshires, serving in Bosnia?

**Mr. Hanley:** My hon. Friend is right to say that some 35 per cent. of Army recruits are under the age of 18. It would put the Army under great stress if we were to restrict recruitment to those over the age of 18; we would lose many talented people to other walks of life. Those under the age of 18 should, with their parents' permission, be given the opportunity to serve in the British forces, one of the best jobs in the world.

With regard to the deployment of young people in the theatres of war, many of those who are under the age of 18 have trained within formed units and if they were not allowed to go with their units, it would not only break up that unit but would be a great disappointment to the young people concerned. However, we shall keep the matter under review.

### Future Frigate Project

12. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the future frigate project.

**Mr. Aitken:** Negotiations with France and Italy on the future frigate project are proceeding satisfactorily. I am pleased to announce plans to sign a memorandum of understanding establishing the joint project office in London this summer, subject to agreement being reached on the detailed arrangements for the development of the ship and its weapon systems.

**Mr. Cousins:** Does the Minister accept that there should be more urgency about the project, which is the most important European project that we have for anti-air and anti-missile defence for our naval forces which need that protective condom above them in the sky? Does the Minister agree that there is an urgent need to get the design work for that important project into the work-starved design teams of British shipyards, such as those of Swan Hunter on the Tyne, at the earliest possible date?

**Mr. Aitken:** I cannot join the hon. Gentleman in his colourful metaphors, but I agree that this is an important project. I am delighted to hear such robust sentiments from a member of the party which, at its conference, votes for swingeing cuts in defence. However, the hon. Gentleman should regard it as good news that the joint project office is to open later this summer.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 June.

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been attending a European Council meeting in Copenhagen.

**Mr. Orme:** Will the Leader of the House explain why many people on invalidity benefit who have been assisting the very sick, poor and disabled and withdrawing from that voluntary work because of the fear that the Government will attack their benefits? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the most vulnerable in our society should not be made to pay for the failure of the Government's economic policy?

**Mr. Newton:** I know of no basis for the fear that the right hon. Gentleman describes. When I was Secretary of State for Social Security we went to some lengths to try to prevent that difficulty arising and we improved the therapeutic earnings rule, with which the right hon. Gentleman will be familiar. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of Social Security will be concerned to ensure that people on invalidity benefit who can do voluntary work while nevertheless fulfilling the legal requirements of the benefit are able and encouraged to do so.

**Mr. Butcher:** Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to congratulate my constituents and all employees of the Jaguar car company, in particular the highly skilled development engineers who so outperformed their foreign counterparts that they won the Le Mans 24-hour race? Will my right hon. Friend go further and tell people at large that there has been an improvement out of all recognition at Rover, Jaguar and all the other British car assemblers, and that there is now little excuse for buying a foreign car?

**Mr. Newton:** I very much agree with all my hon. Friend's points and I join him in paying tribute to Jaguar's achievement and the achievement of many other British car manufacturers in recent months in bringing about the large increase in car production which, had it gone the other way, we would have been hearing much about from the Opposition; we hear nothing when it goes up. With the British car market now growing, while continental markets are plunging into recession, our industry has revitalised itself and is set to win.

**Mr. John Smith:** In view of the increasing and widespread public concern about large financial donations —*[Interruption.]*—about large financial donations from foreign sources to the Conservative party, will the Government now introduce legislation to make such foreign donations illegal?

**Mr. Newton:** On the assumption that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is riding on the back of the absurd story in *The Guardian* today, perhaps I should tell him that, within the past hour or so, the Saudi ambassador to the United States of America, whose name was mentioned in that story, has issued a statement to the effect that all the allegations in the article are untrue and totally without foundation, that the meeting that is referred to did not take place, and that neither he nor anyone else connected with the Saudi Arabian Government has made donations to the Conservative party or been asked for such donations. Indeed, he is taking legal advice about obtaining a full retraction. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The House must come to order.

**Mr. John Smith:** Does not the Leader of the House understand that the Conservative party's difficulties arise because the party will not declare the sums that it receives from other people? As we are seeing what money the Conservative party has received, may I take this opportunity to ask whether it received funds from Mr. John Latsis and Mr. Li Ka-Shing?

**Mr. Newton:** In the right hon. and learned Gentleman's immortal words, he has put something else aside, as I understand it. *[Interruption.]* Let me tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman what I shall do: I shall start listening to his lectures on this subject when he tells me that he will bring to an end the position in the Labour party in which votes at party conferences can be bought, in which votes in the selection of candidates can be bought, and in which votes even in his election as leader of the party can be bought. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The House is in a very bad mood. *[Interruption.]* Order—all of you.

**Mr. John Smith:** Does not the Leader of the House understand—*[Interruption.]* I know that the Conservative party wants to drown this issue out, but it will not succeed. Does not the Leader of the House understand that the public will have noticed that there has been no denial that Mr. John Latsis, Greek millionaire and supporter of the fascist military junta in Greece, gave money to the Conservative party? Does not he understand the simple and clear principle that it is wrong, and should be illegal, for a British political party to accept large sums of money from people who are not British citizens, do not live here, do not vote here, and are not part of our democracy? Why cannot the right hon. Gentleman understand that simple point?

**Mr. Newton:** What I understand—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."]—and believe—*[Interruption.]*—to be a scandal is that a major financer of the Labour party can utter phrases like "No say, no pay." *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I expect better behaviour, especially from the Front Benches.

**Mr. Newton:** The right hon. and learned Gentleman's dealings with the trade unions makes "Jurassic Park" look like a tea party.

**Mrs. Browning:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that, with the coming of the summer solstice, the west country is bracing itself for an invasion of new age travellers? Will he ensure that the Conservative party puts on the statute book whatever measures are necessary to ensure that those who opt for an alternative life style do so at their own expense, and not at the expense of the hard-working taxpayer?

**Mr. Newton:** My hon. Friend will know of the plans that the Government have set out, and of our determination to implement them. She may be relieved to note that, at present, most of the new age travellers seem to be on the Opposition Benches.

**Madam Speaker:** Mr. Seamus Mallon. *[Interruption.]* If the House were a little quieter, hon. Members could hear when I called them.

**Mr. Mallon:** Notwithstanding the importance of Volvo cars and inscribed watches, does the Leader of the House agree that the real moral test of any Government is their care for those in the dawn of life—the young; those in the twilight of life—the aged; and those in the shadows of life —the sick, the poor and the handicapped? Given the Government's predeliction for testing, would the right hon. Gentleman care to subject them to that test? Does he believe that it will show the abysmal failure that most people in the country perceive?

**Mr. Newton:** Given the improvements that have been made in the health service, in benefits for disabled people and in educational opportunities for young people, I think that the hon. Gentleman has a nerve to ask that question.

**Mr. Pickles:** Has my right hon. Friend's busy schedule allowed him an opportunity to consider the announcement——

**Mr. Skinner:** The Leader of the House is on crack. Get another bed ready.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pickles:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to consider our right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's recent announcement about trials of a side-handled baton for police officers? Does he agree that if the trials are successful, those who daily risk their lives on our streets will deserve our support? If the equipment proves good for the police, will the Government supply it?

**Mr. Newton:** I agree very strongly. As has been all too evident on some recent occasions, we ask our police to risk

their lives for us every day, and they deserve the protection with which we can provide them. There is no doubt that the standard truncheon does not meet all the needs of modern times, and it is well known to us that police officers have been pressing for more effective alternatives. I know that they, like my hon. Friend, will welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement that a scientific evaluation of the expandable side-handled baton will be undertaken to test its suitability for trials on the streets.

Q2. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 June.

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Vaz:** During his busy day, has the Lord President of the Council had an opportunity to purchase an early retirement present for the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates)? *[Interruption.]* If so, will he reveal the words that he has had inscribed on the back of it?

**Mr. Newton:** I am afraid that, because of the noise—I am not sure from which side of the House it came—I did not hear the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question. Given the reaction, however, I doubt whether I need bother to ask him to repeat it. As for the first part, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made his views on the matter clear some weeks ago, and I see no reason to depart from them this afternoon.

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the successful management buy-out at Leyland DAF demonstrates that the Government—and, in particular, our right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade —were quite right to back a private solution to what was a problem? Does it not also illustrate good, common-sense Conservative policies, as opposed to socialist dogma?

**Mr. Newton:** Yes. The management buy-outs, first of the vans business in Birmingham and now of the truck business at Leyland, are very good news. They show what can be achieved by working for sound commercial solutions, rather than the preferred solution of Labour Members—offering open-ended subsidies. I believe that hon. Members on both sides of the House, whatever their political views, wish the management buy-out people well for the future success of those companies.

Q3. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 June.

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Marshall:** I half expected to receive a note this morning from the Leader of the House saying that he would link questions 2 and 3. I assume that before he did that, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) would also have to be in the frame.

Will the Leader of the House accept that although all hon. Members welcome the recent reduction in the unemployment figures, that should not hide from us the very high figures associated with structural unemployment in this country? Does he further agree that that high level of structural unemployment represents —[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."]—represents a reservoir of economic resources that this country should be using? If he does agree—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."] If he does agree, will he accept that the Government should be introducing an economic and industrial strategy to create jobs, not instigating a further attack on the residual welfare state?

**Mr. Newton:** May I observe in passing that I am not aware of any practice of linking questions simply because the hon. Members asking them come from different bits of the same city?

Somewhat to my surprise, I found myself agreeing with much of what the hon. Gentleman started with, although not with his conclusions. The Government's view is that the right way forward to tackle that important problem is to put in place the proper training schemes, which we believe we have done, and to create the conditions in which British industry can compete and sell its goods, as we manifestly have with the motor industry, which is very important in the hon. Gentleman's part of the country.

## M25 (Widening)

3.30 pm

**Ms Joan Walley** (Stoke-on-Trent, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you received any application from the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement about the future proposals for the widening of the M25? It seems that a decision may have been made in Cabinet based on information that the Conservative party may lose local election seats. It is time that we had a statement——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I have heard the hon. Lady's point of order. If a statement was to have been made today, it would have been on the annunciator for us all to see.

## Statutory Instruments, &c.

**Madam Speaker:** With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

BRITISH NATIONALITY (HONG KONG)

That the draft British Nationality (Hong Kong) (Selection Scheme) (Amendment) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Hong Kong (British Nationality) (Amendment) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## Deregulation (No. 2)

3.32 pm

**Mr. Anthony Steen** (South Hams): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to empower the Secretary of State and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to control the activities of self-financing regulatory authorities.

Last month I sought leave to introduce a Bill to repeal unnecessary rules and regulations which restrict the competitiveness of British industry. Not surprisingly, the Labour party—the guardian angels of red tape—voted me down. Although driven by the same distaste for regulations, this time I seek leave to introduce a Bill to strike a blow at a far more sinister development which not only chokes profitability, but will lead ultimately to economic paralysis.

I am referring, of course, to the emergence of SEFRAs—self-financing regulatory agencies—the most prominent of which are the National Rivers Authority and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. They make the quangos of the 1980s look like cuddly toys and have created an entirely new and additional layer of bureaucracy. For instance, the National Rivers Authority employs 7,500 staff—officials paid out of the public purse.

Let me explain what SEFRAs are and how they work. They were created with the best possible intention by the Government to improve the standards of health, safety, hygiene and pollution. Their detrimental impact cannot, for once, be blamed on Europe so much as on the over-zealousness of our officials in interpreting far beyond what Brussels intended. *[Interruption.]* I am having great difficulty, Madam Speaker, in hearing myself, so I do not know how my hon. Friends are managing.

**Madam Speaker:** I am terribly sorry. I can hear the hon. Gentleman very clearly and I am most interested in what he has to say. The rest of the House must come to order so that we may all hear.

**Mr. Steen:** I am delighted, Madam Speaker, that you are so interested in what I am saying.

The detrimental impact cannot, for once, be blamed on Europe so much as on the over-zealousness of our own officials in interpreting far beyond what Brussels ever intended. It makes one think that we may have a kind of bureaucratic fifth column in the heart of Westminster and Whitehall.

Most SEFRAs are rather modest and small to start with, often set up to carry out what local authorities used to do. But, once established, they grow fast, with a life force of their own. Many of the 2,945 statutory instruments passed in 1991 increased the powers of SEFRAs and their ability to issue licences, serve notices and demand compliance. Today they set targets, issue codes of practice and have become bodies which alone can grant legitimacy.

To do this, they employ armies of officials to make inspections, and only when satisfied will they grant licences. In fact, the modus vivendi of SEFRAs is to create rules and regulations, then employ officials to enforce them, charging the unfortunate victims for inspection and the issue of licences.

Some of the rules have helped us to clean up our act; others are simply an additional form of taxation, authorising individuals to do what they have done previously without charge. I will give some examples.

The National Rivers Authority insists on charging a householder in the Lake district a fee because she collects the water that runs down the side of a mountain. She puts the water in a tank and uses it in her house. She has never been charged before, but she is now charged for collecting the water, because the National Rivers Authority says that the water that she takes for her own use could be used by somebody else if she were not using it.

Then there is a case in Birmingham where a company has a building with a large corrugated roof on which water falls. The water runs off the roof, into a down pipe and into a stream. The National Rivers Authority charges the company for that because, it says, the water will erode the banks of the stream.

There is another example in my own constituency. The Harborn garage has a forecourt into which rain occasionally falls. The water goes down a little conduit under the road into a stream. Never before were the garage owners charged, but now they are charged £60 a year in case any of the water that falls on the forecourt should pollute the stream. It is shameful to charge a small garage in this way.

If individuals do not pay the charges that are heaped on them, they are pursued into the courts. Thousands of lives have been made miserable by the contagious nature of SEFRA-isation. Without licences, all organisations are trapped. They cannot trade, and they are branded as defaulters.

SEFRAs generate their own life force. They produce codes of practice, they enforce. Lifting standards is all very well if the organisations targeted have the resources to pay. During the recession most businesses have contracted, whereas SEFRAs have grown and grown, with more publicly paid staff, more rules, more regulations and more red tape.

The scrap metal industry is worth £3 billion a year and is pursuing environmental objectives, whereby it recycles 99 per cent. of the material that it handles, with 1 per cent. going to landfill. Its problem emanates from an emerging SEFRA—the waste regulation authority—which, in interpreting the Environmental Protection Act 1990, has muddled disposal of waste with recycling and forced on the scrap metal industry a raft of new regulations. Scrapyards have to pay £3,000 for a licence and £8,000 for an inspection. If they want to go out of business and surrender their licence, they have to pay another £3,000. Operators are quitting the business in droves. The result is that there will be more material to landfill and less will be recycled, resulting in additional pollution.

Apart from the ordinary household waste, all other waste is classified as controlled waste. To carry controlled waste, one must have a waste management licence: cost £95. To receive controlled waste, one needs another licence, a waste management licence, which costs £1,800. A brewery that for years has been sending barley mash, a by-product of the brewing process, to a local farm for pig fodder has been told that it is recycling waste. Under the new regulations, the brewer must pay £95 to transport the stuff to the farm whereas the farmer with his pigs is viewed as a receiver of waste and has to pay £1,800 to receive it. The House can guess the result: the pigs go hungry. Instead of the waste being put to good use, it goes down the drain and, no doubt, helps to pollute the local river.

The most vivid example of creeping SEFRA-isation is encapsulated in the Spanish coffins saga. Unfortunately, 200 to 300 Britons die in Spain each year. Naturally, they are shipped home in Spanish coffins. However, due to European environmental directive 84/360, coffins can be burnt in a crematorium in this country only if they do not contain certain banned substances, such as certain glues. Although Spain is a signatory to the directive, surprise, surprise, it has not got around to enforcing it. That means that when the body arrives at a British crematorium, it is decoffined, as the parlance goes, from the Spanish coffin and then recoffined in a British-made coffin which, surprise, surprise, conforms to EC regulations. The coffin can then be burnt at the crematorium in full compliance with the directive and with the Environmental Protection Act. Britain, as ever, has done its bit in conforming to the regulations. However, when one asks those working at the crematorium what happens to the Spanish coffins, one is told that they are taken out the back and burnt on a bonfire.

That story was related to me by one of the most famous SEFRA-hunters of all time, Christopher Booker of *The Sunday Telegraph*. It is such bureaucratic absurdities that have prompted me to seek leave to introduce a Bill to curb the creeping growth of SEFRAs and to rein back their power to introduce new and punitive regulations which are doing unnecessary and untold damage. That is apart from their appalling cost which has to be supported by the public purse and which, no doubt, contributes to the nation's £50 billion deficit. In short, our nation's enterprise is being inhibited. Any talk of lifting the burden will have a hollow ring unless something is done about the growth of SEFRAs. That is an important task and I ask the House to give me leave to do something about it.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Anthony Steen, Sir Michael Grylls, Sir Michael Neubert, Sir Anthony Durant, Sir Donald Thompson, Sir Keith Speed, Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Mr. Dudley Fishburn, Mr. Quentin Davies, Mr. John Sykes, Mr. Bernard Jenkin and Mr. Roger Evans.

DEREGULATION (NO. 2)

Mr. Anthony Steen accordingly presented a Bill to empower the Secretary of State and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to control the activities of self-financing regulatory authorities: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 213.]

# Orders of the Day

## OPPOSITION DAY

[14TH ALLOTTED DAY]

## Political Parties (Funding)

**Madam Speaker:** I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister. I seek the co-operation of the House in the hope that hon. Members will exercise voluntary restraint on the length of their speeches so that I may call all hon. Members who seek to be called.

3.43 pm

**Mrs. Margaret Beckett** (Derby, South): I beg to move,

That this House records it concern at the revelation that Asil Nadir and his companies made nine separate donations totalling £440,000 to the Conservative Party, which were undeclared in his company accounts and undeclared by the Conservative Party itself; calls upon Her Majesty's Government to endorse the Charter for Party Political Funding published by the Labour Party, in particular its demand that all political parties should publish fully audited accounts which disclose the source of all large donations and should refuse any donations from individuals who are neither British residents nor British nationals, any donations from foreign Governments or their agents and any donations from foreign companies not registered in Britain; and urges Her Majesty's Government to commence proceedings against any company which has made a political donation without declaration under the Companies Act 1985 and to invite all parties to submit their list of company donors to the Department of Trade and Industry to assist in ensuring compliance with company law.

Britain today is a country in turmoil. Its people, perhaps slowly emerging from three long years of recession, feel anxious, beleaguered and insecure in their employment. All too many of them are insecure in the possession of their homes, conscious that there is no such thing as a safe job or a secure profession and increasingly fearful that there are all too few safe streets. The people of our country know that last April they were deceived and their confidence was betrayed by the Government and the party in which they placed their trust. As they gaze with dismay on the failures of the Government, their confidence is further eroded not only by the crass incompetence that they see the Government displaying but by the atmosphere of sleaze and the odour of corruption that they exude.

For years, Conservative Governments have listened to no one. For years, they have used the power and patronage of government, at least in part, for party political advantage. This is a Government who have ceased to be able to tell the difference between the country's interests and their own—perhaps they have even ceased to believe that one can be distinguished from the other. For years they steadily placed, honoured and promoted those who saw things in the same narrow compass, until it would appear that there is no one to blow the whistle, no one to see the line of proprieties being crossed and no one to call a halt.

There is a remarkable coincidence between the Government's placement of honours and donations to the Conservative party. The top ten corporate donors—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I should say at the outset that I cannot force right hon. and hon. Members to listen, but what I can enforce is that whoever has the floor during this debate will be heard, and I hope that my cautionary remarks will be taken on board by hon. Members in all parts of the House.

**Mrs. Beckett:** Since 1979, the top 10 corporate donors to the Conservative party are as follows. United Biscuits has given more than £1 million and the honours received were one peerage and one knighthood; Hanson, £852,000, two peerages; Taylor Woodrow, £837,362, which is remarkable precision, one peerage and one knighthood. British and Commonwealth gave about £823,000—I shall leave out the odd figures—and received one peerage; P and O gave £727,000 and received one peerage and three knighthoods; Glaxo gave £600,000 and received two knighthoods; Trafalgar House gave £590,000 and received one peerage and one knighthood. There is a remarkable coincidence in the placement of honours and the placement of money——

**Mr. Gary Streeter** (Plymouth, Sutton): While the hon. Lady is giving us the figures, will she tell us how much the National and Local Government Officers Association spent on its misleading and grubby advertising campaign at the last general election?

**Mrs. Beckett:** The money that NALGO spent on its election campaign—or in the campaign that it ran at the time—*[Interruption.]* I am quoting the hon. Member for Plymouth Sutton (Mr. Streeter). It was his description, not mine. That money will be found declared in NALGO's accounts, which is more than can be said for many of the donations to the Conservative party.

As I was saying, given the placement of people and the award of honours, there seems to be no one who will tell the Conservative party when to call a halt.

**Mr. Simon Burns** (Chelmsford): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

**Mrs. Beckett:** Not for the moment.

How else can we explain the Treasury's extraordinary decision to pay the then Chancellor of the Exchequer's legal fees in a private lawsuit? How else could the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—since promoted to be Secretary of State for the Environment—have thought it uncontroversial to allow a major company to pay to have his grounds improved? How else can we have reached the position where it is so widely believed as to be no longer a matter of much remark that, as the list that I quoted shows, honours given in the name of the Crown are regularly assumed to be purchased by financial contributions to the Conservative party? How else can it ever have been thought——

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Hon. Members should not persist. The right hon. Lady is making it clear that for the moment she is not willing to give way.

**Mrs. Beckett:** How else can it ever have been thought acceptable that the party of government publishes no proper, independently audited accounts, acknowledges that more than half its funds come from sources it is not

prepared to reveal and now admits under pressure that a large part of its campaign to secure the election was funded from overseas?

**Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** (Amber Valley): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

**Mrs. Beckett:** Is the hon. Gentleman going to tell me where the money came from?

**Mr. Oppenheim:** I thank the right hon. Lady for her courtesy in giving way. Does the Labour party ever accept money with strings attached—yes or no?

**Mrs. Beckett:** No, certainly not. *[Interruption.]* I have given the answer.

How else can it be thought acceptable for the party of government to react as it did for months, with complete indifference, to the discovery that it was paid almost £500,000 in a fashion which breached company law by someone now a fugitive from British justice?

In his evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs the other day, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler)—I am pleased to see him here today because I hope that he will answer the questions that he did not answer in that Committee—said:

"I am not in the business of looking for ways round the laws of the country",

as, of course, Mr. Nadir did in the donations he made to the Conservative party. However, perhaps I can draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention and that of the House to a story that appeared in Scotland a year or so ago.

James Sneddon, the former director of the Conservative Board of Finance Scotland, who is no doubt well known to Conservative Members, said:

"The attraction of the British United Industrialists arrangement"—

this is for the payment of donations to an organisation outside the Conservative party—

"is the exclusion of any disclosure of such a payment as a political donation in the statutory accounts of your company."

That is the advice that the gentleman gave to those whom he hoped to seduce into giving money to the Conservative party through that indirect route, a way around the law. It was advice being given by the Conservative party about the way around the law.

**Mr. David Shaw** (Dover): Will the right hon. Lady please tell me why a man who took £750,000 of Maxwell pensioners' money without any real work being done in exchange is given the honour of sitting on the Labour Front Bench in another place?

**Mrs. Beckett:** The hon. Gentleman has made a serious allegation about the circumstances in which someone was employed. I am not responsible for the employment of someone in a company in which, as I understand it, he did work for which he properly received remuneration. The hon. Gentleman cannot show that the Labour party received money illegally from companies, as we now know that the Conservative party has.

**Mr. Burns:** Will the right hon. Lady give way?

**Mrs. Beckett:** In a moment; I want to say a little more about British United Industrialists. I do not want to leave the point before I have made the matter clear.

Advice was given by the Conservative party that it was a means of companies paying money to the party without shareholders being told. I hear some Conservative Back Benchers saying that the organisation does not exist. I understand that it may have been wound up but, for many years, Conservative Members asserted that donations made in that way were nothing to do with them. Indeed, in a debate in another place not so very long ago—in 1989, I believe—the then treasurer of the Conservative party implied, and may even have stated, that such an organisation was not a means of channelling money into the Conservative party.

**Mr. Burns** *rose*——

**Mrs. Beckett:** Just a moment; I am about to give the hon. Gentleman some information that I know he wants.

Despite the denial by the Conservative party in the House of Lords and for many years outside, when talking of indirect means the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) said:

"British United Industrialists has been mentioned—everyone understands the role of the recipient and realises that a large proportion of the funds paid to it are passed to the Conservative party. There is complete openness and accountability."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 16 May 1989; c. 7.]

Conservative Members may say that that organisation did not exist, but it did, and it was a means of channelling money to the Conservative party.

**Mr. Burns** *rose*——

**Mrs. Beckett:** I shall say a little more about breaches of the law rather than about the implications.

Other breaches of the law occur among those who support and give money to the Conservative party.

**Mr. David Shaw** *rose*——

**Mrs. Beckett:** The *Financial Times* revealed——

**Mr. Shaw:** Will the right hon. Lady give way?

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman has had his intervention. I understand that he will seek to catch my eye later, so he might do one of two things for which I asked earlier: he might at least listen.

**Mrs. Beckett:** The *Financial Times* revealed that in 1990 a company called Sovereign Leasing made a donation of £100,000 to the Conservative party. It failed to declare the payment in its accounts, thus breaching the law. The donation came to light only because the company was taken over by the Bank of Austria, which presumably had slightly higher standards.

There is also on record a company called Hartley Investment Trust. In the run-up to the 1987 general election that company gave £167,000 to the Conservative party, which was the largest corporate donation to the Conservative party ever recorded—so far, at any rate. That company is breaking the law. It should have filed accounts for the year ending March 1991 by the end of April 1992, and for the year ending March 1992 by the end of April 1993. It has failed to do so. That company is chaired by Alan Lewis, and the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox)—the chairman of the 1922 Committee and a member of the Conservative party's board of finance—is a non-executive director. So let us hear less from the Conservative party about the people who legally give money to the Labour party and declare their donations.

**Mr. James Clappison** (Hertsmere) *rose*——

**Mrs. Beckett:** The background to the way in which the Conservative party receives its money is the reason why we have proposed a charter for political party funding, to apply to all political parties in this country. However the issue may have arisen, we believe that it is right that such a charter should now be introduced, but from the evidence so far it appears singularly unlikely that the Government have either the will or the guts to do that.

The presence on the Government Front Bench of the Secretary of State for Employment is a clear sign of how the Government propose to handle the debate—and on how they have handled the matter from the beginning, when it was first revealed that the Conservative party had taken money illegally, in secret and from overseas. The Conservatives say nothing about the way in which they are funded——

**Mr. David Ashby** (Leicestershire, North-West) *rose*——

**Mrs. Beckett:** All they do is talk about the relationship between the Labour party and the trade unions.

**Mr. Ashby:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I have to take a point of order.

**Mr. Ashby:** The suggestion has been made, Madam Speaker, that Conservative Members of Parliament have acted illegally. That is a most dreadful slur on Conservative Members, and the fact is—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. A number of Members may not be listening as carefully as I am listening. I have been listening most carefully, and the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) is talking about the corporate structure of the Conservative party. I ask hon. Members at least to give a hearing to the Front-Bench speakers from both sides. Indeed, I insist that they do so. If hon. Members listened a little more carefully, they might hear a little more clearly what is going on.

**Mrs. Beckett:** We already know how Conservative Members will respond to the debate.

**Mr. Ashby** rose——

**Mrs. Beckett:** Not for a minute.

Conservative Members will respond as they respond to every criticism or concern, no matter how well founded or by whom expressed. First, they bluster that it is an outrage that they should be criticised at all. Then they say that all the comment is misplaced and results from ignorance or malice. Finally, they assert, as they are asserting today, that no matter how flimsy or non-existent the evidence, their critics are not merely as bad as they but far worse, and hence should say nothing at all.

The trouble is that Conservative Members probably believe that. It was said of the inhabitants of the Nixon White House at the time of Watergate that part of their problem was that they had become so out of touch with general expectations about standards of behaviour and what was acceptable in political life that they thought that everyone was behaving in the same way as they were but was just not being honest about it.

My suspicion that that is the attitude of the Conservative party is reinforced by some information that came my way on Sunday courtesy of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). At the end of last week, I am told, the companies division of the Department of Trade and Industry sent a request to Companies house for the civil servants there to go through the files of 12 of the late Robert Maxwell's companies to see whether they could unearth any undeclared donations to the Labour party. I hope that that means that we will at least be spared in this debate the dubious proposition advanced by the chairman of the Conservative party that it is no concern of the Government whether or not companies obey company law.

**Mr. Burns:** Will the right hon. Lady give way?

**Mrs. Beckett:** I must tell the Secretary of State that I find it a somewhat doubtful manoeuvre that civil servants should be asked to do the Conservative party's dirty work. The Conservatives have every right to seek information from Companies house, but why do they not send along someone from the Conservative party and pay a search fee like everyone else?

**Mr. Graham Riddick** (Colne Valley) *rose*——

**Mrs. Beckett:** The Labour party's position is simple and clear: every year we publish independently audited accounts. They are reported and debated in full at our annual conference.

**Mr. Burns:** Will the right hon. Lady give way now?

**Mrs. Beckett:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would like to hear this.

Much of our funding comes, as the world knows, from the trade unions affiliated to our party. Indeed, that is so well known that the Conservative party in government has made repeated attempts over the past 14 years to reduce the funds and remove, if it could and at the very least restrict, the Labour party's access to those funds. In my opinion, that in itself is a rather dangerous use of political power for partisan, party political advantage. That is the kind of thing at which we raise our eyebrows when it happens in third world countries.

Our relationship with the trade unions is known, public and voluntary. It is governed by the Labour party's rules and constitution and by those of the affiliated trade unions. It is also rigidly controlled by law and supervised by a special officer of the courts. There is no question of a casual disregard for trade union law as there evidently is for company law.

**Mr. Clappison** *rose*——

**Mrs. Beckett:** Six million trade unionists voluntarily pay political levies and 4·5 million of them belong to unions affiliated and contributing to the Labour party. Incidentally, they are British——

**Mr. Riddick:** Will the right hon. Lady give way now?

**Mr. Rod Richards** (Clwyd, North-West): Give way.

**Mrs. Beckett:** No, I have not finished—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. It is pretty obvious, even to someone as thick-skinned as me, that the right hon. Lady is not giving way. Therefore, hon. Members should not persist when that is made clear.

**Mrs. Beckett:** Those trade unionists live here and vote here and their interests are bound up with the future and well-being of Britain. They have no other axe to grind and no other interests to serve.

As it happens, the income that we receive from the trade unions is today a declining share of the Labour party's income. Taking the position overall, in 1991 they contributed just over 50 per cent. of the Labour party's income. By a remarkable, although unfortunate coincidence, more than 50 per cent. of the income of the Conservative party in election year came from undeclared sources.

The trade unions contributed just over £7 million to our general election campaign, 68 per cent. of those funds. The Conservative party apparently received £7 million in overseas donations alone for its election campaign—that is the heart of the matter. I say "apparently" because, although the former director of the Conservative party's board of finance, Major-General Wyldbore-Smith, has admitted as much, and its former treasurer, Lord McAlpine, has said on the record that money was paid to the Conservative party through "tons" of offshore and overseas accounts, none of this information is properly in the public domain.

The British public had no idea, when they cast their votes just over a year ago, that the money for all the seductive and untruthful advertisements attacking the Labour party came, in secret, from outside these islands.

**Mr. Richards:** The Labour party's accounts for 1991 show an entry of £228,000 accredited to high-value donor activity. Would the right hon. lady tell us who the donors were and how much each paid?

**Mrs. Beckett:** The hon. Gentleman can find that information, as he said, in the Labour party's published accounts for 1991. That is the sum total of high-value donations that the Labour party received; it is half of what the Conservative party received from one man alone.

The hon. Gentleman should take on board the fact that we are not going to accept the total double standards of the Conservative party in this matter. Almost every penny of the money that the Labour party receives is identified by organisation—because most of it comes from organisations and fund raising. We do not give the name of every pensioner who sends us a tenner, or the name of the school caretaker who writes to me every month and donates the tiny sums that he raises for the Labour party. If the Conservative party tells us who pays even half of the funds it receives, we will certainly publish the names of our contributors.

It is because of all this that we have proposed and published a charter for party political funding. One of our main proposals is that every political party should publish properly audited accounts, refuse donations from people who are neither British residents nor British nationals, and decline ever to take money from foreign Governments or their agents.

I understand that the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield told the Select Committee on Home Affairs that the Conservative party has a rule that it does not take money from foreign Governments, despite the many, many rumours to the contrary. It is not clear to me, however, from the reports that I have received of the right hon. Gentleman's evidence when exactly that rule came into force.

**Mr. Riddick:** Will the right hon. Lady give way?

**Hon. Members:** Name him.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I understand that the hon. Gentleman will seek to catch my eye later in the debate. He ought to contain himself for the moment because it seems to me that the right hon. Lady is not prepared to give way to him.

**Mrs. Beckett:** It is not clear to me when exactly that rule came into force.

**Sir Norman Fowler** (Sutton Coldfield) *rose*——

**Mrs. Beckett:** I am happy to give way to enable the right hon. Gentleman to make a clear statement on this matter.

**Sir Norman Fowler** *rose*——

**Mrs. Beckett:** I shall give way in just a second.

I understand that the right hon. Gentleman's evidence to the Select Committee was that such a rule now exists. It is not clear to me that he said clearly to the Select Committee when it came into force. Will he tell us, now, when it came into force?

**Sir Norman Fowler:** It has always existed; it exists now and has always existed. Will the right hon. Lady, now that she has raised this question, dissociate herself from the comments that she made this morning about this totally unsubstantiated story about the Saudi Arabian royal family? She has slurred that family. Will she now withdraw her comments?

**Mrs. Beckett:** Madam Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The right hon. Lady is at the Dispatch Box. I want to hear what she has to say—whether the House wants to or not.

**Mrs. Beckett:** The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield should re-read his copy of *The Guardian*. I see no cause for, and I do not have the slightest intention of, withdrawing what I said. What I said was clear and specific.

Serious allegations have been made—not by me—that the Conservative party took money from agents on behalf of foreign potentates. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, other allegations have been made that the Conservative party took money from agents of foreign Governments. Those allegations are important and serious and should be discussed. I said that they should be denied if they were untrue. The right hon. Gentleman has denied them, so what is he complaining about?

**Sir Norman Fowler:** Does the right hon. Lady accept that the allegations made in *The Guardian* this morning are totally untrue and that her comments, like much of her speech so far, are simply rumourmongering on her part?

**Mrs. Beckett:** There has conspicuously been no answer to other questions put to the right hon. Gentleman by people such as John Latsis and others, and I shall come to that in a moment. The reason why the rumours exist and the stories are—*[Interruption.]* I will not withdraw.

**Mr. Ashby** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman will resume his seat.

**Mrs. Beckett:** The reason why the allegations have been made goes to the heart of the debate. The Conservative party will not tell the people of the United Kingdom where it got the money. When Conservative Members tell us that, there will be no need, no cause and, presumably, no further rumours.

Before the last general election, when the Prime Minister was, as he puts it, "batting for Britain" on a two-day visit to Hong Kong at the expense of the British taxpayer, he devoted a large chunk of his time to batting for the Conservative party, attending a dinner at which large sums were raised for his election campaign. One of those said to have been present is Li Ka-Shing, who is a close associate of the Chinese Government. Many of those said to have been present are reported to have contributed substantially to Tory party funds on that occasion and others. That must, self evidently, have been at least without the disapproval of the Chinese Government and it has been alleged that it was at least partly with money to which they gave their consent. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The Box is not the responsibility of the House.

**Mrs. Beckett:** My hon. Friends are concerned that information has been passed from the Box on what they regard as a party political matter.

It has been said that one of those present is a large contributor to Conservative party funds. I find it a rich irony that money was given to the Conservative party certainly without the disapproval of the Chinese Government.

The Labour party has frequently been accused without there being the slightest word of truth in it, I hear Conservative Back Benchers making such comments today, although I notice that they do not have the guts to stand up and say it. The Labour party has often been accused of benefiting from what used to be called Moscow gold.

**Mr. Peter Thurnham** (Bolton, North-East): The right hon. Lady said that she wanted to come clean about trade union contributions to the Labour party. Would she kindly tell the House about the massive contributions that the trade unions make to marginal constituencies in which trade union officials work full time during election campaigns? How much did that cost and is it fully declared?

**Mrs. Beckett:** The problems of Conservative Members are, first, that they assume, as I said earlier, that what they are doing must be what everyone else is doing and, secondly, that they do not understand how the structure of the Labour party works—*[Interruption.]* There are strict rules about how much funding and support can be given by trade unionists to any constituency and any constituency party.

**Mr. Burns:** Will the right hon. Lady give way?

**Mrs. Beckett:** No. I am in the middle of a passage. As I was saying, the suggestion that the Labour party receives money from overseas has always been described in thrilling accents as Moscow gold. The notion that Chinese communists give consent to funding of the Tory election campaign would be hilarious if it were not serious.

Of course, the Prime Minister's much reported visit to Hong Kong is not an isolated example. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) obtained through parliamentary questions—*[Interruption.]*—therefore, the information was extracted with difficulty from the Government—has shown that between 1988 and 1991 there were no fewer than 35 ministerial visits at taxpayers' expense to Hong Kong, of which 16 certainly involved party political activity by the Ministers in question, and a further three probably did.

**Mr. Burns:** Will the right hon. Lady give way now?

**Mrs. Beckett:** No.

Apart from the Prime Minister's visit and the money that was raised from Hong Kong, other allegations have repeatedly been made about a variety of donations, some suggest from Dubai and others suggest from Saudi Arabia and so on.

But I say again that the heart of the matter is that such allegations are made and they can be made because of the secrecy that surrounds the source of the Tory party's funds. In election year it spent £26 million.

**Mr. Burns:** Will the right hon. Lady give way?

**Mr. Clappison:** Will the right hon. Lady give way on that point?

**Mrs. Beckett:** I notice that Conservative Members always rise to their feet bellowing when we mention the word "secrecy". I wonder why.

**Mr. Clappison** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** I ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat. He has risen about a dozen times. If the right hon. Lady does not wish to give way, he must resume his seat. Does the right hon. Lady wish to give way? No.

**Mrs. Beckett:** As I was saying—I am anxious for the House to hear it—in election year the Conservative party spent £26 million. Of that, £15 million was from sources unknown. The Government's case is that none of this matters because those who give such large sums secretly to the Tory party do so without reward or even the expectation of reward, out of the sheer kindness of their hearts.

It must be a touching scene. Picture, for example, the famous meal in Hong Kong or the lunch held in Downing street just before the election. The talk turns to the shocking state of Britain. So poor, it cannot fund the Conservative party to run a decent election campaign. I wonder whether the Prime Minister allowed a small, brave, manly sob to cross his lips; a friendly arm round his shoulders, "My dear boy, don't say another word. What is a million pounds here or there to me?"

There is no doubt that Conservative Members will have to eat all those harsh words that they have said over the years about do-gooders. There they are exposed in the ranks of their own friends doing good for the sake of it and, in classic fashion, doing it by stealth.

What is truly remarkable about the Government's version of events is that it is the overseas contributors in particular who understand that they will receive no reward except in heaven for their noble gesture. That is remarkable because we know that it has not always been so clearly understood by some nearer to home, who should in theory be more familiar with the way in which these things work.

Lord King is often described as the ultimate insider. He is the man who successfully persuaded the Government to privatise British Airways, from which he, it would be fair to say, has profited enormously. One would think that he must have understood the delicacy of the relationship between donations to Tory party funds and political decision making. But after all those years of close association, he understood so little that he actually withdrew funding a year or so ago, linking that withdrawal explicitly and publicly to a disagreement over Government policy as it affected British Airways.

Indeed, one almost gets the impression from a report in *The Guardian* on Monday of a reported conversation between the Prime Minister and Mr. Gorbachev that the Prime Minister forgot for a sheer microsecond, because he is said to have mentioned to Mr. Gorbachev that he was raising the matter because he had promised Lord King that he would, even though British Airways did not give money to the Tory party any more. Of course, as the Prime Minister and his colleagues have explained, that has no relevance as it does not make any difference whether or not money is given to the Tory party.

**Mr. Henry Bellingham** (Norfolk, North-West): The right hon. Lady will recall the explosive issue of routes to Tokyo and slots at Heathrow, when British Airways did not get what it wanted despite the money it paid to the Tory party—*[Interruption.]*—which surely proves that one cannot buy influence. Does she agree that that proves that influence cannot be bought from the Tory party?

**Mrs. Beckett:** I did not hear—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The House must come to order.

**Mrs. Beckett:** I am not sure that I heard the concluding words of the hon. Gentleman's intervention, but what I heard of his remarks was well worth hearing.

The Prime Minister said last week that companies donated money to the Tory party because British business "believes that our policies are right for British business, the British future and British jobs"—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1993; Vol. 226, c. 990.]

Again, those who might be expected to be aware that that was the only reason for giving money to the Conservative party do not always seem to realise it.

During the Guinness dispute with Distillers, Ernest Saunders got quite the wrong end of the stick. As he said on television:

"One of them, a very senior figure . . . said he noticed we did not contribute to the Conservative Party and when were we going to . . . I think there were three occasions during the period . . . when it . . . came up, not in any way as a threat. But it came up sufficiently for me to realise that if we were going to go on rolling, I would have to put this matter to the board and our policy would have to be re-thought."

The interviewer asked Mr. Saunders what he thought the comment had meant and he replied—*[Interruption.]* I am sure that Conservative Members want to hear the reply, which was:

"I took it . . . to indicate that if one was going to need political access at the highest level, and political support, then an ongoing . . . relationship which involved contributions, would have to be part of the agenda."

We now know that he was just being reminded of the wonderful opportunities for charitable giving. It all makes a truly amazing story, some might even say an incredible one. Of course, that is just what it is—incredible, literally beyond belief. It is no longer tolerable that the party of government should take such large sums of money secretly and refuse to reveal to the British people whence they come.

**Mr. Donald Anderson** (Swansea, East): Is it not significant that the two cases where the evidence is at its clearest—Sovereign Leasing and Asil Nadir—came about through extraneous circumstances, that is, the receivership and the take-over of the company? So is it not likely that there are bodies buried all over the place? Surely it is right in a democracy that the governing party should come clean and show us where those bodies are.

**Mrs. Beckett:** My hon. Friend is entirely correct in his observation that most of the matters of which we know have emerged only incidentally and the Conservative party has not revealed the source of the money.

What is infinitely more serious than the award of honours—itself a minor scandal to which I have referred—is the influence that such secret donations buy on the policy of the British Goverment. In 1990 and in 1991, when debating the Finance Bill, we raised the issue of the generous tax treatment of offshore trusts. We said that the costs to the British taxpayers of such measures were estimated to be between £1 billion and £2 billion, and sought to persuade the Government to make a change of policy. First, the Government poured scorn on the figures. They then refused to make a change. Finally, they claimed in 1991 to have completely resolved the matter. That case was not accepted by independent commentators and accountants.

I wonder whether it would have been so readily accepted by the British press if it had known that it was through such trusts and accounts that money, which at the time the Tories desperately needed, was being channelled into Tory party funds from overseas. Similarly, the tax treatment of investors not domiciled in Britain makes this country, together with countries such as Luxembourg and Switzerland, one of the most generous in the world to the seriously rich.

Ministers boast of Britain being a tax haven. This year's Finance Bill further loosened the law on tax avoidance for those with available accommodation in the United Kingdom who may not now need to be taxed as residents. Meanwhile, the Government's utterly incompetent management of our economy has left us in debt up to our ears, and Ministers are attacking the unemployed, those with disabilities and pensioners. Those who give the Conservative party money are benefiting at the expense of those who have only votes to give.

Other questions about the effects of the process on Government policy are bound to arise. Why do we not ban tobacco advertising, as all medical advice suggests that we should? Is it because of the money that tobacco companies give to the Tory party—and at what cost to the British taxpayer through the health service? Why does the British taxpayer pay for an army training facility in Dubai when swingeing cuts are being made in defence expenditure? Is it, as has been alleged, as a quid pro quo because the Sultan of Dubai donates to Tory party funds?

**Mr. Ashby:** That is sleaze.

**Mrs. Beckett:** Yes, it is sleaze.

Why have the Government so singularly failed to police the Companies Acts? Even more outrageous, why does the Tory party advise companies on how to get round the

*[Mrs. Beckett]*

existing legislative curbs and make donations to the Tory party by the back door so that their shareholders are kept in ignorance of what is being done? We know that it has recently done so.

The policies of Britain's Government should be decided by what is in the interests of the people of Britain and should never be subjugated to what is in the interests of the Tory party. If that is not happening, what do the Government have to hide? Why do they not publish full accounts? Why do they not adopt our charter proposals, which are simple and straightforward? I think that Conservative Members have forgotten that this is not the first time that the Government have had the opportunity to clean up their act.

In January 1989 the House of Lords carried an amendment to put the treatment of donations by companies on much the same footing as the treatment of donations by trade unions to the Labour party. That amendment was rejected in the House of Commons. The hon. Member for Beaconsfield—who has made a lot of noise today, but all from a sedentary position—was the man who moved to reject the amendment. He said that the issue would have to be placed on an annual general meeting agenda, would be a nuisance and shareholders could get rid of directors if they chose. He said in Committee:

"That is why I believe that it would be wrong in principle to clutter the agenda of annual general meetings in this way" —[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 16 May 1989; c. 8.]

What an important consideration—a major and terribly worrying matter—that it would be wrong in principle for shareholders to be bothered with the little matter of whether their company gives hundreds of thousands of pounds of their money to the Conservative party, with or without their knowledge!

The suspicion unquestionably exists that, if the Conservative party will not reveal from where it obtains more than 50 per cent. of its money—[HON. MEMBERS: "The Labour party does not."] We reveal from where we obtain almost every single penny that we receive. More than 50 per cent. is undeclared, secret, large parts of it from overseas. If the Conservative party refuses to make that declaration, the suspicion must arise that the damage that would be done to the Conservative party by the British people finding out from where it obtains its money is even worse than the damage that is being done today by secrecy.

The call for reform comes not only from the Government's political opponents, but from within the ranks of the Conservative party itself. The Conservative party's organisation, the Charter Movement, says:

"The Conservative party should not be financed from abroad. It should not be financed by or on behalf of foreign governments. It should not be financed by those who have no vote in United Kingdom elections. It should not be financed in a furtive way."

Those are the words of the constituents and members of the Conservative party and they would be ashamed if they saw the way in which their representatives are behaving in the House of Commons today.

Lord McAlpine said on British television the other evening that he did not know that Asil Nadir was, as he put it, a crook. But if his donations had been publicly declared from the beginning, it is highly probable that word would have got back about the questions being asked.

There is in all this a terrible danger for the health and well-being of democracy in Britain, a danger of which Conservative Members have no inkling or understanding. If the British people come to believe that the very processes of democracy are being insidiously suborned, to their existing disillusion with the blatant casual betrayal of all the promises that the Government made them at the election might be added that deep corrosive cynicism that, wherever it is found, saps public confidence in democracy and creates profound public unease.

This is a shabby Government, a deceitful Government, a Government unworthy of the trust that the British people placed in them last year. Their weaknesses and deceits permeate and disfigure the very fabric of British life. It is time that they went.

**Mr. Robert Hughes** (Aberdeen, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is not it an ancient tradition in the House and in the country that the civil service is non-political and apolitical? During the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), eight civil servants sitting in the Box have been passing notes to the Minister on political points. Is not that an example of the stinking corruption of the Government and do not you, Madam Speaker, have the power to remove civil servants who are being tainted by such an example?

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman will not expect me to give credibility to what he has just said. We must bear in mind the fact that those to whom he refers cannot answer for themselves.

**Mr. Hughes:** Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand perfectly that those who serve the Government cannot answer for themselves. That is all the more reason why they themselves should make it clear that they are not associated with the Government's political fortunes. If you, Madam Speaker, have no power to remove them and if the Government do not have the decency to remove those civil servants from temptation, might not it be better if the civil servants took their own action to protect their own order?

**Madam Speaker:** That is not a matter for me.

4.35 pm

**The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Hunt):** I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'believes that the principle of voluntary funding underpins the strength of democratic political parties in this country; records its concern at the purchase by trade unions of votes in the election of the Labour Party leadership, the selection of candidates and of votes on policy at Labour's Party Conference sufficient to secure binding commitments; and calls upon the Labour Party to end the control over its policy, organisation and leadership wielded by a small number of trade union leaders.'.

I have been in this House for about 17 years, but I do not believe that I have ever heard such a shabby, irresponsible, miserable speech. What a waste of an Opposition day this is. Gone suddenly are the demands by the right hon. Lady for debates on public expenditure, Bosnia and unemployment. It is amazing what a little good news will do. The right hon. Lady calls herself the deputy Leader of the Labour party. I believe that she will grow to

be quite ashamed of her speech, which was riddled with rumour, innuendo and smear. She referred to an atmosphere of sleaze. The only atmosphere of sleaze that exists after her speech is to be found among Opposition Members.

Why are we debating political funding today? I know the answer. From the depths of Walworth road has come some rather bad news. The general election defeat has left the Labour party with the most serious financial crisis in its history. I hear someone say that that is not true. I have here the report of the national executive committee of the Labour party, which says:

"The general election defeat has left the Labour party with probably the most serious financial crisis in its history."

Now we know why we are having this debate. The Labour party wants to get its paws on the public purse. It wants the taxpayer to bail out its sinking ship. Enough of the pretence. That is really what this debate is all about. It is about the Labour party's desire to have state funding of political parties. But the confidence trick is exposed for what it really is—just a ruse by that party to get its hands on taxpayers' money. That is the party's secret agenda.

The saddest aspect of this debate so far is the willingness of the main Opposition party to strike at the heart of our political system and our democracy. They are trying, by a series of slurs and innuendos, to bring our democracy into disrepute. In recent years they have not only opposed the Conservative Government but sought to undermine the very foundations of our political system. In doing so, they destroy their own credibility. They now attack everything. They do not have policies any more; they just manufacture political smears.

Let me give some examples. Despite the words of the Lord President at Prime Minister's Question Time today, the right hon. Lady maintained the allegation contained in *The Guardian* of this morning, which is now being exposed as a slur. The allegation has been shown to be completely without foundation. A statement issued earlier today, which was referred to by the Lord President, made it clear not only that no such meeting as had been alleged took place but that neither Prince Bandar Bin Sultan nor anyone connected with the Saudi Arabian Government has made donations to the Conservative party, directly or indirectly, or has been asked for such donations. Why, then, did not the right hon. Lady withdraw that disgraceful imputation?

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Hunt:** I will give way later.

In her speech, the right hon. Lady sought not only to uphold the credibility of that baseless allegation, but to raise a number of other unsubstantiated allegations. I believe that Labour Members will fail in their attempt, because the integrity of our system shines through all that they say.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat; the Secretary of State is not giving way now.

**Mr. Hunt:** Like so many good things in this country, that integrity is recognised everywhere else in the world, but not on the Opposition Benches.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Hon. Members know very well that, if the Secretary of State will not give way, they must resume their seats in good time. Hon. Members must be patient.

**Mr. Hunt:** I am proud to be part of a British political system that has stood the test of time throughout the ages, despite the Labour party's attempts to undermine it.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Bryan Davies** (Oldham, Central and Royton): Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Hunt:** Just one moment.

I thought that the right hon. Member for Derby, South made a very serious error of judgment when she attacked the honours system.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Hunt:** One moment.

The Labour party alleges that, in this country, money can buy honours and favours. That may have been so some years ago, but it is not true today. In fact, on 4 March my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced a series of measures to improve the system, including making the means of nomination for honours much more open and widely known. What is not sufficiently well known is the rigorous scrutiny that is conducted to maintain the integrity of the system.

**Mr. Bryan Davies:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Clive Soley** (Hammersmith): Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Hunt:** Just one moment. Let me finish what I wish to say about the honours system.

Our honours system gives the nation an opportunity to recognise the enormous contribution that so many people make to our way of life. The award of honours for service and achievement has been a valued part of British life for many years. That whole system is subject to a series of safeguards, which I will explain to the House.

Scrutiny is carried out independently and impartially. If the right hon. Member for Derby, South or any of her chums doubt that, let them come out and say so. Let me explain how the system works. All recommendations for policital honours are examined carefully by the Political Honours Scrutiny Committee, which is composed of distinguished Privy Councillors; all three major parties are represented. Its members are Lord Pym, Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos and Lord Thomson of Montifieth. It is no accident that two former Labour Cabinet Ministers are among their number—although one has now joined the Liberal Democrats.

When the leader of any party nominates any individual for a political honour—*[Interruption.]* I shall come to the other honours in a moment. It is important that I put the record straight, in view of the right hon. Lady's disgraceful attack on the system.

In those circumstances, it is the duty of the Chief Whip of any party to provide the Scrutiny Committee with a

*[Mr. Hunt]*

statement detailing any payments—or expectation of payment—given to any party by any individual concerned, directly or indirectly, with such payments. In addition, the Chief Whip must provide an assurance that those donations were made without expectations of an honour. All other names—apart from those receiving political honours—come forward through a system of repeated scrutiny, on which political interests are not represented.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Hunt:** Just one moment.

My right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Thatcher and my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) extended the system so that all names added by the Prime Minister for senior honours should also be scrutinised, in the same way as political honours.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Hunt:** Just one moment.

That system is founded on a combination of non-partisanship and inter-party consensus. Let me tell the Leader of the Opposition and his Front Bench that any attempt to undermine it will have profound constitutional consequences.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) gave the House an absolute undertaking that the Conservative party had not received any moneys from the Saudi authorities—the Saudi Government. Will the Secretary of State now answer a question? Has any Saudi-sponsored agency, any Saudi-based business man or any Saudi national arranged to lend, lent or given large sums to the Conservative party—or any Conservative party funding organisation—in the past three years?

**Mr. Hunt:** I am not aware of any such circumstances. Let me tell the hon. Gentleman that I consider it disgraceful for Opposition Members to throw out accusations in this way without naming the individuals concerned.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Answer.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman has put his question; he must now contain himself.

**Mr. Burns:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the credibility of the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) as an authority on sleaze would have been strengthened if, during her disgraceful speech, she had had the courage to refer to the "lavender list" of resignation honours published in 1976 and the bankrolling of the private office of the then Labour leader, Harold Wilson, by private subscription? I believe that some of the people on the Opposition Benches featured on that lavender list.

**Mr. Hunt:** I just happen to have a copy of the lavender list. Let me tell the Leader of the Opposition that he continues attacks of this kind at his peril. If Labour Members wish to get into the sewer of politics, they should hardly complain when they find that they are up to their necks in it.

Let me put one or two questions to Labour Members. I am growing increasingly impatient with their hypocrisy on the subject of Mr. Robert Maxwell.

**Mrs. Maria Fyfe** (Glasgow, Maryhill): Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Hunt:** Just one moment.

I will not embarrass Labour Members by asking how many of them were given free lunches, dinners and drinks by Mr. Maxwell.

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Tony Banks:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Hunt:** The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) may be proud of that, but I am not giving way.

For many years, the Labour party enjoyed the sponsorship of Mr. Maxwell and his *Daily Mirror* newspaper. There was a very public cheque, accepted with grovelling gratitude, by a Labour party conference. How much more money was involved and was that money his to give? It has certainly not been repaid. We hear from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) that he is very happy about that money. I wonder whether the Maxwell pensioners are happy about it. The right hon. and learned Gentleman seems confused as to how much was given. First, Walworth road put out an authoritative statement that £43,000 had been given by Mr. Maxwell. That figure then became £41,000, then £38,000 and when the right hon. and learned Gentleman spoke on the radio a short time ago, it had sunk to £31,000.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** The cheque bounced.

**Mr. Hunt:** I have it on good authority that that particular cheque did not bounce. Will the Labour party tell us exactly how much was received?

**Mrs. Beckett** *rose*——

**Mr. Hunt:** I am happy to give way to the right hon. Lady if she will tell us exactly how much was received by the Labour party from the late Mr. Maxwell.

**Mrs. Beckett:** The Labour party received £31,000 from Mr. Maxwell—rather less than even one of the many donations made by Asil Nadir.

**Mr. Hunt** *rose*——

**Mrs. Beckett:** I have not finished yet. The right hon. Gentleman asked a question and I am giving the answer.

No other money was received. That money was given because Mr. Maxwell matched a collection made at the Labour party conference. It must have been one of the most public donations ever given to a British political party since it was given on prime time television. The right hon. Gentleman now has his answer. That is all that the Labour party received.

**Mr. Hunt:** I can hardly wait to respond. We know about that donation only because it was on television. If it had not been on television, we would never have known about it.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Hunt:** The Labour party does not reveal details of high value donations. If the late Mr. Maxwell had not chosen to make his highly public gesture on television, the House would never have known about it.

I have another point to make to the right hon. Member for Derby, South. What about all the other payments? What about the £38,000 paid by Mr. Maxwell towards the costs of a legal action to overturn the Boundary Commission's proposals in 1982? That was undertaken on behalf of the then leader of the Labour party and it is acknowledged in the many books on the subject that he was exceedingly grateful for that £38,000. It has been well documented on many occasions and I will provide all the extracts. Also, it was recently reported in the newspapers. I hope that the right hon. Member for Derby, South will make inquiries.

I am sad that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has left us for a moment. I pay tribute to his integrity because he believes that all the money should be repaid by the Labour party.

**Mr. Bryan Davies:** Does the Secretary of State recognise that the issue concerning my constituents—he has not yet begun to address it—is that Lord King made it clear that he was withdrawing support from the Conservative party because a discrete area of policy no longer pleased him? What is the country to conclude about all the other contributors to the Conservative party, both declared and secret, who continue to pay money to that party?

**Mr. Hunt:** That was a baseless allegation, but the hon. Gentleman will not divert me. He held the post of secretary to the parliamentary Labour party and he will know the extent of the late Robert Maxwell's support for the Labour party. I have not even begun to deal with trade union funding.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** So far, we have heard about Robert Maxwell. The Secretary of State keeps saying that all this is well documented. That is fine, because everyone can examine the documents and draw their own conclusions. Since he has told us how much Mr. Maxwell gave directly and indirectly to the Labour party—we have never tried to hide that—will the Secretary of State tell us how much Asil Nadir gave to the Conservative party? How much was given by Mr. Latsis, Mr. Botnar, Mr. Yiren and Mr. Ka-Shing? We will do a deal. If the Conservative party pays back the money to those people, we will club together and pay back the money from Robert Maxwell.

**Mr. Hunt:** Before the hon. Gentleman has a whip round among his hon. Friends, let me tell him about that list of names. Statements have been made making it clear, for instance, in the case of Mr. Li Ka-Shing, that the allegations are completely baseless. I understand that the next edition of *Business Age* magazine will contain a detailed retraction and an apology. I should like the hon. Gentleman to consider doing the same.

I have given details of moneys donated by the late Robert Maxwell that have reached public scrutiny. I should like to know—I hope that the right hon. Member for Derby, South will consider this—what other sums have not seen the light of day.

Let me blow away the smokescreen surrounding the Opposition's motion. When the Polly Peck group made a series of donations totalling £440,000 to the Conservative party during the 1980s there was no evidence of any malpractice. We have always made it clear that the Conservative party will return any stolen funds to their rightful owners. The chairman of the Conservative party has made it clear that the party does not accept contributions where there is any suspicion that they have been obtained illegally. We do not accept contributions where there is any question of strings being attached and we certainly do not accept contributions from foreign Governments.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr. Hunt:** If Opposition Members addressed themselves to the substance of their motion, they would see that a fundamental quesiton arises. If they were ever to regain power, would they make it illegal for individuals to make anonymous donations to political parties? *[Interruption.]* If they would not, the motion is spurious, but, if they would—and they seem to be saying "yes"—some important democratic principles are at stake. Political activity, like charitable activity, is voluntary. The Conservative party at least upholds the principle that contributors should be entitled to privacy. I believe that the principle of voluntary funding underpins the strength of our democracy and the party political system in this country and we destroy it at our peril.

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Hunt:** I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. He cast a disgraceful slur on the integrity of our individual civil servants and condemned them collectively.

The critical difference between the funding of the two main parties is that when companies donate to the Conservative party they do so because they share and support Conservative principles and policies. When trade unions give to the Labour party cause they do so because they want to decide its principles and policies.

It is striking that there is no obvious queue of enterprises or entrepreneurs waiting to fund the Labour party. The only queue at Walworth road is of Labour members quitting the party en masse; according to the figures that I have read in the accounts of the Labour party, its membership went down by 50,000 between 1990 and 1991. Indeed, some reports now put it as low as 100,000. This means that the membership of the Labour party is now equal to that of the Liberal Democratic party. Labour Members should ask themselves why.

On the subject of the disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 1985, which the right hon. Member for Derby, South mentioned, I shall make some important points so that Opposition Members can desist from making ill-informed comments. I do so, unavoidably, in the absence of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. I hope that I speak for hon. Members on both sides of the House when I send him, on behalf of the House, our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

Members of the Opposition seem to misunderstand the role of the Department of Trade and Industry in enforcing the disclosure requirements. It is primarily the duty of companies and their directors to comply. Having said that, however, the DTI takes its responsibilities very seriously by, for example, following up allegations of non-compliance, except where the matter is more appropriately handled by another agency.

*[Mr. Hunt]*

In the case of Polly Peck—*[Interruption.]* This is an important point. In the case of Polly Peck, the Serious Fraud Squad Office has taken the lead.

**Mr. Rhodri Morgan** (Cardiff, West): Can the Minister say, therefore, why, late last week, the companies division of the DTI asked Companies house in Cardiff if it would research the box of one group of companies only—the group of companies associated with Robert Maxwell—to see whether the directors had properly declared all such contributions? In the light of the controversy this afternoon already about the possible abuse of civil servants and politics, will he say whether he thinks that that request was a proper use of civil servants' time?

**Mr. Hunt:** That is typical of the sort of allegation that is being made. I am not aware of any such circumstances. I believe that the hon. Gentleman is misinformed, but I will, of course, investigate. The hon. Gentleman should not make allegations of that nature without checking thoroughly in advance. It is wrong to seek to involve civil servants in a party political battle.

**Mr. Robin Cook** (Livingston): Since the right hon. Gentleman referred to Polly Peck a moment ago, may I remind him of what he said five minutes earlier, which I wrote down at the time? He said that the Conservative party does not accept contributions where there is any suspicion that they were illegally obtained. Is the Secretary of State asking the House to accept that there is no suspicion that the money received from Polly Peck and Asil Nadir was illegally obtained? If he is not saying that, why does not he agree to give it back to where it belongs?

**Mr. Hunt:** I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman chose to misinterpret what I said and what has been said by my right hon. Friend. Let me make it absolutely clear that the Conservative party does not accept contributions if there is any suspicion that they were illegally obtained. That applies to all the donations that the Conservative party receives. I also said that the Conservative party does not accept donations where there is any suspicion that there are strings attached. That is not the case with trade union donations to the Labour party.

Mr. Edmonds recently showed the red card to the leader of the Labour party and the right hon. Gentleman knows it. He said:

"We pay for the Party, we have the right to democracy in the Party."

Democracy usually means one member, one vote; in the Labour party it means one trade union leader, 1 million votes.

The trade unions—meaning, in practice, a small handful of trade union leaders—control 40 per cent. of the electoral college for the party leader; they account for 70 per cent. of the votes at the annual conference. No fewer that 175 Labour Members of the House are sponsored by unions.

I remember that the late Joe Gormley said that they had a certain number of Members of Parliament in their bank, because they funded them through the National Union of Mineworkers. And Tom Sawyer, of the National Union of Public Employees, said on 2 June last year that while they continued to fund the party,

"we will have a say. It is as crude as that. No say, no pay."

Trade unions now supply over 70 per cent. of the Labour party's finance.

In many ways I am a strong believer in trade unions, but I believe that they do themselves a great disservice by identifying themselves with one political party only and allowing it to be a parasite living off trade union funds.

We have heard very little evidence from the Labour party and what evidence we have heard I have refuted. I remind the House that the hidden agenda for today's debate is Labour's desire to have its political campaigning funded by the taxpayer. The reason behind that is obvious and it is a paradox for Opposition Members.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): The Minister referred earlier to the late Joe Gormley and implied that sponsored members of the National Union of Mineworkers went along with what he had to say. Let me just put him straight. At the time that Joe Gormley was president of the NUM, he was in favour of the Common Market; I was not. He was in favour of the Labour Government's pay policy and I voted against it. He was in favour of proportional representation and I was not. Joe Gormley has gone and I am still here.

**Mr. Hunt:** The hon. Member for Bolsover was not here earlier when I paid a tribute to him for his integrity by saying that, if he had his way, the Maxwell money would be repaid. He is nodding in agreement.

**Mr. Skinner:** I am in nobody's pocket.

**Mr. Hunt:** Exactly. I am saying exactly what the hon. Member for Bolsover is saying. He is in nobody's pocket, but the rest of his party is in the trade union pocket.

There is a paradox for right hon. and hon. Gentlemen. While Labour remains in the grip of the trade union movement it is unelectable. If it tries to escape from the trade unions, it will become bankrupt. How on earth can is square that circle? As usual with the Labour party, it is the taxpayer who provides the answer. I shall tell the Labour party the problems about state financing, which are all too obvious. It is wrong in principle to fund political campaigning. Why on earth should the taxpayer,who already has to fund the health service, education and defence, fund the Labour party's political campaigning?

How are the moneys to be allocated between the parties? If it is by seats won, we should hear protests from the Liberal Democratic party, which is one of the strongest advocates of the state financing of political parties. If the money was allocated on the basis of votes cast at an election as far back as four years previously, what equity would there be? No doubt the Labour party would allocate funds according to the latest opinion poll. It allocates policies according to the latest opinion poll, so why not do that with its finances as well?

**Mr. Andrew Faulds** (Warley, East): Would not it be healthy, to put it at its simplest, if political parties were funded from taxation rather than from moneys provided by foreigners?

**Mr. Hunt:** I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has listened carefully to the whole debate. I have already dealt effectively with that point.

**Mr. Derek Enright** (Hemsworth): What about the Saudis?

**Mr. Hunt:** I dealt with the point comprehensively.

The debate has been prompted by a desire to have taxpayers' money funding the Labour party. The Labour party's submission to the Select Committee on Home Affairs gives the game away. It is a lengthy wish list for cash from the taxpayer and it reads rather like a plaintive version of the Labour party manifesto. In its own words, the Labour party is here today to

"argue for the introduction of forms of State aid"

for political parties. If Labour wants a party, let it pay for it and not the taxpayer.

We learnt during last year's general election campaign that the Labour party has descended from the days of Gaitskell and Attlee to being the party of "nudge nudge, wink wink" and the party of rumour and innuendo—indeed, the party of the sly innuendo. Today's speech by the right hon. Member for Derby, South was a travesty and a disgrace. It pitched, weaved and evaded, while all the time seeking to undermine some of our most hallowed institutions. The right hon. Lady will not be allowed to get away with it. The Labour party always denigrates what is good about Britain. The Government stand for the integrity of the existing system. I will not allow the Labour party to undermine public confidence in the integrity of our system. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to throw out the motion.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Before I call the next hon. Member, I reiterate, because of the time, my plea for short speeches. A number of hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye.

5.12 pm

**Mr. Doug Hoyle** (Warrington, North): I have never heard such synthetic anger as that demonstrated by the Secretary of State for Employment. He had nothing to say and no information to give us. We still do not know in whose pockets the Tories are. The right hon. Gentleman threw no light on the sources of Tory party funds. I can only hope that, when it is the turn of the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), the chairman of the Conservative party, a little more information will be given to the House.

The debate is about the secretive and sleazy way in which the Tory party is funded. It is about the unique way in which honours fall on company chairmen who give to the Tory party. It is also about the very curious case of Mr. Asil Nadir and the help that he has received from Conservative Members.

No answer was given by the Secretary of State. Indeed, he demonstrated to us, once again, that the Tories are afraid to reveal the sources of the funds that pour into their coffers. Can the Secretary of State tell us why the Tories published their accounts until 1979, since when those accounts have not been published? It is interesting that that change came about.

**Mr. Tim Smith** (Beaconsfield) *rose*——

**Mr. Hoyle:** If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I shall tell him what information is now given to us. We understand the expenditure and what Tory central office receives. In 1992, central office received £20·7 million. When we asked about that and about company donations, the Tory party told us to look at company accounts. I repeat: in 1992, the Tories received £20·7 million. When the records were checked by Companies house, only £2·9 million was shown in company accounts. That means that there is a deficit of £17·8 million. We want to know where that £17·8 million came from.

**Mr. Tim Smith:** The hon. Gentleman has made the suggestion about the accounts of the Conservative party that was made by a member of the Select Committee last week: that no accounts had been published between 1979 and 1983. They were published, and I undertook to send copies to the Select Committee.

**Mr. Hoyle:** I gave way to the hon. Gentleman because I expected him to tell me where the difference of £17·8 million came from. I shall give way again to him. I am told that he is a treasurer of the Conservative party. I give way to him now so that he can stand up and tell us where the £17·8 million came from. Does the hon. Gentleman care to do that? I am waiting. I do not think that we shall get the information from the horse's mouth. We certainly did not get it from the Secretary of State.

Matters are worse than that. According to *Business Age*, £71 million has been donated in this way since 1985. *[Laughter.]* I hear Conservative Members laughing. I am quite prepared to sit down and to let one of them get up and tell us where the money came from. No. That has finished it now. The lager louts have finished for today.

**Mr. Ashby** *rose*——

**Mr. Hoyle:** No—there is one left.

**Mr. Ashby:** Is the hon. Gentleman aware that this marvellous magazine *Business Age* is really the "Hello" of business publications? It talked about Sarawak as a desert kingdom, when it is in Borneo.

**Mr. Hoyle:** That is a very useful piece of information, which has added to my knowledge. Does the hon. Gentleman now care to tell us, taking just 1992, where the almost £18 million that is unaccounted for came from? We know that the funding——

**Mr. Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley): This is boring.

**Mr. Hoyle:** It may be boring, but it is nevertheless true. In fact, it is not boring to my colleagues, because we should like a little light shone on the matter. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can help us.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien** (Warwickshire, North): As a member of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, I have to tell my hon. Friend that he is being very unfair to Conservative Members. They will not be able to answer my hon. Friend. I refer him to evidence given to the Select Committee, particularly that from Mr. Eric Chalker, who was on the Conservative Board of Finance and who represented 84 constituencies. He said:

"Over £67 million of expenditure was recorded by the Conservative Party . . . in my fours years on the Committee, but no one had to account for a penny of it to the Conservative Board of Finance nor to any other elected body."

Conservative Members do not know the answers; nor does anyone else.

**Mr. Hoyle:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. Perhaps only two people know where the funding came from. One is Lord McAlpine, whom the unfortunate President of the Board of Trade apparently saw on his visit to Venice. I join the Secretary of State for Employment in hoping that the right hon. Gentleman has

*[Mr. Hoyle]*

a speedy and full recovery and is soon back in the House. However, the President of the Board of Trade visited Lord McAlpine, and Lord McAlpine is one of the men who knows.

The other person is perhaps someone to whom my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) referred—Sir Brian Wyldbore-Smith. He is apparently a director of the Conservative Board of Finance—a curious name, but a curious job, too. Apparently, Sir Brian used private addresses to receive cheques—they were not sent directly to central office. They were made out to him personally, eventually passed on and often paid into an offshore account in Jersey, a tax haven.

They eventually landed at central office with Lord McAlpine, whose office, I understand, was always kept locked except when he was in it, so that the secrets could not be given to the rank and file or to members of the Cabinet. Therefore, my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) is right to say that Conservative Members do not know where the funding came from.

I fully expected the Secretary of State to tell us about foreign backers, as that is what part of the debate is about. Why did we not hear about the foreign business people who poured money into the Conservative party's coffers? Why did we not hear a bit about what came from all the trips made to Hong Kong, the 16 occasions when Tory fund raisers went there with Ministers?

Perhaps the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield can tell us a little more about Li Ki-Shing, the Hong Kong-based billionaire. He is one of the richest people in Hong Kong, and was the Chinese Government's representative at the Hong Kong and Shanghai bank, which we all know recently took over the Midland bank. Perhaps the £1 million that he is reported to have given was payment for allowing the takeover to go through—*[Interruption.]* Is anyone denying that he gave £1 million? I am prepared to give way. Are you telling me that he did not give £1 million or that you do not know? You have your opportunity——

**Several hon. Members:** Order.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I control the Chair. The hon. Gentleman has been here a long time, so he knows that I have no responsibility for the £1 million to which he is referring.

**Mr. Hoyle:** Thank goodness, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are all very relieved that you have no responsibility for it.

Let us consider Greek shipping millionaires, because they are interesting people. John Latsis is reported to have given £2 million to the Tory party by 1991. He had previously given £500,000. If Conservative Members do not believe it, why do they not intervene to say so?

What about the curious case of the Sultan of Brunei, who was very close to the previous Prime Minister and her family? What about the Fayed brothers, who took over the House of Fraser? There was great difficulty in getting the Department of Trade and Industry's report of the inquiry into the case published. They are still company directors, but we do not share the Tories' amusement about that.

The DTI inspector said that the Fayed brothers had dishonestly represented their origins, their wealth, their business interests and their resources to the Secretary of State, the Office of Fair Trading, the House of Fraser directors and shareholders and their advisers. However, because of previous contributions, they are still acting as company directors.

I shall mention Asil Nadir a little later. We are told that he had no right to expect an honour or a peerage for his donations to the Tory party. I think that he was treated very unfairly, because the facts are that industrialists who give money to the Tory party are far more likely to receive an honour than non-donors.

**Mrs. Alice Mahon** (Halifax): My hon. Friend will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) mentioned United Biscuits and the £1 million given to the Tory party in order to gain an honour for Sir Hector Laing. Is he also aware that a factory closed in my constituency which, had it received that £1 million in investment, would not have had to close, with the loss of 1,000 very much needed jobs?

**Mr. Hoyle:** I could not agree more with my hon. Friend—it would have been a much better use of the money donated to the Tory party.

Let us consider the facts. One hundred of 199 donations brought honours to directors or chairmen of companies which had given to the Tory party.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): Is it not strange that seven Conservative Members made representations, written and oral, to the Attorney-General—in one case, the hon. Member saw him in the Division Lobby? We know who three of the seven are; why do the remaining four not explain why they made representations when there could have been no constituency interest? Is it because Mr. Nadir was involved in Tory party finance, or is it something even more sinister?

**Mr. Hoyle:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because I had intended to ask that question a little later. We need an explanation of why those names are being withheld from the House. What have they to hide? Why is the Attorney-General not prepared to make them public? The Secretary of State has not explained, so we can only hope that the chairman of the Conservative party, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield, will not only tell us why the names have been withheld but give us the names themselves. Let us have a little openness in the debate.

Before I gave way to my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North who made a good intervention, I was saying that 100 out of the 199 honours awarded were given to people in charge of companies that had donated to the Conservative party. The interesting aspect of that is that only 6 per cent. of the companies concerned disclosed the donations.

**Mr. Burns:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Hoyle:** The hon. Gentleman has been up and down all day. Of course I shall give way to him.

**Mr. Burns:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman wants to be fair, so would he care to tell the House how many contributors to the Labour party between 1964 and 1970, and between 1974 and March 1976, were friends of the then Prime Minister and received honours in honours lists?

**Hon. Members:** Pass.

**Mr. Hoyle:** Yes, that question is not even worth replying to. *[Interruption.]* Now Conservative Members are shouting; now they have come to life. When we asked them to tell us who contributed the missing £17·9 million in one year alone—1992—they were struck silent. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) intends to answer that question, I hope that he will intervene, but I shall not give way to frivolous interventions. I am giving the hon. Gentleman every opportunity to answer the question. He could tell us now. He does not know? He does not, but he does not deny the fact either.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South was right to name a few of the companies.

**Mr. Donald Anderson:** While we are on the subject of illegality and donations, is my hon. Friend aware that Sir Geoffrey Mulcahy, of the Kingfisher Group, was given an honour in this year's honours list at a time when his subsidiary B and Q was leading the fight by illegally trading on Sundays?

**Mr. Hoyle:** That is a rather telling point. It may account for the Government's total opposition to the Bill on Sunday trading introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). We are talking about huge donations. We have been told that United Biscuits gave £1 million, and we know the honours that were received. And what about Hanson?

**Mr. Ashby:** Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the chairman of United Biscuits got his knighthood from a Labour Government? [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]

**Mr. Hoyle** *rose—[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I was watching the debate on the monitor before I came into the Chair, so I know that the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) has been enjoying himself today. I am having great difficulty in hearing the debate, and if I am to control the debate, I wish to hear it. If hon. Members on both sides would control themselves, that would be of advantage to the debate.

**Mr. Hoyle:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you rightly said, we have been watching the antics of the Conservative lager louts all the afternoon, except when they were struck dumb when we asked where the money came from.

**Mr. Ashby:** What about United Biscuits?

**Mr. Hoyle:** Yes, Hector Laing received his knighthood as the hon. Gentleman said, but—*[Laughter.]* When hon. Members have had their little joke, perhaps they will listen. When Sir Hector Laing gave £1 million, he received his peerage from a Conservative Government. Not only that, but his successor Sir Robert Clarke also received his knighthood from a Conservative Government.

Now let us deal with the curious case of Lord Hanson. Hanson gave £852,000, and not one person but two people received peerages—Lords Hanson and White. At the time of the takeover bid for ICI, was it not rather curious how reluctant the Conservative Government were to take action?

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Hoyle:** Ah, the Front Bench at last.

**Mr. Newton:** I am especially interested in the way in which the hon. Gentleman has sought to get away from the subject of United Biscuits. He has started talking about Lord Hanson, who received a knighthood in the lavender list. *[Laughter.]*

**Mr. Hoyle:** But again, Lord Hanson received his peerage from the Conservative party——

**Mr. Burns:** Dig the hole deeper.

**Mr. Hoyle:** Conservative Members are enjoying themselves now. Perhaps the hon. Member for Chelmsford would like to stand up and tell me where the money comes from.

The Leader of the House might have mentioned the fact that Lord White received a peerage although he spends most of his time overseas, in the United States. That was a good pay-off. So it was not surprising that, when one of our leading companies was threatened, there was not much action by the Government to defend it.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** My hon. Friend mentioned United Biscuits and the substantial contribution that it has made to the Conservative party. Is he aware that United Biscuits pressed for the abolition of the Potato Marketing Board, with a view to securing a substantial reduction in the price of potatoes? United Biscuits did that because it is one of Britain's largest users of potatoes, in its processing plants.

The general view in the potato industry is that there is a direct link between the abolition of the Potato Marketing Board and the contribution to the Conservative party. *[Laughter.]* That is the general view in the farming industry. Let Conservative Members deny it.

**Mr. Hoyle:** I am amazed at the hilarity shown by Conservative Members when my hon. Friend made that telling point. Do they no longer want farmers' votes? Are the contributions from United Biscuits more important to the Conservative party than farmers' votes?

I could carry on with a long list—[HON. MEMBERS: "More."] If I had time, I could go on to Taylor Woodrow and P and O, and Sir Jeffrey—now Lord—Sterling, and many more. But I shall not bore you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I hope that the answer to many of the questions that I have asked will be given by the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield, the chairman of the Conservative party.

Asil Nadir believes—with much justification in my view—that he has been extremely badly treated by the Conservative party. The Conservatives now admit that he gave £400,000, and Mr. Nadir claims to have given an awful lot more. Some of that £400,000 was given after it was alleged that he stole money from Polly Peck. [HON. MEMBERS: "Alleged."] Of course, alleged.

If any of us wanted to buy a television set in a pub, he would probably look twice at it before buying, and if it turned out to be stolen, he would be charged with receiving stolen goods. Yet the Conservatives will not give the money back. They say that they may if it is demanded of them, yet they know that that money was not shown in Polly Peck's financial returns.

**Mr. Nick Raynsford** (Greenwich): We have heard the Secretary of State claim that the Conservative party would always give back any money if there was a suspicion that

*[Mr. Nick Raynsford]*

it had come from an illegal source. That was most interesting, and I wonder whether my hon. Friend knows whether there is any record of the Conservative party ever having given back a donation.

**Mr. Hoyle:** No, not that we know of, but then, of course, the Conservatives are not very good at publishing records of any kind.

Let us consider Mr. Asil Nadir and his friends in the Conservative party. We know that he is charged with theft and fraud to the value of £30 million. We also know that he jumped bail of £3·5 million. I wrote to the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates), to tell him that I intended to raise certain points. I am sorry that he is not here today. It is rumoured that, quite apart from the loan of a Volvo, he dined with Mr. Nadir on the Saturday before Mr. Nadir left the country on the following Tuesday. I would have been very interested to learn from the hon. Member for East Hampshire what they discussed over that dinner.

I find it very surprising that the newspapers state that the hon. Member for East Hampshire has complained that Polly Peck was undermined by MI6. Having served on the Select Committee on Trade and Industry which examined the supergun affair, I am not too surprised about that claim. However, it is astonishing that the person who is rumoured to have made that accusation is still a Minister responsible for security in Northern Ireland. That is rather amazing.

I agree that the names of the other people involved should be known. One of those who spoke and wrote on behalf of Mr. Nadir unfortunately cannot be with us today—the President of the Board of Trade. I would have liked to hear why the President of the Board of Trade had lunch with Mr. Morgan, who handles Mr. Nadir's PR. Mr. Morgan denies that they talked about Mr. Nadir, but the President of the Board of Trade said they did. What was there to hide when Mr. Morgan had to deny that they spoke about Mr. Nadir?

I would have liked to ask the President of the Board of Trade why it has been decided not to strike Mr. Nadir off as being unfit to hold company office. I would also have liked to ask the President of the Board of Trade why, even though the Serious Fraud Office had been informed that Mr. Nadir might leave the country, he was able to fly away on a small plane without let or hindrance.

There are many questions which should be answered in relation to that matter. However, I do not want to take up too much of the time of the House—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am prepared to sit down now if we are going to hear about the missing millions.

The Conservative party has brought all this on itself. The Conservatives received secret funds and donations, not only from companies in this country, which are not recorded, but from people outside this country who do not have a right to vote here. I believe that that practice should be stopped.

Why does not the Conservative party take up the offer that we have made—something with which hon. Members representing other parties would agree—and publish everything so that we know the source of all the donations? We would then know who is pulling the Conservative party's strings, and why, and how much those people are paying for the privilege of doing just that.

5.42 pm

**Sir Norman Fowler** (Sutton Coldfield): Frankly, that was a fair old ramble through the undergrowth. With respect to the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), he asked me a number of questions, but he ended up providing the answers to them himself. When he referred to Lord Hanson and Lord Laing, he raised the issue of two people who were actually first honoured by Labour Governments. That seems to be the entire answer to the point that he was making.

As the House will know, for the past 12 months I have been the chairman of the Conservative party organisation. In addition, as the House will know, I gave evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee for almost two hours last week. I will therefore seek to be brief in setting out my position.

Let me start by dealing with the allegation in *The Guardian* this morning to which reference has already been made and which has received a great deal of publicity. It was alleged that the Conservative party received millions of pounds in cash from the Saudi Arabian royal family and that the donation followed a meeting in London between a Cabinet Minister and prominent Saudis with close links to the Saudi Government and royal family.

That allegation was picked up by the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). In the article she is quoted as saying that she would raise the matter in today's debate. She did not raise it until I raised it with her.

**Mrs. Beckett:** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Sir Norman Fowler:** No, I want to finish this point.

That allegation and charge has been proved to be—*[Interruption.]* Okay, that charge has now been countered and it is said that it is totally untrue. I want to quote the statement made by the Saudi ambassador to the United States. He said:

> "All the allegations in *The Guardian's* article are untrue and wholly without foundation. No such meeting took place. The allegations are baseless and harmful fabrications and, in view of the serious nature of these allegations, His Royal Highness the Ambassador is taking legal advice as to the appropriate course of action to allow him to obtain a full retraction and an apology."

That is the position and I believe that it would now be right for the right hon. Member for Derby, South to dissociate herself from the matter.

**Mrs. Beckett:** The right hon. Gentleman is trying to make a great deal of the fact that I did not raise the issue during the debate——

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson** (Aberdeen, South): Withdraw.

**Mrs. Beckett:** There is no need for the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) to bellow. There is nothing that I need to withdraw. The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) wanted to know why I did not raise the matter in my speech. I had intended to do that, but before I reached that point, the right hon. Gentleman had already intervened. What I said in the press, what is certainly true and what I have no need to withdraw is that very serious allegations had been made and I said that I would raise them or see that they were raised in the debate so that there could be an opportunity for those allegations to be refuted or confirmed. What is there to withdraw in that?

**Sir Norman Fowler:** The right hon. Lady really cannot be as naive as that—if she is, she should not be the deputy leader of the Labour party. She is giving credence to that kind of rumour and allegation. In investing in and putting her name to the matter, she knows perfectly well what she is doing and she should have dissociated herself from it.

**Mr. Soley:** The right hon. Gentleman is missing something that the Government have missed throughout the debate. The point is that the Government could disprove all of this by publishing the accounts. The issue arises from the fact that a number of people, including those in the Saudi embassy, have said that this took place. We cannot know whether that is true, but we do know that the Government make a distinction between Governments giving money and the money given by individuals. In the Saudi case, individuals may have been directly involved in that money because of the peculiar monarchic situation in Saudi Arabia. That is why the only way out of the trap is for the Government to publish the figures.

**Sir Norman Fowler:** Again, that is exactly the kind of smear and rumour that we have heard all afternoon. I challenge the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) to make those comments outside the House. He knows that he would not then have the privilege that he has inside this place.

**Mr. Soley** *rose*——

**Sir Norman Fowler:** No, I am not giving way again on this point.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Sir Norman Fowler:** No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours** *rose*——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The right hon. Gentleman has said that he will not give way. I call Sir Norman Fowler.

**Sir Norman Fowler:** Let me make it absolutely clear: the Conservative party did not, does not and will not accept donations from foreign Governments. That also applies to royal families and to the agents of the Governments and royal families. I hope that I have made that position absolutely clear.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Sir Norman Fowler:** No, I will not give way again.

There have also been other allegations made today notably, on television and radio programmes, by——

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you will have heard, the right hon. Gentleman said that he would reply to me. He has not replied to two of the questions that I have asked——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. That is not a point of order.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** May we have a reply——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman knew full well when he rose to his feet that that was not a point of order. I call Sir Norman Fowler.

**Sir Norman Fowler:** I have set out the position as clearly as I conceivably can. I certainly do not intend to give way to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) again. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am trying to listen to the right hon. Gentleman, but his hon. Friends are not helping me to do so.

**Sir Norman Fowler:** I think that they were saying goodbye to the hon. Member for Workington. Some hon. Gentlemen we miss in the House; others we miss perhaps a little less.

Other allegations have been made today, notably on television and radio programmes, by the hon. Members for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). At times, they appeared to repeat allegations that first appeared in the magazine, *Business Age*, and which resulted in legal action being taken against that publication. More to the point, however, that legal action has caused the magazine to retract its allegations, issue an apology and to agree damages. I hope that that will be noted by the Opposition.

**Mr. Frank Dobson** (Holborn and St. Pancras): We are in some difficulty. [HON. MEMBERS: "Absolutely".] We have been told by the Secretary of State for Employment that *Business Age* has apologised. The chairman of the Conservative party, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), has just said the same. In between those two announcements, however, I received a message that informed me that their announcement is untrue.

**Mr. Thurnham:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is not it wrong for Opposition Members to repeat untrue allegations under the privilege of the House?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** If it had been wrong, I would have ruled those hon. Members out of order.

**Sir Norman Fowler:** I believe that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras will find that the information that he has just given to the House is inaccurate.

*Business Age* appears to be the well from which Opposition Members draw their allegations. That magazine has also alleged that the Conservative party has £200 million salted away in secret accounts overseas. *[Laughter.]* That allegation has been widely reported on radio, television and the newspapers. I must tell the House and, in particular, my right hon. and hon. Friends that I sometimes wish that that allegation were true. That allegation was so daft, however, that we have offered a 10 per cent. finder's fee to anyone who is able to find that elusive £200 million. Needless to say, we have heard nothing further.

It is important to consider the serious nature of the point at issue. As chairman of the Conservative party, I am, in common with my predecessors, committed, first, to the voluntary financing of political parties. It is the voluntary commitment which gives a political party its strength. That means that a strong party must have a large, nationwide membership.

One point that has not been understood in the debate, and which should be emphasised, is that the vast majority of the Conservative party's income is raised at the constituency level. In 1992-93, we estimate that the overall

*[Sir Norman Fowler]*

income for the party was £26 million, of which £18 million was raised and spent in the constituencies and only £8·3 million was raised centrally.

It is the central organisation and central fund raising which have attracted all the public attention. It is important to recognise, however, that the Conservative party has no national membership income, unlike the Labour party and the Liberal party. All membership subscriptions to our party are paid locally to constituency associations.

**Mr. Hoyle** *rose*——

**Sir Norman Fowler:** I believe that the House has just about heard enough from the hon. Gentleman.

I do not deny the need for rules to govern the way in which money is raised. I obviously accept that. The most fundamental of all those rules must be that money does not buy political power.

**Mr. Donald Anderson** *rose*——

**Sir Norman Fowler:** I shall not give way.

The real scandal would be if donations bought control over candidate selection, control over the leadership election and control over policy. That is why I find the Opposition motion so extraordinarily hypocritical, because everything that I have said applies not to the Conservative party, but to the Labour party.

At the last election, the Labour party received three quarters of its funds from the trade unions. Trade union money buys the unions a 40 per cent. say in the selection of candidates, a 40 per cent. say in the selection of the leadership and a 70 per cent. say in party policy determined at party conference. As Tom Sawyer, the deputy general secretary of the National Union of Public Employees has said, "No say, no pay." That needs to be repeated again and again, because that reveals the position of the unions. I am not inclined to take lectures from the Labour party on this matter. If it wants reform, there is a great deal that it must and can do for itself.

I am even less impressed by the argument for state funding. In a country where voting is not compulsory, it would be very curious to make it compulsory to donate to party-political campaigns.

I am aware of the Short money used inside Parliament, but it would be a radical extension of current practice to give money for party activities out in the country. Obviously there are practical objections to such a system. Rules would have to be devised to govern how the money was divided and a bureaucracy would have to be established to check how that money was spent. How would those funds be divided? If it were on the basis of past votes, that would simply freeze the status quo. If it were given on the basis of the number of candidates fielded, that would simply encourage extremist candidates to stand.

Above all, I do not believe that the public would support such a change to state funding, particularly when we are rightly seeking to put a check on public expenditure. The idea of compulsory taxpayer funding of the political parties is opposed by about 80 per cent. of the population—the vast majority are overwhelmingly opposed to it.

Let me set out the mechanisms and principles that govern the way in which the Conservative party raises money. In the past 12 months, I have set up a new management board that oversees spending in the same way as a board of directors might do in a public company. That board establishes accountability for our members and for all parts of the party. We are also in the process of setting up a new board of treasurers, which will be responsible for central fund-raising activities.

Last week, I set out for the Select Committee some of the rules that govern our fund raising. For example, we refuse to accept any donation of which we do not know the source. We refuse to accept any donation that we have reason to believe contains illegally obtained money. We refuse to accept any donation to which strings are attached. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment dealt with that issue extremely well in his speech.

I must repeat what I said to the Select Committee on the question of honours. Under the Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act 1925, which was introduced as a result of the abuses committed by the last Liberal Government, any attempt to meddle with honours awarded is illegal. Such an activity is not just wrong; it is illegal. An Act of Parliament exists to prevent such intervention and, of course, the Conservative party observes the law.

I have listened to the Opposition's allegation about peerages, but the hon. Member for Warrington, North has destroyed their case with his own-goal revelations about Lord Hanson and Lord Laing. The first honours given to those individuals did not come from a Conservative Government, but from a Labour one. There is nothing in that allegation. We refuse to accept any money from foreign Governments. I have made it clear——

**Mrs. Barbara Roche** (Hornsey and Wood Green) *rose*——

**Sir Norman Fowler:** I will not give way.

I have already dealt with the absurd report in *The Guardian* today, so I shall comment on one or two of the other suggestions that have been made. We have not received money from the Government of Kuwait, the Government of the People's Republic of China or any other Government whatever. As for the suggestion by *Business Age* that the Sultan of Brunei has given us money, the standard of journalism in that magazine leaves a certain amount to be desired. It describes Brunei as a tiny desert kingdom. Every atlas that I have seen shows that, far from being a tiny desert kingdom, Brunei is next to Borneo and the only sand there is on the beach. The standard of journalism in *Business Age* must be treated with a great deal of caution—much more caution than has been shown so far by Opposition Members.

Within the rules that I have set out, we certainly accept contributions from public and private companies. I underline that, under the law, those contributions must be declared by the companies.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien** *rose*——

**Sir Norman Fowler:** I will not give way. The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) questioned me for hours last week and I do not wish to continue that.

The attitude of Labour Members is hypocritical. I have a copy of a letter—I sound like the shadow trade and industry spokesman—from the right hon. Member for

Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) about the Labour party's attitude in December 1992. It is to a company, B and Q, in which the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) has a great deal of interest. There was a complaint which concerned a fund-raising ball held at the Conservative party conference. The right hon. Member for Copeland says:

"I recognise that some of this publicity was a result of comments made by my Parliamentary colleagues. I would like to make Labour's position clear. We recognise the need for business to communicate with politicians of all persuasions . . . . The Labour party was delighted to welcome B and Q at our gala dinner at the Park Lane hotel in June. We recognised your objective in attending was to further your corporate needs. I am grateful for your support and I hope that it continues."

That seems adequately to deal with the issue of B and Q.

Apart from corporate donations, we receive voluntary contributions made by individuals from their own resources. They are given to the party on exactly the same basis as they are given to other parties. I agree entirely with what Lord Hailsham said on this matter:

"It is the most basic right that what a man does with his money, like what he does with his vote, is a private affair. We defend it."

In the Conservative party, no donor—large or small—receives any influence or favours in return for a donation. There are, therefore, no grounds to override the fundamental individual right to privacy.

As far as Mr. Asil Nadir and his contributions are concerned, the House will know—I made this totally clear to the Select Committee on Home Affairs—that we do not comment on specific donations to the party; nor do we intend to do so. However, in view of the fact that information that we provided in 1991 to the administrators of Polly Peck International has been made public, I shall make the following facts clear.

Contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition said last week, the Conservative party did not receive £1·5 million from Mr. Nadir. Over five years starting in October 1985, the party received a total of £440,000 and the last contribution was made in March 1990. Those donations were made not by Mr. Nadir personally but by Polly Peck International or Unipac Packaging Industries. We know of no further donations from Mr. Nadir or his companies.

The donations were made at a time—this needs to be emphasised—when Polly Peck was regarded as a highly successful British company. I understand that the company made similar donations to organisations and bodies such as the Spastics Society, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Royal Opera House. The responsibility for disclosing those donations rested with Polly Peck.

I understand that the then deputy chairman of the Conservative party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon (Sir J. Cope), wrote to the administrators, Touche Ross, in October 1991. He ended his letter by saying:

"We have of course consulted our solicitors and have been advised that there is no legal obligation to provide you with the information you seek as regards to Polly Peck International plc unless you have obtained an order of the court requiring disclosure of the information concerned. However, the Conservative party is quite willing to assist you as administrator in this matter without that necessity. I do not know what the position is under Cypriot law, but for the same reason you will see the information included as to Unipac."

Details of the contributions are then set out.

We never received a reply to that letter. There was silence from Touche Ross for the next 18 months. The issue was next raised when a copy of the information—I do not know whether it was a copy of the letter—was provided to the Opposition spokesman on trade and industry, the hon. Member for Livingston.

There were new allegations in *The Sunday Times*, again quoting staff from Touche Ross. At no stage have we been contacted by Touche Ross since our 1991 letter. The result is that, yesterday, I asked our lawyers to contact Touche Ross directly. One hour before entering the Chamber, I finally received a letter, 601 days after our first communication.

Obviously, we will now consider that letter. I do not believe that any reasonable person will expect me to give a snap reaction and response to it. *[Interruption.]* It is a serious point. If the matter was so urgent, Touche Ross should have come back to us quickly, rather than after 600 days. To avoid any doubt, let me make this clear. If we receive proof from Touche Ross or any other source that the money we received was stolen, we will return it. I make that position absolutely clear.

We now need to deal not with unsubstantiated allegations and unsourced press reports. We need evidence instead of pure assertion. I hope that Touche Ross will start to deal with us and not pursue the matter through the newspapers.

**Mr. Dennis Turner** (Wolverhampton, South-East) *rose*——

**Sir Norman Fowler:** I will not give way.

I have set out the position of Mr. Asil Nadir fully and clearly. Let me make this clear: we will return the money if it was stolen. I hope that the Labour party makes such a pledge regarding the tens of thousands of pounds that the Leader of the Opposition admitted were received from Mr. Robert Maxwell. That issue needs to be addressed. I realise that the figure that has been given is £31,000. We want to check carefully whether that is the complete figure. If the money received from Mr. Nadir is tainted, it seems that the money received from Mr. Maxwell is covered in black tar.

**Mr. Dobson:** Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us whether the Tory party ever received any money from Robert Maxwell? If everything that Robert Maxwell did was tainted, why did the right hon. Gentleman, when he was the Secretary of State for Employment, sell to Maxwell the Professional and Executive Register at a time when it was rumoured that higher bids were received from other companies? The hon. Gentleman did not deny those rumours.

**Sir Norman Fowler:** The hon. Gentleman once again shows his total lack of integrity. The allegation that he has just made is simply untrue.

**Mr. Eric Martlew** (Carlisle): It is true.

**Sir Norman Fowler:** It is not true. It is specifically untrue. I challenge the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras to provide evidence to support what he says. The hon. Gentleman does not appear to understand how sales take place in government. Ministers do not make those decisions. However, for avoidance of doubt and from my own clear memory, Mr. Robert Maxwell did not appear in one way or the other in the matter.

*[Sir Norman Fowler]*

In my recollection, the offer that was made to the Department of Employment was by far the highest offer. The hon. Gentleman seeks to make yet another slur. It is slur after slur.

**Mr. Dobson:** If the right hon. Gentleman's recollection is so clear, why did not he challenge the doubts cast at the time in newspapers such as *The Times* about whether the Maxwell bid was the highest offer? If he thought that Robert Maxwell was so monstrous a person and that his companies were so unreliable, why did he say:

"We were impressed by their plans to make the company the flagship of the new employment services division of their business"?

Why did he say:

"There is no doubt that they have the expertise and commitment to give the Professional and Executive Register the start in the private sector that we want for it"?

Can he confirm now that it is entirely closed down?

**Sir Norman Fowler:** The hon. Gentleman is a disgrace not only to his Front Bench but to standards in politics. He continues to repeat things that he knows are untrue. He knows that he is in the hole and is protesting and protesting. What the hon. Gentleman says is untrue. I hope that when he comes to think about it, if he ever comes to think about these things, he will withdraw the suggestion that he has made.

The Conservative party's position is precisely this. Unlike the Labour party, we do not believe that the taxpayer should be forced to bail out political parties.

**Mrs. Beckett:** We should have the record straight in the House. The right hon. Gentleman has already referred to Short money—taxpayers' money which goes to the Opposition political parties. It is also on the record that public money from the taxpayers goes to the Conservative party to fund the advisers and appointees that it has in government. The Conservative party receives at the minimum, and on published figures, substantially more than the Labour party. I believe that it receives about four times as much as the Labour party. Those appointees of the Conservative party advise the Government in supplement to Government advisers.

**Sir Norman Fowler:** I hear what the right hon. Lady says, but I am not sure whether it takes the debate much further. We are debating how much further down the road to state funding we want to go. There is a clear divide between the positions of the two parties. The right hon. Lady wants state funding. The Conservative party does not want state funding. I believe that the public overwhelmingly do not want state funding.

Unlike the Labour party, we do not sell votes at our party conference to our donors. Unlike the Labour party, we have always had a system of one member, one vote in the selection of our candidates. We have had such a system literally for decades. As my right hon. and hon. Friends know, many of us are here today because at the selection meeting our chief competitor was thought to be backed by central office. There is no question whatever about that.

Unlike donors to the Labour party, our donors do not wield block votes at our party conference or decide the leadership of the party. When the Leader of the Opposition sought election to his present position, he sent his aides around union conference after union conference. That is not remotely the position in the Conservative party.

There is one true scandal in the funding of British political parties. It is the funding of the Labour party, a party which has sold its soul to the highest trade union bidder. The Labour party is basically undemocratic. It is union-dominated. Its constitution is one of reasons why it has stayed on the Opposition Benches for 14 years and why it will stay on those Benches for a great deal longer.

6.15 pm

**Mr. Archy Kirkwood** (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): This has been an interesting debate so far. The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) had some interesting things to say about the continuing negotiations on the Polly Peck donations received by the Conservative party. He said that he was in negotiation with lawyers and with Touche Ross.

If the right hon. Gentleman is in any doubt that any of the £400,000 to which he referred is under suspicion, the right course is for him to pay that money into court and leave it in the hands of the court until such time as a legal resolution has been arrived at for the proper disposition of that money. If he did that, he would be seen to be completely above suspicion.

The right hon. Gentleman announced that he had received a letter from Touche Ross. It is certainly strange that it took Touche Ross so long to reply. Something seems to be seriously wrong there. If the right hon. Gentleman wanted a course of action that was above suspicion and would certainly satisfy me that the Conservative party was doing everything possible to ensure that it was beyond any controversy or complaint, he would pay that money into court forthwith.

I wish to make a short speech because I do not want to be part of the party political harangue that has been going on. [HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] Indeed, it would be easy for me to be sanctimonious. I assure hon. Members that I shall not do that. At least the last time that the Liberal party was in a position to deploy honours we were open about it. We had price lists. There were price tags on honours. The law has been changed since then. I certainly accept the assurances by the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield about the various stories that have been flying around. I am pleased that he gave them.

It is time that we drew a line under some of the allegations, charges and counter-charges that have been made, because they do not do the process of politics much good. The sooner that we turn to the important aspects of the matter, the better. It may be a controversial position to take, but I am willing to draw a line in the sand—the Saudi Arabian or any other sand—about what has happened in the past. If the House turned its mind to what we could do collectively and across the party political divide to re-establish public confidence in financing of the political parties, it would be all to the good.

Of course the funding of political parties is a matter of public interest. It is a fundamental element of a democratic process that the way in which parties finance themselves and the uses and sources of that money are transparent. I suggest to the House that that is not the case at present —for a variety of reasons. We have an ancient and antiquated unwritten constitutional system which tends to land us in problems when crises arise suddenly out of the

mists and take us by surprise. We discover that there are anomalies. We make the constitutional changes as we go along.

Liberal Democrat Members have been saying for longer than we can remember that we should examine the whole constitutional machinery. Such an examination would include the way in which parties are financed. Dare I say it, it may even include consideration of whether there is a role for the state in party political financing.

There is an argument for that and we should perhaps examine the way in which sister democracies such as Canada and Germany operate. There are some lessons to be learnt there. The German system is not perfect, because it encourages central parties to get fat, bloated and lazy. There is so much money swilling around that they do not need to go out and fight for members and donations. We should encourage people to give. The more who give money voluntarily towards the political process, the healthier it will be.

I must at that point enter a caveat, and I address it particularly to Conservative Members. There must be a threshold on individual and corporate donations above which matters become dangerous. I do not know whether the line should be drawn at £2,000, £5,000 or £10,000. Once we get into five and even six-figure numbers, the level of money could distort the balance—I am not making accusations but arguing purely in terms of principle—because any political party would have to respond.

Politics is today an extremely expensive business, with multi media technology, and propaganda costs a lot of money. I am in favour of propaganda, because it is an open and honest part of the process. We must all tell our tales and get our policies across. The media are becoming more complicated and pervasive. While that creates the need to raise more money, we must resolve to generate it in an open and honest way.

The time has come for us to consider two simple changes. The Government should sponsor bilateral talk with all the parties in the House to see if we can reach agreement on two simple questions. The first is about the level of individual and corporate donations above which we should have to solicit the approval of the donors to make their identities known.

That would not cost anybody anything. People may argue that it would frighten donors off, but, as the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield said, it is a free country and people can do as they wish with their money. We should encourage them to put money into politics.

Consider, for example, David Sainsbury. Nobody could complain that a man such as he—some may say that he was misguided about the way in which he deployed the money, but that is a separate question—should not have contributed in the way he did. When the SDP started, he gave it a foot on the first rung of the ladder, which it was perfectly legitimate for him to do. He did it openly, and it had the result of which we are aware. We should not discourage such giving. Indeed, we should encourage it.

But if we are to go that far, the Government of the day should be given protection against the suspicion that will always exist if there is not a threshold governing big money players in the game. Otherwise, there will always be the conspiracy theory. If the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield was doubtful about conspiracy theories, and as he listened to the Labour party's Front-Bench speakers, he must have appreciated that there would always be people looking for excuses to run scare stories. That is bad for business. It should not be impossible for the parties to agree a figure, or at least to discuss the question of individual donations.

There is a second, quintessentially simple move that I suggest that we consider seriously. Companies are today no longer easily and readily under the control of their shareholders. I do not complain about that, because companies have become complicated and sophisticated organisations. Company law is behindhand in achieving a proper relationship between shareholders and company managements, but that is a subject for another debate.

If companies, particularly big firms, engage in substantial donations—I do not consider £2,000 to £5,000 in the form of annual or other donations to be untoward, because such amounts do not skew the balance of influence in any political organisation—company law should ensure that their managements must secure the sanction of their shareholders before engaging in donations running into four and five-figure sums.

Those two changes would not be massive or involve great statutory controls or large Acts of Parliament. They would enable us to move to a point from which innuendos could be dealt with. Everything would be in the public domain, open and above board.

If we do not take such action, there will be a danger —again, I do not make a party political point, though it is an important aspect that particularly the Conservative party must bear in mind—that any party that has been in power for three, four or more terms will start to run up against the charge of nepotism in relation to placements on party and public bodies, hospital trusts and so on. After a party has been in power for a number of terms, there is bound to be a suspicion that insiders will get control, and that party advisers, pollsters and pundits will take charge of the party apparatus.

That danger is made worse by commercial aspects for which the Government are not responsible. I refer to cases such as Barlow Clowes, Maxwell, Lloyd's and the Guinness affair. Such cases erode public confidence. More than anything else in today's debate, I am nervous lest such matters fare badly in the country's high streets, with people saying, "They are all in it, up to their necks."

While I do not believe that to be true, we must accept that there are problems. They will get worse, and they are always worse for the Government party, no matter what is discussed in terms of party political finance. It particularly applies to a Government who have been in power for as long as the Conservatives have held office.

That is why the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield has a heavy responsibility on his shoulders. I appreciate that he has problems. He must get his management right, and he must find £8·3 million for next year or his party will grind to a halt. Frankly, I could run a handsome party for £8·3 million. There is an argument for keeping parties lean, cheap and cheerful, as is the case with the modern Liberal Democrats.

As I say, the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues bear a heavy responsibility for ensuring that they get the balance right. In that connection, the right hon. Gentleman can ignore much of the nonsense that has been thrown at him from across the Floor of the House today. But he cannot ignore it all, and he must give serious thought to the issues that I have raised. I hope he will do that.

My hon. Friends and I are faced with Hobson's choice today. I have great difficulty with the Labour motion,

*[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]*

especially as it invites us to support some sort of Labour charter. That is testing our patience a long way. We do not have much choice. I wish to make it clear that—subject to what the Leader of the House, who is persuasive, may say in reply to the debate; he may yet persuade me to the contrary—I do not want anybody to read anything into any support that we may give to the Labour motion. Certainly nobody should read into it our support for a Labour charter, because large chunks of it are nonsense.

6.27 pm

**Sir Ivan Lawrence** (Burton): As I listened to the extremely reasonable speech of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) I could not help but feel that there are many lessons that we might yet learn from the sale of political honours by his party in times past. I am pleased to know that all of that is in the past and that, at any rate from his point of view, we are now reasonable and understanding of one another.

As the House knows, the Select Committee on Home Affairs decided towards the end of last year to inquire into the funding of political parties. Our terms of reference were to examine the case for and against the state funding of political parties, the methods by which parties should be financed, the adequacy of the money that is raised for the purposes that are needed, the desirability of controls over the sources of finance and other statutory requirements that might be placed on donors or recipients. It was reassuring to have the Liberal party treasurer state in evidence that we received yesterday that, placed in the same political position, he would have been delighted to have accepted £440,000 from Asil Nadir.

We were getting on with our work quietly and sensibly when we approached the silly season, which coincided with the upturn in the economy, which greatly irritated Labour, the criticism of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) from within and without his party, and the drying up of income to the Labour party, to which reference has been made. There was a row about one man, one vote in the Labour party and the fact that, if there is one man, one vote—[HON. MEMBERS: "One person."] Please forgive me, I should say that if there is one man/woman, one vote, the trade unions might get nasty and forget their historic obligations to the Labour party.

They might remember what Tom Sawyer from the National Union of Public Employees told us, "No say, no pay". They might remember the words of John Edmonds of the GMB, when he said, "It's our party". They might remember what Bill Morris, of the Transport and General Workers Union, said when he reminded the Labour party of the size of his union's donation—£1·5 million. The older of us will recall Arthur Scargill having to come to the Bar of the House to apologise for saying that if Labour Members supported by the National Union of Mineworkers did not deliver for that union, they would lose their sponsorship. The trade union movement provides 70 per cent. of Labour party funds, helps to choose candidates, and votes on policy and candidates. I might ask in passing, what business contributor to the Conservative party has those powers?

Therefore, it is vital that Labour Members should raise the issue of state funding of political parties—the taxpayers' contribution. The trouble with the Labour party is that, if it was popular with successful British industries and if the people who give it their votes raised money for it by contributions—as they do for the Conservative party to the tune of £17 million—we would not be having today's debate initiated by the Labour party. It is because the Labour party is so anti-business and anti-ordinary people that it has to raise money through the trade unions. If the trade unions take away that money, the Labour party will have to raise it from the taxpayer.

I said that we were in the silly season because the Labour party is making itself look foolish by allowing itself to be associated with the rubbish in *The Guardian* about Saudi money. It is not remotely likely that the kings of Saudi Arabia would have an aeroplane, with its engines revving, full of used £5 notes ready to deliver to the Conservative party on the first day of the general election. I see that my right hon. Friend the chairman of the Conservative party is present. He will know that, if that had been the case, the party would not be £17 million in the red. It does no credit to *The Guardian*, which passes itself off as an organ of judgment and credibility, or to the Labour party, gleefully to take up such utter nonsense.

It is silly to campaign about the sale of honours. There is not the slightest evidence to show that honours have been sold. The Labour party is certainly vulnerable on that issue. Asil Nadir must be bitterly disappointed that the £440,000 that he gave for the purchase of honours not only failed to buy him a knighthood, but resulted in him being prosecuted with such strength that he has fled the country and dare not face up to his responsibilities.

The Labour party has shown not only silliness but an amazing gall. According to the party, Robert Maxwell gave only £31,000 or £43,000, plus £38,000. Yet he was a secretive man with a lot of companies into which he tucked a lot of money. He was a former Labour Member of Parliament and a dedicated Labour party supporter. He was secretive and generous. I wonder whether any Members of the Labour party can put their hand on their heart and say that that was the only money that that generous and secretive man ever gave to the party.

The Labour party says that he gave only £31,000 or £43,000, plus £38,000. I should like to know whether any of his family ever gave any money to the party or whether any of his companies did so. I should like to know whether he gave the party gifts in kind or advertising space in the *Daily Mirror* or any of his other papers. I wonder whether any of the money that that corrupt man gave to the Labour party was returned to the creditors and pensioners. If it was not, I should like to know how soon it will be returned.

Silliest of all is early-day motion 2184 calling on me to reconsider my position as Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs. It states that I have admitted to

"being involved in accepting free all expenses paid trips to the illegally occupied areas of Cyprus"

to which the fugitive Nadir has fled from justice. I do not know whether to laugh or cry at the fact that that motion has the signatures of 100 honourable and supposedly sensible members of the Labour party.

Of course, I admitted to being involved: I had to declare my visits in the Register of Members' Interests, as we all have to do in this place as hon. Members and as members of honourable organisations which operate with the sanction of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the

approval of Parliament. No allegation has been made that I took any money from Asil Nadir. I did not, I do not know him, I have never met him, I have never corresponded with him and, as far as I know, I have never been a beneficiary of his largesse. I was invited to visit north Cyprus by the Government of north Cyprus.

**Mr. Alan Meale** (Mansfield): Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** No, I shall not give way for the moment.

The Government of north Cyprus, although not recognised by the international community, represent a grievously wronged people. It is strange that the Labour party, which claims to have concern for human rights, never speaks up for the Muslim Turkish minority in Cyprus. They once ruled Cyprus, together with the British, from 1571; the Greeks never did that. They did not slaughter 103 villages belonging to the Greeks in 1963, 1967 and 1973. If the British soldiers who lost their lives fighting against the Greek EOKA bid to unite Cyprus to Greece——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman has been in the House long enough to know that this is not a debate about Cyprus.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** The early-day motion which has been tabled and which asks me to resign is all about Cyprus, but I do not wish to be irrelevant.

**Mr. Meale:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am grateful to you for your previous ruling. Contrary to what the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) was saying, the early-day motion relates to Government foreign policy——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Early-day motions are nothing to do with the Chair.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** I went to north Cyprus with some highly respected Labour Members of Parliament—the hon. Members for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland), for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), for Ipswich (Mr. Cann) and for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds)—as well as with the hon. Members for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), and as well as my hon. Friends. By tabling such a silly motion, the Labour Members are shooting themselves in the foot because their own respected and highly reputable people came on that visit.

If I am to resign because I accepted a sponsored visit —as do many hon. Members from both sides of the House —should they not be asking members of the Select Committee on Home Affairs who continuously accept sponsorship from trade unions, the interests of which they are directly considering in the inquiry, to resign as well? I would not be so childish or silly to make that request of the hard-working Labour members of my Select Committee, but the motion shows how silly the Labour party is.

Looking down the list of 101 Labour signatures I see to my astonishment that 58 of them are sponsored by the trade union movement. One of the signatories, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), has admitted visiting General Electric in Boeing, Cincinnati and Seattle. The costs of his visit were borne by companies including British Airways.

The hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) declares an overseas visit in August and September 1992 to China, with accommodation and hospitality provided by the Chinese Government, although he paid for the travel himself.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) made an overseas visit to Tokyo, Japan, as a guest of the World Parliamentarians' Conference for Support of the United Nations. I do not know where the money for that came from.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) went to Colorado, United States of America, to visit a nuclear dry storage facility and that was funded by Scottish Nuclear Ltd. The hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) visited Cyprus. That was paid for by the Government of Cyprus, yet the hon. Gentleman has the nerve to sign the early-day motion requesting my resignation.

The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) went to Libya, sponsored by the Libyan Government, and to Berlin, Senegal, Martinique and Libya again, visits, I think, in the main not paid for by the hon. Gentleman. I do not know the parliamentary word for hypocrisy, but if I did I would use it.

The Home Affairs Select Committee will doubtless consider all those issues. It will consider whether taxpayers really want to fund political parties and what control a Government may or may not exert if it is the paymaster through the taxpayer of such funding. It will want to consider the level of donations, corporate giving and whether the law requiring disclosure of donations is sufficient.

I should like to know, and no doubt the Select Committee will ask, whether the Labour party receives any corporate donations and, if so, if it will give us the names of those corporate donors. If it will not, why is it demanding that the Conservative party gives the names of its corporate donors?

I should like to ask the Labour party what the item "high value donor activity" of £228,000 in its 1991 accounts means. I should like to know, and the Select Committee will no doubt ask, whether the Labour party believes that the freedom of the individual to decide what party he supports, whether by his vote or by his or her donations, should be removed, and whether the Labour party has become anti-civil liberties. I should like to know whether the Labour party believes that individuals should be forced to disclose their donations. I should like to know whether disclosure is practicable. The Select Committee will be asking those questions.

Why cannot a donation to a political party be given through organisations so that the real donor is hidden? How many trade union employees work as full-time agents for the Labour party? How many trade union premises were used by the Labour party during the 1992 election? How many trade union vehicles were used? Was all that declared? How much Labour opinion research was done by the trade unions? No expenditure has been declared for that in the Labour party's accounts, so someone must have paid for it and it seems likely that it might have been the trade unions.

The Home Affairs Select Committee went to Washington and we visited an office in order to see how high disclosure worked in the United States. A name, such as that of the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale), is typed in and reams of paper come out saying that he gave

*[Sir Ivan Lawrence]*

$220,000 to the Republican party, $150,000 to the Democratic party, $100,000 here, $10,000 there, $5,000 there. The only people who go to those offices, where about 120 people work at state cost, are the researchers for the candidates standing against the incumbent congressman to see what dirt they can churn out. For my part, I do not think that the British taxpayer wants to spend that kind of money on that kind of research in order to pretend that there is open disclosure of contributions to parties.

**Mr. Meale:** Perhaps in all his searches of company and political party records the hon. and learned Gentleman would care to examine those of Polly Peck and Asil Nadir to see whether his name and the payment for his accommodation during his recent visit to Cyprus appear there.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** I have disclosed it, so it does not matter. I signed the Register of Members' Interests the moment I returned. If the hon. Gentleman had known about that register, he might not have put down such a silly early-day motion, nor got so many of his silly friends to sign it.

I hope that the silly season will end soon and that the Select Committee will return to sensible, calm deliberations, settle down and remember that we have the least corrupt political system in the world.

It is time that we stopped trying to pretend that we are a weak, vapid, failing nation which ought to be the laughing stock of the rest of the world. We are not. We are one of the great nations of the world. Other countries look to us for political probity, and the sooner that Opposition Members realise that the better it will be for Britain.

6.45 pm

**Mr. Donald Anderson** (Swansea, East): For the greater part of his speech, the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir. I. Lawrence) spoke not as the Chairman of an all-party Select Committee trying objectively to consider the subject before us, but as a partisan politician. However, as my starting point, I agree that there is relatively little corruption in our political system compared with what one reads about in, for example, Japan, or areas where there is a clear correlation between contributions to the leading party and public contracts. We are still relatively corruption-free.

One of the bulwarks of that is our party system which ensures that Members of Parliament can, to a large extent, rely on their party for the funding of their campaigns, rather than on external donors. That is why the parties themselves must be above question.

Some fear that the political culture in Britain is changing for the worse. Because of some highly publicised trials that have taken place during the past few years, there are strong fears about Britain's corporate structure. The same sleaze, which, alas, is well publicised within the City, might move over into our political system. There is also anxiety about the activities of certain lobbying organisations. But whether or not such fears are justified, this is a good time to learn the lessons of Asil Nadir and some of the revelations that have come to light and to try to alter our law and procedures accordingly.

One of the sadder features of the good, tub-thumping, party speech of the Secretary of State for Employment was that he did not seem to realise that there is a problem and that is worrying. Surely we can learn from the current revelations and build, or attempt to build, barricades to guard against the dangers and the personal conflicts of interest that are likely to arise for Governments as a result of financial contributions.

There will always be temptations. The best guarantee against politicians falling into those temptations is openness. I commend to the House the dictum of the Supreme Court Justice Brandeis that sunlight is the best disinfectant. I hope that in all our political funding for all the parties we will be prepared to let in as much sunlight as possible in the hope that those who might otherwise be tempted will draw back and remember the fine political culture within which we have all been brought up.

**Dame Jill Knight** (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I am following the hon. Gentleman's speech with great care. Does he feel that every penny donated to a political party should be governed by the rules that he has just advocated, or is he referring just to large sums of money donated for the purpose of obtaining influence? Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is a basic human right of anyone who has earned his money and has paid his taxes to make whatever contributions he wishes? Does not this apply to the small-time private individual seeking to advance his political belief through a political party?

**Mr. Anderson:** I have set out a broad principle, which must be interpreted on the basis of reason. Certainly one would not want the widow of Cheltenham, who may or may not make contributions to the Conservative party, to be obliged to make such a disclosure. On the other hand, if Ross Perot were to give money to the Conservative party, it would be democratically wrong that there should not be disclosure so that the British public might make up their own minds. It should be clear that we are not in danger of being bought or of having conflicts of interest.

There are two basic concerns, the first of which is foreign donations. When the Select Committee went to the United States it learnt that foreign donations are totally banned in that country. In the American system there is consensus, from right to left, that such donations are wrong. I am aware of the argument that people who believe in the free enterprise system should be allowed to make contributions as they wish. In respect of domestic matters I accept that principle, but in the case of foreign donations other important principles of our democracy are paramount. There is a real danger of conflict of interest.

For a period of 10 years I had the honour to be a foreign affairs spokesman for my party. In that capacity, I dealt with questions relating to Hong Kong and with questions concerning Cyprus. I have no doubt at all about the personal integrity of those Front-Bench politicians with whom I dealt at that time, but one has to guard against conflicts of interest. In the case of Hong Kong, during the 1980s very sensitive issues were discussed by representatives of this country, representatives of Hong Kong and representatives of the Government of the People's Republic of China. If it were known that senior Hong Kong business men were contributing massively to the funds of the Government party they would clearly be at least under temptation. There would be potential problems of conflict of interest.

The same goes for Cyprus. It is said that Asil Nadir gave money not just because he happened to believe in the free enterprise system, but because he was, rather vainly —vainly in the sense of personal vanity and in the sense of failure—hoping to gain a personal honour. It was said also that he was lobbying on behalf of the Government of north Cyprus. During the 1980s we were also trying to resolve the Cyprus problems. It is clear that, although it is a guarantor power, Britain did not at that time take any initiatives. I cast no aspersions at all about the personal integrity of Ministers who were responsible for British foreign policy. However, acceptance of money from Asil Nadir, who was lobbying on behalf of a government not recognised by any other country in the world, created the likelihood of a conflict of interests. In my judgment, these and other questions make it most undesirable for parties to accept contributions from foreign donors.

The second concern arises in respect of contributions from private donors. What disclosure is reasonable in those circumstances? Business people are not always public-spirited. What is their motive in making contributions? Some people point to the very close correlation between knighthoods and contributions to the Conservative party. In that regard I make no particular point. Nor do I make any point about, for example, the drinks industry. I am strongly of the view that there should be random breath testing. Some people may say that the Government steadfastly refuse to accept the principle of random breath testing because of the very substantial, and increasing, contributions made to the Conservative party by the drinks-related industry. At least that is in the open. We know that the drinks industry makes massive and increasing contributions, as is its right. In this regard, I make no particular complaint.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** The hon. Gentleman is making an interesting point. I represent what I consider to be the brewing centre of England and I have never had any representations from any brewer to the effect that I should oppose the random breath testing of drivers. In fact, I am strongly in favour of random breath testing. Although the hon. Gentleman may be suspicious of them, these large organisations, which undoubtedly give money to political parties, do not always seek to put pressure on those parties.

**Mr. Anderson:** So be it.

**Mr. Chris Mullin** (Sunderland, South): The brewers' interest in the Government's plans to break up their monopoly might be a better example. I wonder if any Conservative Members have had representations about that matter.

**Mr. Anderson:** So far as I am able, I am relying on points of principle. My hon. Friend makes an interesting point, but I shall not follow it up at this stage.

I want to make the general point that, in a democracy, transparency is very important. The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) asserted that, in a democracy, citizens have a right to make voluntary contributions. Some people may give to Oxfam, some to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and others to the Conservative party. But surely it is naive and simplistic to suggest that there is no difference between giving voluntarily to a charity with a specific objective and giving to a party which, in government, can—in many cases does—adopt policies that may flow from such contributions. In the case of Asil Nadir, I regard as wholly naive the suggestion by the chairman of the Conservative party that if funds are proved to have been stolen they will be returned. What evidence would be sufficient? No numbered bank notes were transferred from Polly Peck into some Jersey offshore account. It is quite impossible to trace money that may have been stolen and then transferred into an offshore account, part of whose funds may have been illegally obtained. All that one can say is that some of the money is likely to be tainted. If, in respect of this matter, the Conservative party chairman had any honour he would repay funds that clearly are the subject of fraud. He cannot get away by saying that if it can be proved that the funds were stolen the money will be repaid. Such proof is impossible. Nadir may have believed in the free enterprise system, but he was doing much else.

I return to a point made by the hon. and learned Member for Burton. It is clear that, in respect of Maxwell, my own party is somewhat vulnerable. I make no attempt to dissemble in respect of that matter. However, I know of no member of the Labour party who has sought to lobby the Attorney-General in respect of members of the Maxwell family who face criminal prosecution. Surely alarm bells ring when seven Conservative Members—not just the constituency Member, in whose case one might understand such action—make representations on behalf of this gentleman to the Attorney-General, whose duty it is to make objective decisions in respect of prosecution. The fact that Nadir paid such substantial sums and the fact that there may have been other types of contribution indicate that something smells, that something is amiss in the British state.

The *Sunday Times*—a paper that normally pulls its punches in respect of the Conservative party—has said that the Tory party took

"stolen money from an ambitious crook who believed he was buying a favour".

That was the paper's allegation. The Conservative party allowed itself, with its eyes open, to be led into a conflict of interests; it saw the danger and walked into it. I believe that that is wrong.

Let me again quote Supreme Court Justice Brandeis, who said that sunlight is the best disinfectant. Why does the Conservative party fear the sunlight? What has it to hide? In a democracy, why should not citizens know how their parties are funded and be allowed to make their own decisions?

7 pm

**Mr. David Ashby** (Leicestershire, North-West): This is a sleazy debate initiated by a sleazy party, which is attempting to denigrate politics and democracy. The motion is not worthy of a great party. While our Prime Minister is in Copenhagen, successfully persuading the world's greatest nations to desist from creating an all-out massacre in Bosnia, what does the Labour party wish to debate? It wishes to debate the issue of whether donations to a party should be transparent—whether they should be disclosed. Moreover, it is going about it in a way that depends on rumours, sleaze, the bandying of names and the slinging of mud in the hope that it will stick.

Various names have been flung—for instance, that of Asil Nadir. Last week, Labour was certain that the sum involved was £1·5 million. In the Select Committee on

*[Mr. David Ashby]*

Home Affairs, it was a Labour Member who happened to ask the chairman of our party whether he was not sure that other donations from Asil Nadir, of which he was unaware, might bring the total to £1·5 million. In fact, as the party chairman has said openly, the sum is £440,000.

What has happened to politics in this country? We used to accept the word of Members of this honourable House. We did not ask them to give evidence on oath. What is happening to the Labour party? When someone says something openly to the House and states that it is a fact, Labour Members say, "We do not believe you. What about this, that and the other?" What they say is just sleaze and mud slinging, involving no truth and no backing. It shows how low they have sunk. Their performance in today's debate makes me feel ashamed of the House: I think that it is a disgrace.

Conservative Members have flung around the name of Robert Maxwell. I think it disgraceful that we should raise such matters, because this is not what the debate should be about. The hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), who has now left the Chamber, even mentioned the name of Ernest Saunders, in connection with something that he—a convicted man, whom no one would now believe—wrote in a book. I asked the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) whether she had read the Select Committee evidence, because I was present on the Terrace on the occasion in question. I remember telling Ernest Saunders that I thought the current takeover bid for Distillers absolutely stank. He stared at me in amazement.

I was entirely right: the bid did stink, for all the reasons that subsequently emerged in the prosecution. Perhaps that is the way in which Ernest Saunders wants to gloss over the fact that Tory Members have spoken to him and asked for donations. If hon. Members want to believe anything, they should believe his book; but does it say anything about my having approached him and told him that his bid stank? It does not.

Let us have an end to all the mud slinging. Allegations have been raised about the Sultan of Brunei; the chairman of our party has said that they are untrue. We do not accept money from foreign Governments, or from the families of foreign rulers. That should be the end of the matter. That is the way in which we behave and those are the standards of the House.

**Mr. Gordon Prentice** (Pendle): What about Michael Mates?

**Mr. Ashby:** I do not know the hon. Gentleman's constituency, but he is a newcomer to the House. I have been here for 10 years and I can tell him that being a Member of Parliament carries great dignity. Our word is our bond.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. No hon. Member may voice, from a sedentary position, the Christian name and surname of another hon. Member. If the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) wishes to intervene, he should stand up and do so; otherwise, I should be grateful if he would keep his thoughts to himself.

**Mr. Ashby:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is honour and dignity in British politics; there is truth and honesty. Let us have no more of this sleaze. Let us start behaving in the way that the world expects.

**Mr. Prentice:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Ashby:** I will, if the hon. Gentleman tells me his constituency.

**Mr. Prentice:** Pendle. Does the hon. Gentleman think that it was honourable for the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) to give a watch to the fugitive Asil Nadir, inscribed with the legend "Don't let the buggers get you down"?

**Mr. Ashby:** The hon. Gentleman should address that query to the hon. Member in question, not to me. I do not know the circumstances; I am simply saying that, when someone says something in the Select Committee or the House, it is the truth. We do not lie in the Chamber, or in Select Committees. When things have been said in Select Committees, we do not then turn round and suggest that the person who said them was lying—or was not telling the truth, or was not being accurate. Other such phrases seem to have become current in the House. That is not the way in which we behave.

**Dame Jill Knight:** Does my hon. Friend agree that it denigrates the standing of the House and that of all hon. Members on both sides of the House when such suggestions are continually bandied about, although they have been clearly denied?

**Mr. Ashby:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. What Labour Members are doing in this debate is fundamental to democracy. They are trying to ridicule the Conservative party and, in so doing, are ridiculing themselves. They have given the impression that all politics are as filthy dirty as theirs. What we have seen today and in the disgrace of the past few weeks is the filth and dirt of the Labour party, not that of the Conservative party.

I have been closely associated with Italy and I have just come back from a trip to Peru, where I examined human rights and all the issues in which Labour believes—issues in which I believe as well; we have that in common. I found that, in those countries, the British political system was highly regarded. We have the respect of the whole world. In Peru, the system had broken down because of a total lack of respect for the political set-up.

**Mr. Winnick:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Ashby:** Let me finish. The Peruvian president had emerged from behind, rather like Ross Perot, with no knowledge of politics and no political backing. He had been virtually unheard of a fortnight before the election. Having emerged as president, he looked around at the political scene. All the political parties had been denigrated and were in chaos. He rejected them and turned to the army. The world said, "No, that is not good enough." He then tried to return to a democracy. I hope that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) understands that I am not suggesting that the system in Peru is right. I am trying to say that if we go along this road, we are creating that sort of chaos.

**Mr. Winnick** *rose*——

**Mr. Ashby:** I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

We also see chaos in Italy. The political parties have behaved in a way that is right, but there have been attacks and counter-attacks and the political system is disintegrating. We are travelling in that direction and that would be dreadful.

We have heard many innuendos about Asil Nadir. There are enough lawyers in the Labour party to know what the law is. They know what is legal or illegal, but they continue to talk about illegal funding. There is no illegal funding. If the board of a company agrees that a donation should be made to a political party, and that political party accepts the donation, it is legal.

**Mr. Winnick** *rose*——

**Mr. Ashby:** Let me finish my point.

It is up to the board of directors to declare it in the accounts. If it is not declared, the funding is not illegal but the lack of declaration is. There are some very good lawyers in the Labour party and I have great respect for them, but they continually say that it is illegal money. It is not. It is illegal if it has not been authorised by the board of directors and, in those circumstances, it would have to be returned. If it was in excess of any authority or the company was bankrupt, it may be illegal. I do not know enough about bankruptcy because I am a criminal lawyer.

It has been suggested time and again by the Labour party that the Conservative party is blacker than black and the Labour party is whiter than white. If Labour Members had read some of the evidence of the Select Committee, they would have seen the evidence of an academic, Dr. Pinto-Duschinsky, who told us that all three major parties refuse to disclose individual donations. He said that it is hypocritical—I am trying to recall his words accurately because I am not allowed to quote from the document—for any party to throw stones in respect of this matter. He told us that during his research he went from party to party asking for a list of its largest donors. They all said no. He said that he went to Walworth road and was told that it had not hitherto disclosed the names of individual donors. Where is the argument? It is utter hypocrisy for the Labour party to suggest that it allows the names of individual donors to be given.

**Miss Joan Lestor:** (Eccles): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Ashby:** If Dr. Pinto-Duschinsky was lied to, I should be happy to give way to any Opposition Member who will say that the Labour party provides the names of donors. We will find out the answer tomorrow when we hear the evidence.

**Miss Lestor:** I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the state of politics and what is coming across from this debate. I am a sponsored member of a trade union. It is not a secret because it is declared in the Register of Members' Interests. Anyone can read in the accounts of any trade union how the Labour party receives money from trade unions because it is public knowledge and the Labour party publishes what it receives from the trade union movement. Conservative Members have made much of this because they know how much we get. Therefore, why is it wrong or undesirable for the Conservative party, in the same way, to publish the amount of money that it receives in donations from companies? I fail to understand that. As the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said, it is nothing to do with small individual donations. Why is the Conservative party so opposed to making public what we already make public and which the trade union has to make public by law? That is the difference between us.

**Mr. Ashby:** It has to be disclosed by law if one is sponsored by a trade union. It is important because it has to be registered in the Register of Members' Interests. We all know that we have to do that. That is very different from donations given freely to a political party.

**Miss Lestor:** By companies?

**Mr. Ashby:** Yes, by companies. We have heard enough about the nature of political sponsorship. That sort of donation has a tag on it and I have seen those tags used in the Chamber. Members of various unions get together and do what their union bids them do in the Chamber. That is wrong and I have often felt that such hon. Members are not truly independent. Donations to the Conservative party are independent of individual Members. There is no company that says, "Because we have donated £5,000 to the Conservative party we should have 30 per cent. of the votes." There is no company that says that is because it has donated £10,000, it should have a percentage of the votes in choosing a candidate or a percentage of the vote at conference. That is the difference.

We must think about whether there should be disclosure. Dr. Pinto-Duschinsky told us that although disclosure is good in theory it would not work in practice. He told us that it does not work in the United States, Germany or Italy. That is the sort of evidence which we have been hearing and which we hope to continue to hear in the Select Committee.

I do not want to continue much longer, but the Select Committee on Home Affairs has been undertaking a serious and important study. I supported that study, together with Labour Members, because I felt that there should be an inquiry into the funding of political parties. I thought that it was time that we looked into the question of funding to see which way we should go. I supported that; I was perhaps the one member of my party who did so. I hoped that we would have a serious discussion and hear evidence that would be helpful and useful to us from academics, the parties and other interested people, so that we could produce a report that would be far better than the sort of charter that has been flung across the table by the Opposition. I hoped for a report that would reveal deep thought and have all-party support—a very good report that everyone would consider.

I am sorry to say that our Committee deliberations have been rather hijacked by Opposition members of the Committee. They have taken them as an opportunity to do exactly the same as we have seen them doing in the Chamber. There has been innuendo, sleaze, rumour and disgraceful behaviour and a refusal to believe people—the sort of behaviour that is not worthy of an hon. Member. This is a very sad day for us, because I really hoped for a good, worthy report.

I started off in the Committee leaning towards disclosure. I felt that it would be a good thing for political parties to disclose donations above a certain level. I was not sure what that should be; I wanted to hear evidence as to whether it should be £100, £500, £1,000 or £5,000. I did not know whether it should apply only to companies, or to individuals and companies. I wanted to hear the evidence

*[Mr. Ashby]*

and consider whether it was the right direction in which to go. I had an open mind, but I was leaning towards disclosure.

I have seen in the Chamber today and over the past few days and weeks what use is made of information. That information is used only to dig dirt, for sleaze and smears, and to behave dishonourably. And now I say that only over my dead body will I accept in the report a statement that there should be disclosure. That information is wanted for all the wrong reasons, not for the right ones.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, I make a plea for concise speeches. A great many hon. Member wish to speak.

7.22 pm

**Mr. Chris Mullin** (Sunderland, South): It was my idea —whether it was a good or a bad one, I am not sure—that the Select Committee should consider the financing of political parties. At the time, the Conservative members affected boredom. One of them said how difficult it would be for the public to take us seriously if we wasted our time on this issue. But, after they had affected boredom for 40 minutes, it became absolutely clear that, far from being bored, they were riveted by the subject. One of them told me that they were afraid that we would start asking where their money came from.

I am sorry that that is the way that the inquiry has gone, because this has been a disappointing debate. I particularly regret the contribution of the Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), and indeed that of the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby). I thought that they were disappointingly partisan. There is a bigger issue at stake if one is a democrat, and one or two speakers have touched upon it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) said that our political culture was changing for the worse, and so it is. It is regrettable that, in our political life, money is now a greater feature of how a general election or by-election campaign is run, or how a party is funded. The more money that is required, the more dubious those resources become.

That is not a party political point. It affects all three main parties when they are in government. The Liberals, at least, are straightforward about it. Mention has been made today of the lavender list, and the name "Robert Maxwell" has been chucked around the Chamber. I do not think that that does the Labour party any credit. Why not be straightforward about it, because then people will start to take us seriously on the general principle that is at stake?

Any party in government is vulnerable to the charge that it is making decisions on the basis of vested interests. If the vested interests are secret, the party is even more vulnerable to that charge. It is a fact of life that one of the great mysteries of British politics is how the Conservative party is funded. It is a mystery not only to the British public at large, but also to most Conservative party members.

The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), who is rightly agreeing with me, is one of the democrats in the House, and it is always a pleasure to find myself in agreement with him. I know that there are other hon. Gentlemen who believe that the present state of affairs cannot continue, because it is tainting the whole political process. We are all politicians and, whatever our party views, we have one thing in common: we care about how politicians are perceived outside the House.

During the course of this debate, I have been wondering whether members of the public listening to our deliberations today will feel better or worse about politicians and our political process. I am afraid that, after hearing all the speeches, with some honourable exceptions, they will feel worse, because the longer this kind of agonising goes on, the more our political process will be demeaned.

I will not get involved in trading the sort of insults that have been traded today. Quite enough has been said about who contributes what, and in what circumstances. I will not waste any time on that, but will merely draw the attention of the House to one or two principles that should be upheld in a democracy—and we all want to live in a democracy.

First, is it right in a democracy for any political party to be funded by donors whose names are secret, as are the amounts that they contribute? Powerful people always want to protect their interests; they do not do things out of the kindness of their hearts; they do them because they want influence. The only medicine for that is daylight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East quoted a United States Supreme Court judge. That is the best solution. The hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West said that, after listening to today's deliberations, he had come to the conclusion that there should not be any disclosure. It is up to him how he justifies getting back on his own party political side. I was disappointed by that, because, as he said, he was one of those on the Committee who thought that it would be a good idea to investigate this subject. If he is concerned about the general effect of the political process, the answer is not more, but less, secrecy. That is surely the road down which most sensible people outside the House would expect us to be going.

The question of state aid has been raised. It was not one of my motives, when I made my suggestion to the Select Committee, that we should have state aid for political parties. Unlike other members of the Select Committee, I am not prepared to state my conclusions before I have heard the evidence, but I am so far unpersuaded that that is the solution to our problems. I agree with the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) that we should be concerned for the future rather than the past. Like him, I am prepared to draw a line in the sand, the jungle or wherever it happens to be, and look to the future.

There are one or two things on which there ought to be unanimity among democrats in the House and on the Committee. The first is that there must be proper disclosure of those who contribute to whatever political party.

**Mr. Edward Garnier** (Harborough): I am the first to admit that the hon. Gentleman has conducted himself with great reasonableness during the inquiry into funding. Does he agree that it is a pity that the Opposition have chosen to have this debate today, before the Labour party has given its evidence to the Select Committee?

Would it not have been better for this debate, if it were to take place at all, to have taken place after we had heard from the Labour party's witnesses? The three main

political parties would then have given their evidence, and we could then have reached conclusions and informed this debate rather better.

**Mr. Mullin:** It might have been better, but the fact is that we are having this debate today. It has been prompted not so much by the Select Committee's deliberations as by the departure of Mr. Nadir to northern Cyprus. I do not have any influence over his timetable. We are having this debate today, so we should try to address the issues today. Disclosure is fundamental, and it is not a controversial issue in other democracies. One of the puzzling things is that issues that have been tremendously controversial here do not appear to be controversial in other countries.

The second principle is that company donations should be placed on a footing similar to that for donations from other organisations, such as trade unions. That point should not be controversial. I shall probably get myself into trouble somewhere for saying that I am not all that disappointed that a Conservative Government passed legislation that obliged trade unions to hold a ballot on political funds every 10 years. That does not give me much trouble, and I believe that it was a healthy move.

As it turned out—I have no doubt that it was not the Government's intention—it was healthy for the trade unions. The trade union leaders had to get out and about among their members, and justify the political funds. They did so successfully, to the extent that one or two trade unions that had not had a political fund voted to have one. We should be grateful to the Conservative party to that extent.

Another simple principle is that there should be a limit on the size of donations. In the United States—I hope that hon. Members will correct me if I have got it wrong—the limit is about $250. We can have a debate about what the size should be. Some favour limits of between £5,000 and £10,000. That is not realistic. I favour some limit, although I do not lay down precise figures. We all have different figures in our heads. However, there should be a limit on the size of donations.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** The $250 is the figure that must be disclosed.

**Mr. Mullin:** I am sorry, I was wrong. In the United States, the figure of $250 applies to what should be disclosed. I thank the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). The figure that must be disclosed should be about $250, although we shall need to debate exactly what it should be.

There should also be a limit on the size of donations, whether by individuals or organisations which, of course, would be more than $250. We can have a debate about what the figure should be.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) said—this point has been made in evidence to the Select Committee—that individuals should have a right to dispose of their properly taxed income as they please. I agree up to a point that individuals should have that right, but I believe that there is another right in a democracy. That right is for the electorate to know who is funding the organisations whose various programmes are contending for recognition. No absolute rights are involved, and one right has to be balanced against the other. Although we can argue about where to draw the line, a line should be drawn.

A point on which all democrats should be able to agree is that there should not be foreign donations. People who are not entitled to take part in our elections should not be allowed to contribute to the funding of one of the parties involved in political campaigning in elections. That is a simple principle which is readily accepted in other countries.

The Secretary of State for Employment said that the integrity of our system shone through, which was a surprising remark in light of the debate. Whatever else one can say about today's debate, one cannot say that it has shown up the integrity of our system. We have an opportunity to improve the integrity of our system and I want our system to be respected elsewhere in the world. Regrettably, that is not the case at the moment.

I shall be disappointed if our Select Committee divides on partisan lines on those simple points on which every democrat should agree. One objection that may be made is that, if the proposals are accepted, the amount coming into the main parties will go down. That is very possible. However, it may be a good thing rather than a bad thing for less money to be spent on the political process.

If the result of shedding daylight on the funding of our political system is that contributions go down, I for one as a democrat will be able to live with that. I believe that our political system will be healthier as a result.

7.34 pm

**Mr. Richard Shepherd** (Aldridge-Brownhills): I profoundly agree with some of the points made by previous speakers, such as the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson).

I also noted what my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), my constituency neighbour and the chairman of the party, said. It was a robust defence and a necessary defence. It was important for me and, I suspect, for hundreds of thousands of Conservatives that he laid to rest some of the scandals, rumours and charges that have gone careering around our public life. My only comment is that it was a defence of the system as is. That is what is under challenge. I shall give a good reason why I think that it is profoundly unsatisfactory as is.

It is profoundly unsatisfactory to watch the Prime Minister of Great Britain go to an international conference in Copenhagen which is important for our interests and to see him, the representative of us all—we all wish for the well-being of our country in its external relations—being besieged by inquiries about the funding of the Conservative party. It was a massive distortion and a deflection from purpose in government.

I give the other instance. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment fell into saying "we the Conservative party". Those who sit on the Conservative Front Bench are the Government of the United Kingdom. They have to act in the national interest and, from time to time, they have to rise above the mere partisan exchanges into which we enter with such vigour and, sometimes, enjoyment across the Floor of the House. It is not right that a Minister should defend the fund-raising activities of the Conservative party of which I am a member. My right hon. Friend is Her Majesty's Secretary of State and that in

*[Mr. Richard Shepherd]*

itself shows the confusion in the public mind between the financing of a political party and the business of our country, as exemplified by the Government of our country.

There are matters of considerable principle behind this debate. Several hon. Members have identified the fact that we are discussing our public system. It is the only way in which, in a democracy, we can transmit our purpose through our institutions and through our Government. It is, therefore, the most basic principle that those institutions should be seen not to be corrupt in any way. I have used the expression, "like Caesar's wife"; like Caesar's wife, the Government should be above suspicion. When challenged on that point, I cannot think of any Caesar's wife who was above suspicion. In fact, they engaged in regicide as often as not, if I remember sufficiently my Suetonius. However, the principle is right. Governments should be above suspicion.

In the mass of charges and counter-charges, I, like every other hon. Member and certainly like every Conservative Member, wish to defend the integrity of my party. I am unable to defend it, because I cannot point to any published list of where the funds come from which would exorcise the malignity of the charges. I make that point as my principal purpose.

Political funding or contributions to funding are not, as the former Chancellor Lord Hailsham said, a matter merely of privity or the fact that we have a right to dispose of our money as we wish. I accept that it may be true of charities in general: charities such as the Red Cross and a number of others actively seek funds. The motives of the givers in all instances can be questionable. They may be honourable; many people give to charities in the hope of aggrandising themselves in the eyes of the community. The givers may subtly be trying to reach for honour and recognition. Many give for honourable reasons, but political parties are different because they are contending for the Government of the country. They therefore hold public policy decisions in their hands.

It is important that the public—that is you and I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and everyone here—do not think or cannot conclude that there is something essentially corrupt in the process. I appreciate that these are grand words, but our suspicious minds will always lead us to do just that. As long as donations are hidden and screened by the arguments that the right of privacy gives us the right to donate very large sums to political parties, there will always be a question mark. Public policy should dictate that large sums of money should be identifiable in the accounts of a party.

The wider question, which has been touched on today, is that of integrity in public life. As a Conservative, I have to say that a seediness has been perceived by Conservatives in my constituency. It is with some diffidence that I mention the members of the Conservative Front Bench. I mention them because at the heart of our system—as I emphasised at the beginning of my remarks—is integrity in public life. I am not interested in private lives; we are all entitled to one. That integrity must be manifest in public life. I can only report to the House and to my party what my Conservative association and my constituents have identified.

There have been three Ministers of the Crown whose activities I cannot understand in the light of procedures for Ministers published by the Cabinet Office. I cannot understand a Minister of the Crown accepting a holiday financed by the head of a foreign state. I cannot understand a former Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—now the Secretary of State for the Environment—accepting the gift of moneys towards his pond. When I was growing up, the sense of integrity in public life would have meant that an honourable man would have resigned. Perhaps I am wrong. He would not only have been out of the Cabinet but out of public life because the demonstration of the flame of integrity is the one trust that the public have.

If we become disillusioned with our political processes, they are worth nothing. Our cry should be that the integrity of the institutions of state is the defence of each one of us as individual citizens. We look to the officers of the law for fairness because therein lies our freedom. The confidence with which we can look to the officers of the Crown is the confidence of our state. We diminish ourselves, but, much more, we diminish those whom we represent.

This is a great country; it is a great democracy. Why are we trying to defend the status quo and yesterday when the world is swimming in an avalanche of—for all I know—the most profound lies? Why should we be diminished by that when we can call a halt to it today? The chairman of the Conservative party could say tomorrow that we will open our accounts. I hope that he will do so. We are a political party; we have battles to fight and causes to maintain. We could then say that a political party has to cut its coat according to its cloth—perhaps that is what we should be doing too.

**Mr. Peter Mandelson** (Hartlepool): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) spoke of integrity in public life. It has come to my notice that the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) misled the House this afternoon when referring to an article in *Business Age*. I have of course——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot accuse an hon. Member of deliberately misleading the House.

**Mr. Mandelson:** The right hon. Gentleman has inadvertently and possibly unwittingly misled the House by stating that the article recently published in *Business Age* was going to be the subject of a full retraction. I have given notice to the right hon. Gentleman through the Government Whip—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry for the interruption from the Government Whip. I am told that the editor of *Business Age* has issued a statement arising from what the right hon. Gentleman said this afternoon. It reads:

> "*Business Age* has never at any stage intended to and will not be publishing a retraction of its story. The gentleman's statement was therefore quite untrue."

I should like to know from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether it is in order for the right hon. Gentleman, having not satisfied or informed himself of what the editor of *Business Age* was going to do, to have unwittingly misled the House by saying that the magazine was to issue a full retraction, quite apart from any minor corrections to do with any particular personality with which the magazine might deal.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members will be aware that hon. Members are entirely responsible for the statements that they make in the Chamber.

**Mr. Stuart Bell** (Middlesbrough): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We heard from a member of the Government Front Bench that there was no confirmation of the statement made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson). In fact, we have given to the Whips Office for communication to the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) a copy of the statement from *Business Age*. The statement is on the magazine's letterhead and comes from Tom Rubython, the editor. It is quite categoric. I merely wish to place that on the record.

7.45 pm

**Mr. David Trimble** (Upper Bann): It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), especially in view of the sentiments he expressed. Some Conservative Members have called today's debate a silly season or sleazy debate and there have been such elements in it. However, the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills raised the tone of the debate, which is much to his credit and that of the House.

I also agree with some of the points made by some Labour Members and by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who said that the motion and the amendment created a dilemma. It creates a dilemma for our party because we can agree with elements of both. I have not yet read the Labour party's charter for party political funding, so I am a little reluctant to give Labour a blank cheque. Basically, we support the principle of the disclosure of donations. I am not sure whether it should be carried as far as requiring parties to publish full accounts, but we believe that donations should be disclosed.

I confess that what I understand to be in the Labour party's charter causes us some embarrassment. I believe that the trip wire for disclosure is a donation in the region of £5,000. I have seen that figure in the public prints. That would cause the Ulster Unionist party serious embarrassment because I am not aware of our ever having received a donation of that order. No doubt the trip wire could be set at an appropriate figure so that we could disclose something.

The principle of disclosure is right. Conservative Members complained about sleaze, smears and allegations. The simple answer to the complaints is that, if there were disclosures, there could be no smears or innuendos. The Conservatives are suffering from self-inflicted wounds in that respect. Secrecy inflames or creates suspicion which could be dispelled.

I may not be fully informed about the niceties, so I say with some trepidation that the position of Conservative central office is somewhat anomalous and dangerous. The controversy attaches not to the money raised through associations, which comes through the national union, but to the direct payments to central office, which is an anomalous body.

The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) described himself as the chairman of the Conservative party, but my understanding is that that is not his job. Instead the right hon. Gentleman is the chairman of central office—a position to which he was not elected but appointed. Central office has its origin in the private office of the Prime Minister and if we bear that fact in mind we see the danger for the Conservative party. If there is a suspicion regarding moneys going to what is in essence the Prime Minister's private office, that is getting close to home and it is fairly dangerous. I should have thought that for the good of the party it would be desirable to disclose the facts and to put the position of central office on a more regular basis. I know that there are movements within the Conservative party pressing for that to be done and for internal democracy within the party. I wish those movements well. It would be good for the health of the Conservative party and for the health of public and political life in this nation if there were some effective internal democracy.

As will be understood from the comments that I shall make later, I do not believe that one can separate the question of funding from the question of structure. The two are related. The line that the Conservatives have taken is simply to blame the Labour party and to say that it is just as bad, or worse, referring to its relationship with the unions. I am sure that Labour Members will acknowledge that there are anomalies in their relationship with the unions, too, which have given rise to some vulnerability.

I make my suggestion with trepidation, as I may not be aware of all the subtleties of the relationship, but I have often thought that there is a simple solution to the charges made and to the problems that the relationship with the unions creates for the Labour party. For historical reasons, that relationship is quite understandable. However, the legislation governing unions now contains the requirement for ballots on political funds and trade union members effectively have to opt whether to pay the political levy. Why does not the Labour party arrange that by saying that opting to pay the political levy is opting for membership of the party? Why do not all those persons simply pay the political levy as members of the party? The Labour party could work that idea through in detail. It would get rid of the problem of a union, or a person controlling a union, appearing to buy votes, because the votes would be the votes of real people who had opted, by paying the political levy, to join the party. That should solve the problem.

I cannot mention the political levy without mentioning what strikes me, as a Member representing a Northern Ireland constituency, as a serious anomaly. There are trade unionists in Northern Ireland, some of whom opt to pay the political levy and thereby help to finance the Labour party. Yet what does the Labour party do to those trade unionists who fund it? It bars them from membership. Is that creditable? I believe that by now the Labour party headquarters computers are programmed to eject immediately from the system any correspondence with the postcode BT, or automatically to generate a refusal if any such correspondence gets in. The Labour party takes people's money but refuses them membership. That is not creditable.

I notice that the Labour motion refers to contributions from persons overseas. The principle behind the reference is healthy, but I understand—I hope that hon. Members will correct me if I am wrong—that the Labour party maintains an organisation which people who live outside the United Kingdom can join to show their support for the principles of the party. No doubt such people pay a membership fee; there may or may not be a financial relationship. I believe that the membership of the support group, if I may call it that, is not limited to British

*[Mr. David Trimble]*

nationals, but that anyone may join. That creates the anomaly whereby anybody in the world can support the Labour party—except 1·5 million citizens of the United Kingdom——

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): Who live in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Trimble:** Who live in Northern Ireland and are banned. Those are the only people in the world who are banned from the Labour party.

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** They are lucky.

**Mr. Trimble:** As I have said, we cannot separate funding from structure, but there is a serious point to be made about overseas support. I greatly regret that there is no Member in the Chamber who represents the Social Democratic and Labour party, because in that context we must mention the way in which that party not only receives but solicits overseas support. We know of the dinners held in Dublin to raise funds and the efforts made to raise funds from Irish Americans. Irish Americans from across the Atlantic are clearly persons overseas and money is raised from them. In the past the SDLP has accepted funding not only from individuals but from a body known as the National Democratic Foundation, which is closely linked to the United States Democratic party.

I believe that the SDLP received six-figure sums from the National Democratic Foundation, sums in excess of the total income of the Ulster Unionist party. In addition, the party received specialist assistance, training and expertise. Its members were regularly sent to the United States to be trained. That was all done by an element of the Democratic party and now that the party is in the White House that element is talking about sending special envoys to Northern Ireland. That is the degree of the intimate relationship between that element of the Democratic party and the SDLP.

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** My hon. Friend is referring specifically to the National Democratic Foundation. Does not a large proportion of the money involved come ultimately from Government sources, because it can go through the Republican fund or the Democratic fund? When we talk about overseas Government funding of political parties, we must mention that anomaly.

**Mr. Trimble:** I thank my hon. Friend for adding that information and for pointing out that Government funds can be laundered through that foundation, which enables the Government of another country, or a major political party in another country, to interfere directly in the internal affairs of part of the United Kingdom. That is not a healthy state of affairs.

I should add that the funding from the National Democratic Foundation has ceased within the last year or two, causing an immediate financial crisis for the SDLP. However, that is another issue and I shall not go into it now.

I said that one could not consider the question of funding apart from the question of structure. I also assert that we must examine not only funding but expenditure and the reasons for expenditure. As has been illustrated by the frequent references to spending during the general election year, the major item of expenditure for political parties is the general election. The anomaly is that there is no limit on national expenditure and campaigns. Many of the problems would be resolved if there were such a limit.

I am sure that hon. Members know that every political party in the United Kingdom, except one, supports the idea of working out limits on national expenditure in general election campaigns. The one party that does not support that idea is the Conservative party, which, of course, adopted that position out of self-interest, because it thought that it could outspend the other parties. However, I am not sure whether it did significantly outspend the other parties at the general election——

**Mr. Riddick:** No.

**Hon. Members:** Yes.

**Mr. Trimble:** If we had full disclosure of expenditure we could resolve the question. I hear hon. Members asserting across the Chamber that the Conservative party did or did not outspend other parties. I am not sure whether it had that financial advantage.

If there was a realistic limit on expenditure the need to raise funds would not be felt so keenly. Sometimes fund-raisers may go too far in their efforts. It is curious that we have financial limits on the least important aspect —constituency spending—but no limit on national expenditure. That should be put right.

I know that other hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall make only a few final comments. We do not support the idea of state funding. Some hon. Members have said that Short money is different, but one wonders why. What is needed is adequate support for research by individual members, so that they can fund the research that they need to undertake in order to discharge their duties in the House. If there was adequate research support for hon. Members, there would be no need for Short money.

Reference has been made to trade union legislation and it has been acknowledged that there is a public interest in the regulation of unions because of the important role that they play in society and in the economy. Political parties are also important. There is also a case for regulation, or at least the setting of minimum standards, with regard to the structure and conduct of political parties generally.

I know that that is an awkward topic and not perhaps one that we would want to be resolved by legislation. However, the issue is important and it should be addressed. Perhaps that debate could be carried forward through the suggestion of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire.

7.59 pm

**Mr. Henry Bellingham** (Norfolk, North-West): If a martian were to appear in the Strangers Gallery and it did not know the background to this debate, it would reach a conclusion about the sheer hypocrisy of Opposition Members. The Opposition will regret having raised this subject when there are so many other important issues on the agenda.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) and others have referred to state funding. I agree with the hon. Member for Upper Bann about that. If we were to ask the taxpayer to pay for political campaigning when the Government are trying to rein back on public expenditure in an attempt to control and contain it, we would meet a very negative response. Furthermore, every opinion poll and survey that I have seen shows that at least 75 or 80 per

cent. of the public are against public funding of political campaigning. We know very well what the Labour party is after. Labour is broke and it wants the taxpayer to bail it out. It is as simple as that.

A great deal has been said today about Asil Nadir. I want to declare an interest because I am one of the 60,000-odd small shareholders in Polly Peck. It has been an interesting topsy-turvy investment. My stockbroker bought my shares for me at about £1·50 without my consent as he has discretion on my account. I recall that they rose to £4, slipped back to £2 and then came down to about 20p. I believe that they are now worth 0·02p. That has certainly been an interesting investment and my holding is still worth something, so I have an interest to declare. No one is more anxious than I am to see Mr. Nadir face charges in the courts of this country.

On the other hand, I strongly believe that one is innocent until proven guilty. At the moment, the only thing that Mr. Nadir is guilty of is jumping bail. My right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) made a fair point. Polly Peck was a blue chip company. It was a member of the FT-SE30. The company fooled top merchant banks, and every institution in the City had a holding in Polly Peck. The company fooled them and the Tory party.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Razzall, the Liberal party treasurer, said that the Liberal party would also have taken that money so long as it was properly declared. However, when a party takes money from a company, it does not know at the time that that money is not going to be declared in the accounts. That is why I believe that parties should publish accounts in which they should show what corporate donations they have received. If parties did that, it would meet many of the accusations levelled at the Conservative party in respect of corporate donations, some of which are not being declared, not through the fault of the Conservative party, but because that company or a subsidiary of that company has been negligent in that respect.

I welcome what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment said. He said that if there is evidence that the money was improperly procured, it will be paid back. I believe what he said, and it was confirmed by the chairman of the Conservative party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield.

If Mr. Asil Nadir really thought that he was buying favours, he was bitterly disappointed. I intervened in the speech of the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), but was prevented by Opposition Members from saying what I wanted to say. I wanted to make a point about British Airways. British Airways had given money to the Tory party for a prolonged period. It was one of our biggest corporate donors.

I recall very sensitive and delicate discussions and negotiations taking place about routes to Tokyo and about slots at Heathrow. British Airways was very disappointed when it did not get what it wanted. It then cut off its subscription to the Conservative party. That is surely an example of the Conservative party, when it forms the Government, not being bought off by a large corporate donor or being unduly influenced.

I had the privilege of being the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the then Secretary of State for Transport at the time of those discussions. As one of the parties to the discussions was a donor to the Tory party, Ministers looked even more carefully at the merits of the case and were even more wary.

We can see such behaviour across the board. It is clear from certain defence contracts when defence companies happen to be donors to the Tory party. They often do not get what they want. What about the big brewers? The Government have done them no favours in respect of the beer law reforms, yet among their number are some of the biggest donors to the Conservative party. Some members of the Eurotunnel consortia are donors to the Tory party, but I can state quite candidly that we have not exactly done them too many favours.

That leads me to the question of private donors. I feel very strongly that if someone makes a donation to a political party, to a charity or to any other organisation, he is entitled to total anonymity, because if it is revealed that he made a large donation that individual will be inundated with other requests.

I have made a few small modest contributions to charities in my constituency. On one occasion, although I requested anonymity, the charity gave my donation publicity. Some 40 or 50 other organisations then wrote to me asking for a similar contribution. That is why I feel very strongly that, if any individual makes a donation, it must be up to that person to decide whether that information should be made public.

Exactly the same applies to foreign donors. If foreign donors want to donate money to a political party, why should they not do that? If they feel that our free market system and policies on employment law and trade unions will benefit their corporation and trade, why should those foreign donors not give money to the party that is likely to form a Government who will further the system of free enterprise that will benefit their companies? If they want anonymity as private individuals, so be it.

However, if there are particularly large donations to any party, it would probably be a good thing if that individual could be persuaded to renounce anonymity. I certainly would not insist on that and I would not insist on its appearing in a party's accounts. I would certainly not insist on it appearing in Conservative party accounts.

We have heard many different arguments this afternoon. No party in the House is whiter than white. We have heard a great deal about how the Labour party is financed by the trade unions and, in that respect, I recall the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir. I. Lawrence) quoted trade union leaders such as Tom Sawyer and others, including John Edmonds. They pay their money and they expect to have a say in how their party is run. Not only do they pay their money; they expect to have a direct say in how candidates are selected and in policy formation. Not one corporate donor to the Tory party has ever insisted on that.

Opposition Members have expressed a great deal of cant, hypocrisy and humbug. Let us consider some of the large donors. The Maxwell saga has not yet been unscrambled. What about the four peers in the House of Lords who were on the Maxwell pay books? Some of them made large private donations to the Labour party, but none of that has come out. The Social and Liberal Democrats have received money over the years from people like Union Jack Hayward and other large donors.

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including Lord Sainsbury. We also heard again today that the Labour party has taken money from firms such as Northern Foods, B and Q and others.

The issue is a simple one and, therefore, I feel that the martian would be appalled by the sheer hypocrisy demonstrated in the Chamber today. The Opposition could have debated one of the great issues of the day, but they chose to pick on party political funding. They will regret that for the simple reason that, if one lives in a glasshouse, one should not throw lumps of concrete around. That is why I urge hon. Members to support my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and to chuck out the motion.

8.9 pm

**Mr. Alan Meale** (Mansfield): I should like to pay tribute to the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), whose speech addressed the true issue behind the debate. We should examine the current funding system, because it is not working, and is causing anxiety to hon. Members of every political party.

That concern is easy to understand when we consider what happened during the general election, when tens of millions of pounds were spent on national advertising campaigns. It is not surprising that such activity has been described as sleazy, when one considers the money that was thrown at public relations companies to push forward one political party or another. It is important to recall the massive amounts of money that were spent on advertising billboards before and after the general election. After all, people thought that that election was to be held before the election date in April.

It is amazing to hear Conservative Members, with the exception of the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills, making accusations about particular individuals who try to raise funds through certain organisations that have been associated with the Labour party since it inception—the trade unions. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), who spoke about the funds collected by trade unions in Northern Ireland and the restrictions that are placed on union members. I hope that that system is examined by the Labour party.

It is quite extraordinary for Conservative Members to turn around and throw the blame at Opposition Members. In my constituency, I was sent information time and time again by Conservative party members and supporters which provided me with evidence of meetings and fund-raising activities organised by Lord Beaverbrook to try to raise funds in Mansfield for the Tory party. That money was designed to help the party in its push to win the constituency at the general election.

Those efforts should have had some effect, because in the previous Parliament I had the smallest majority, at 56. They did not seem to work, however, because my majority increased by 16·9 per cent. to nearly 12,000. All I can say is, "Keep sending the letters."

It is scandalous for Conservative Members to say that money has not been donated to their party from abroad. It is widely known that, in the past three years, Ministers and other hon. Members have gone around the world to try to get people to register to vote. Their purpose was also to gather money for the coffers of the Conservative party. It is misleading for Conservative Members to say that they have not been involved in such activity.

The activities of Asil Nadir and the revelation that he gave such a gigantic amount of money to the Conservative party for its general election campaign funds have caused great concern. It is extraordinary that Conservative Members should try to justify his behaviour. The collapse of Polly Peck did not occur that long ago, but it was not as recent as some hon. Members have tried to suggest today. The warning signs about that company, however, were apparent for some time before its collapse.

We know from evidence that has now been produced that Polly Peck was in a rocky state for some time. Perhaps one reason that Mr. Nadir was not successful in his attempt to get some kind of honour, despite his huge donations to the Conservative party, was that the future of his company looked rocky.

It is no credit to the House to say that the Conservative party is not the only political party to be caught out in political donations that led to honours. Political parties on both sides of the House have put people forward for honours because of donations from those individuals. The sooner that practice stops the better.

We must be honest with ourselves and accept that sleazy activities took place. We should take note of what has happened recently—for example, a Minister of the Crown sending a watch to Mr. Nadir, engraved with the slogan, "Don't let the buggers get you down." That Minister is still in office. What about the expenses-paid trips provided for hon. Members by companies such as that owned by Asil Nadir? Those individuals not only received free tickets to visit foreign parts, but stayed in an hotel owned by Mr. Asil Nadir. In one instance, that occurred two days before he skipped bail and escaped abroad.

Rumours and innuendo are rife that Members of the British Parliament have been loaned, given or offered properties at advantageous prices in northern Cyprus. Some of them are owned by Greek Cypriots, who are now refugees and no longer live in that occupied area of Cyprus. Such is the behaviour that has gone on, yet some people have tried to say that it does not matter. It does matter, because it lowers the tone of the Chamber and the reputation of everyone who sits in it, whatever his party. It is quite disgraceful that such behaviour has gone on.

We must decide what on earth we are going to do about such activities. We need to introduce, as quickly as possible, limits on spending by political parties. We also need to set a limit on the funds that are collected for election campaigns. We also need to limit the size of donations; otherwise, undue influence could be brought to bear. We must also not be shy about the fact that the shareholders of companies, individual householders and voters have a right to know about funding. We must reveal the wherewithal and the source of donations. We also need to ban donations by foreign individuals.

It is no good the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) saying that the nature of political funding does not matter. It does. Not long ago, we were at war with Iraq, the leader of which is regarded by many hon. Members as an absolute maniac. It would not be beyond his imagination, however, to start to throw a bit of money around in Britain. Before the war, his Foreign Minister used to visit London regularly, and it is a well-known fact that he used to lose up to £250,000 a month at the casino tables in London and elsewhere.

Large amounts of money can be thrown around by Governments—at such times, friendly ones, or hostile ones of the future. We must not allow either Governments or foreign business men or women to offer large sums of money to parties as that may influence the political direction of our country.

I echo what the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills has said. It is time for us to clean up our act in this place. It is time for us to get ourselves together and introduce a system which is clean and tidy and which people can trust.

8.19 pm

**Mr. David Shaw** (Dover): Opposition Members have chosen a debate that has backfired on them because much of their case is based on lies, rumours and half-truths. However, what is true is that Maxwell supported the Labour party and that there is a peer sitting on the Labour Front Bench in the House of Lords who took £750,000 from the pensioners—it was pension fund money. That peer sits there today with the full support of the Labour party and its leader. He sits there, having been responsible for managing £80 million that went walkabout—that is about the same amount that has gone walkabout in Asil Nadir's company. I hope that Lord Donoughue will have the courage of his convictions and pay back the money. When will those on the Labour Front Bench take away their support for Lord Donoughue? When will they say, "Enough is enough, Lord Donoughue—get off our Front Bench"?

The right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) failed to disclose the contributions made by Maxwell to the secret fund that was used by Michael Foot to oppose the Boundary Commission. Why was the fund so secret? What bank accounts did the money come from? Was it solely money that Maxwell put up, or did it come from other sources as well? We certainly did not find that out from the right hon. Lady.

The main issue to which I want to draw the attention of the House is what is happening in the constituency of the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition. The financing of the Labour party in Monklands is in a dreadful state. The trade unions have an iron grip on the party. The Labour executive in Scotland said that the Labour party in Monklands had no rules to run itself. The leader of the Labour party is a lawyer but the Labour party in his constituency has no rules to run itself. The same Scottish Labour party report has criticised the Labour council group for having no rules to run itself.

In those circumstances, is it surprising that about 25 family members of councillors have become council employees? Is it surprising that party members get family members jobs with the Monklands district council? Is it surprising that the highest number of employees per thousand population of any council in Scotland can be found in Monklands district council? Is it surprising that local newspapers in Monklands have described a meeting of the direct works department as being like a meeting of the Labour party because one cannot tell the difference between the works department and the Labour party in Monklands? Is it surprising that a £10 million shopping centre development is now costing pensioners and council taxpayers £1 million a year? There is corruption and nepotism, and there are transactions that have not been explained.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. The hon. Gentleman is going a bit wide. This debate is about the funding of political parties, not the domestic affairs of a specific council.

**Mr. Shaw:** At the beginning, I was careful to point out that party financing in Monklands and the organisation and structure there is so corrupt and integrated that the decision-making processes of the council are controlled by the trade unions. The trades unions control the Labour party in Monklands and therefore can award themselves more jobs and keep the whole process going by diverting public money to the Labour party through trade union sources. That money belongs to the council and the public.

As has been said, it is also a question of company law. I shall refer to the way in which company law is being abused in Monklands. For example, the leader of Monklands council has loans from Scottish Enterprise which went to one company. However, the money was diverted to another company and, as a consequence, £100,000 of taxpayers' money has been lost. The council leader's brother, who is in partnership with him, is being sued by the Inland Revenue for the non-payment of £44,000 in taxes.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman is going very wide. We are talking about contributions to political parties but he has hardly referred to that. I ask him to come back to the debate and not refer to the business of local councils.

**Mr. Shaw:** The key point is that the council leader, Mr. Jim Brooks, is an active supporter, both financially and otherwise, of the Labour party in Monklands. While I realise that some aspects of the debate relate to the national Labour party and the national Conservative party, the Labour party in Monklands is involved with the national Labour party—it is controlled and run by the national Labour party. Corruption in the Labour party in Monklands, which the Leader of the Opposition has failed to do anything about, is relevant to the debate. Company law and taxation law are being abused.

**Mr. Thomas Graham** (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Shaw:** I would like to give way but we are running out of time and I have a lot to get through.

There are serious allegations that the Labour party in Monklands is being supported by a council leader who has not always paid national insurance contributions for his employees. As a consequence, many employees may well lose part of their state pensions.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I have listened to the hon. Gentleman's explanation for the point that he is making. He is certainly not satisfying the Chair that he is not going wide of the debate, and I ask him to come back to it.

**Mr. Shaw:** I hope that I have made it clear that money, which should have been used to pay national insurance contributions for employees of the company run by the council leader, has ended up in the Labour party.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** What does that have to do with contributions to political parties?

**Mr. Shaw:** It is about contributions and the fact that money has ended up in the Labour party to support the re-election campaign of the right hon. and learned

*[Mr. Shaw]*

Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition. His campaign for re-election has been based on corrupt money. The Conservative party has been accused of fighting an election with corrupt money from Asil Nadir.

**Mr. Graham:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thought that it was a privilege to be a Member of Parliament and that we could not abuse someone outside who did not have the right to speak in the House. Basically, no one on Monklands district council has been charged with corruption.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order for me.

**Mr. Shaw:** As I said, we are being criticised on the basis of allegations against Mr. Asil Nadir and contributions that have ended up in the Conservative party. I am saying that the election campaign of the Leader of the Opposition was funded and supported by illegal moneys that had been diverted from the public purse to his own ends. The most appalling cover-up has been put in place.

**Mr. Meale:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I fully realise the dilemma that you are in with the speech of the hon. Gentleman. Surely there is a rule in the House that an hon. Member must notify another hon. Member before he raises any matter relating to that hon. Member.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I am in no dilemma at all. There is a courtesy—it is not a rule—that an hon. Member must notify another hon. Member if he wants to raise a matter relating to that hon. Member. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) has done that but it is a matter for him.

**Mr. Graham:** On a further point of order——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I hope that it is a point of order, because many other hon. Members want to speak, and time is limited.

**Mr. Graham:** I should like your advice and guidance on this matter. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) said that the election campaign of the Leader of the Opposition was funded illegally.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Dover is responsible for his own speech.

**Mr. Shaw:** I can assure the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) that on a number of occasions, even to the point of risking the wrath of the Speaker, I have tried to confront the Leader of the Opposition to make it clear that I wanted to raise this issue. The right hon. and learned Gentleman should have been here because he should know that I had put my name down to speak in the debate. He knew that I was likely to try to raise the issue. He saw me in the Chamber earlier.

**Mr. Robin Cook** (Livingston): The hon. Gentleman must be aware that he has just made a serious accusation of a criminal offence, and has named individuals in connection with it. Does he have the courage to repeat that allegation outside the cloak of privilege?

**Mr. Shaw:** I have made it clear that those accusations have been made outside the House. They are part of a serious investigation by the Scottish Office. I have every confidence that, if there is any justice in Scotland, the investigation will result as soon as possible in the police formalising a full investigation and charges being laid. I believe that the matter is serious. The Leader of the Opposition has had every opportunity to do something about it.

The position is so serious that I have discovered in the past few days that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is very worried. Although his only statement to date has been, "I am not in a position to comment"——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I must insist now. The hon. Gentleman is going far too wide. He must get back to the debate. If he does not do so, I shall have to ask him to resume his seat.

**Mr. Shaw:** In the office of the Leader of the Opposition there is a man called Mr. Murray Elder, who has attempted to make a cover-up. As far as I am aware, he is funded by party political funds. Mr. Murray Elder has contacted a constituent of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East and has——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. That is enough. I ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat.

**Mr. Meale:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I will take no point of order.

**Mr. Meale:** It is important.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It had better be a point of order.

**Mr. Meale:** It is a point of order. An allegation was made by the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw). I want to put it on the record that the person who was named was funded by Short money, which is money from the Government——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair.

8.31

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): The best that one can say about the remarks that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) is that they are characteristic of him. If he believes that they are true, he will take the first opportunity to repeat them outside the House. There is no reason why he should not do so today.

I declared my interest last week. My constituency party receives a rather limited sum from a trade union during general election campaigns. The debate that the Opposition have initiated is perfectly justified. In view of some of the criticisms that have been heard today, the serious allegations that have been made and the position of the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, it would have been wrong if we had not had the debate.

I tabled a question to the Attorney-General last week in which I asked him how many hon. Members had made representations to him about Polly Peck. As many hon. Members will be aware, the Attorney-General replied that seven hon. Members had made such representations. Out of those seven, we know the identities of three. Only one of those three had a constituency interest.

It would have been appropriate for the four remaining Members—I take it that they are Conservative Members—to declare before today or during today's debate why they made representations to the Attorney-General about

a prosecution case that had not come to court. What purpose and what motivation did they have in making such representations? If there was no constituency interest, why did they make representations to the Attorney-General, either orally or in writing?

I deplore the way in which, in response to later questions tabled by me, the Attorney-General has made it virtually impossible—the word "virtually" is not even necessary, he has made it impossible—for Members of Parliament to table any further questions about Mr. Nadir. We have been gagged. As a result of what the Attorney-General said to me at the end of last week, it is not possible to table any questions on representations by hon. Members about Polly Peck. It is not the role of the Attorney-General to stop us tabling such questions. After all, if I had not tabled the original question, we would not have known that seven Tory Members of Parliament had made representations to the Attorney-General.

I wonder how many representations have been made by Tory Members of Parliament about prosecution cases other than Polly Peck and Maxwell which have not come to court. There is bound to be anxiety, especially in view of the financial contribution that Mr. Nadir made to the Conservative party.

Last week, in evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, and again today, the chairman of the Tory party denied that there was any question of a connection between large contributions to the Conservative party and honours or influence. We can make up our own minds about that, but the fact remains that since 1980, 18 life peerages and 82 knighthoods have been given to those involved with companies which have made the largest donations—at least £17 million in the past 10 years.

It may be that the 18 life peers and 82 knights would have received their honours regardless of any company contributions to the Conservative party. However, I wonder how many people in Britain really believe that. How many people believe that there is no connection between making a large and continuing financial contribution to the Tory party and receiving honours? As for influence, much of the legislation introduced by the Conservative Govenment in the past 10 years, including tax laws and tax concessions, favours the very rich.

Mr. Nadir did not receive his knighthood. I am sure that Conservative Members are pleased about that. Yes, it would appear that Mr. Nadir craved a knighthood and did not receive one. However, it is likely that if investigations had not taken place—informal investigations in the first place, followed by serious charges against him—and Mr. Nadir had continued to make contributions, he would have received his knighthood. None of us would have been particularly surprised if that had happened. So one cannot say that our case is undermined because one person who has fled justice did not receive an honour.

Opposition Members do not suggest that there is an automatic connection. No one suggests that it is so simplistic. No one suggests that if a person makes a large contribution or several large contributions to the Tory party, individually or through one's company, he receives a knighthood, life peerage or some other honour. Of course, it is not as simple as that. But I suggest, as my hon. Friends have suggested, that there is some connection. The sooner that such connections are broken, the better.

It is interesting to note that the Conservative party has not received a favourable press on this matter. The editorial in the *Evening Standard* last week after the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) had given evidence to the Select Committee was headed "Come, come, Sir Norman." It was critical of the evidence that he gave to the Committee. Writing in *The Daily Telegraph* last week, Paul Johnson—we all know how enthusiastic converts can be—criticised the way in which the Tory party finances itself. He made the connection between contributions and honours. So the allegations are not simply some Labour smear. There are questions to be answered.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) said, why on earth did the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office—a Minister of the Crown—consider it right and proper, after serious charges had been made against Mr. Nadir, to send him a watch with that vulgar and abusive message? Why did he believe that the Crown Prosecution Service was not carrying out its duties and responsibilities properly? I certainly believe that that Minister should resign, especially in view of the further matters which have arisen. It is nothing personal. It so happens that, in many respects, I believe that he has done a useful job in Northern Ireland, however strongly I disagree with him. That does not alter the fact that what has come to light is a resignation matter.

On three occasions, I have introduced ten-minute rule Bills designed to reform the system of party funding and electoral expenditure. As I have argued in the House previously, I believe full disclosure to be essential. I cannot accept the argument that as voting is secret in this country, so contributions should be secret. The most effective way to undermine allegations of there being connections between contributions and honours and so on would be to do away with secret, underhand methods and publish full details.

The Labour party already discloses a considerable amount, but if it is felt necessary, in the public interest, to disclose more, my party should do so. All parties represented in the House should follow the path of full disclosure, certainly above a certain limited sum. I do not wish to stop companies donating, but there should be a political fund for those wishing to donate.

Some people believe that trade unions have had political funds only since the Conservatives came to office. That is wrong. Since 1913, trade unions have not been able to donate a penny for political purposes without establishing a political fund. The Conservatives have simply made it essential for unions to re-run the ballot every 10 years. Prior to that, as I say, no trade union could contribute money unless a political fund was in existence. It had to be set up by members after a ballot. Moreover, any trade unionist who does not wish to contribute can contract out.

Consider the way in which large companies donate money to the Tory party. The disclosure that is necessary exists only because of changes introduced by the then Labour Government in 1967. But there is no balloting. If a shareholder disagrees with the company's approach, he can attend a board meeting, but he will have little influence, because we know how company annual general meetings are organised.

I was glad that the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) pointed out that the amount spent on behalf of a candidate at a general election is tightly controlled. If a candidate exceeds that sum and wins, he may appear before a court and can be disqualified. That is right and

*[Mr. David Winnick]*

nobody is suggesting that that rule should be altered. Nobody would suggest that it should be possible to buy votes. Control exists to ensure fairness.

If that is the case on the local scene, why should the political parties at a general election be able to spend as much as they like? There is no limit. The fact of there being no limit in that case undermines what we are trying to establish locally. That is why I say that we should reach agreement, though I would not put a figure on it now. It is not necessary to be that precise at this stage. If agreement could be reached on an all-party basis to place controls on the amount that may be spent at a general election, we should have gone a long way towards achieving our goal.

Conservative Members have suggested that we want state funding. I do not know how many of my hon. Friends are in favour of such a system, but I believe there is an argument for a degree of state funding. Today, there are constant accusations flying about. We accuse the Conservative party of receiving money along the lines suggested in this debate. Conservative Members in turn accuse Opposition Members of receiving money from trade unions. Is there not a case for saying that the parties represented in the House—parties which at least have electoral credibility and receive some electoral support—should receive money?

If it is said that that system would be wrong because ordinary citizens should not have to contribute, one must ask what view is taken of Short money. How many people have written protesting about Short money? That began when the Conservatives were in opposition in 1975, and people have not objected, for example, to the number of political assistants of Conservative Ministers or the way in which they are funded. I do not object, because the same would happen if Labour were in office.

Let us remember that we are paid out of taxpayers' money. So why should we take the view that if we had a degree of state funding, it would be deeply resented by the general public? I do not believe that they would object and, in any event, there is a good case for some state funding. I wish to make it clear that I do not want to stop people contributing. That must be permissible in a democracy.

Conservative Members who strenuously oppose state funding should recall that every candidate who stands for election—whatever the party, major or minor, and however fringe the candidate—receives assistance. Postal delivery costs money and is financed by the taxpayer. How many Conservative Members have said at the hustings or in the House, "I do not want to receive such assistance during the election campaign"? It is all taxpayers' money, so let us put an end to the argument that any state funding along the lines that my hon. Friends and I have suggested would undermine democracy.

We in this country, on the whole, have a clean democracy. I assure Conservative Members that I am totally genuine in my views on the subject. We are concerned for the integrity of public life. We had a clean democracy in the 1960s and 1970s, but that did not stop us introducing the Register of Members' Interests. Some hon. Members argued at the time that it was not necessary because we were all honourable. I am not aware of any hon. Member who now argues against the existence of that register.

Further reforms along the lines that my hon. Friends and I, and the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), have suggested are necessary. But, above all, we require full disclosure of money coming to political parties. That is an essential reform which, once introduced, would be welcomed. Nobody would then suggest that we should return to the situation that exists now. I hope that more than one Conservative Member will tonight accept that it is essential for the status quo to come to an end. Some basic and essential reforms on political expenditure are vital for public life and political integrity in Britain.

**Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe** (Leigh): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not common courtesy and normal practice in the House for an hon. Member who makes a speech in which he makes accusations to remain in his place at the conclusion of his speech to hear the following speaker, especially when it is clear that the following speaker intends to put a point of view based on the hon. Gentleman's speech?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It is a common courtesy in the House that, on resuming his seat after making a speech, an hon. Member remains to hear the following speaker. I have noticed for some time that, sadly, that courtesy and, I must say, others, have not been observed. I, too, hope that in future hon. Members will observe the common courtesies of the House. I regret that that has not been the case in recent times and that many hon. Members have been guilty in that respect.

8.47 pm

**Mr. Stephen Milligan** (Eastleigh): It was refreshing, after the catalogue of unsubstantiated smears from the Labour Front Bench, to hear the comments of hon. Members on the Labour and Liberal Back Benches. Fortunately, some serious speeches have been made and I am anxious to reply to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), who put the argument for state funding. I am glad that at least one Labour Member had the honesty to be clear about his policy.

There are two objections to state funding. The first is that the people of Britain clearly do not want it. We got a taste of the way in which people would react to it from the reaction to the decision of the House to increase our office allowances hugely last year, a decision carried mainly by Labour votes. The decision was greatly resented in my constituency and that of many others. At a time when people are tightening their belts, the idea that we should be awarding ourselves extra money in some shape or form is not well received by the public.

The second and more important argument against state funding is that I object to it being suggested as a cleaner system which is less vulnerable to abuse. It is striking that in almost every European country in the last year—for example, in France, Spain, Germany and most noticeably in Italy—there has been a series of scandals, even though each country has state funding. It is clear that state funding does not end political scandals. It merely creates more opportunities.

We in this country are fortunate to have a decent and clean system and an important reason for that was given by the hon. Member for Walsall, North when he spoke of

limits on spending in the constituencies. Calculations show that the Americans spend 16 times more per elector during the elections than we spend in this country.

At the national level, the crucial reason why there is no corruption and there is a fair balance between the parties is the fact that there are controls on television. One cannot buy television commercials as one can in America. The system of party political broadcasts means that, by and large, every party gets a fair crack of the whip. The Opposition parties get a bigger crack of the whip than one might expect according to the proportion of votes cast.

If we are to maintain a voluntary system, which I believe that the people of this country want, we must then ask: does the money given voluntarily to all parties in the House buy or influence decisions? My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) said that a number of recent decisions, including those on the brewers and British Airways, clearly demonstrated that when there was a clash between the interests of the people who had given money to the Conservative party and the interests of the country, the Government put the interests of the country first.

Many of my hon. Friends will know that there is great unhappiness among landowners and property owners about the proposals on leasehold reform—the Duke of Westminster has withdrawn funds from the party because of it. I am delighted to say that such actions have had no influence on the Government's decision. The Opposition have today produced no evidence to suggest that money given to the Conservative party has influenced Government decisions, which is the critical test.

What a contrast the Labour party offers. Does money buy influence in the Labour party? Of course it does. It is included in its constitution—it buys 40 per cent. of the votes in the selection of candidates and 40 per cent. of the votes in the election of the leader of the Labour party.

**Mr. Graham** *rose*——

**Mr. Milligan:** I shall not give way as time is short.

I welcome the fact that the Leader of the Opposition is trying to clean up his act, but all that he is trying to do is to eliminate the union share in the selection of candidates and the election of leader. He is not trying to eliminate the block vote. What a protest there would be if the shareholders or directors of Polly Peck or British Airways had a block vote at the Conservative party conference. There has been one member, one vote at the Conservative party conference for a long time.

The case of Mr. Asil Nadir has been frequently mentioned. He paid a lot of money—£440,000. What influence did he buy? What favourable decisions did he receive?

**Mr. Graham:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Milligan:** No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Nadir received 10 minutes with the then chairman of the Conservative party to say how the presentation of the poll tax was going wrong. Tens of thousands of people agreed with Mr. Nadir and gave their advice free of charge. I think that Mr. Nadir's advice was helpful in that respect, but he received nothing else—what a contrast to Labour. I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will succeed, but the omens are not favourable. He will not eliminate the sponsorship of individual candidates.

I was interested to see what the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) had to say. Incidentally, I gave her warning that I would raise the issue on the Floor of the House. She had written to Labour's Deputy Chief Whip to say that she was nervous that Aslef's sponsorship could be withdrawn from her. She was frank and open, as is Labour party policy. She said that she was keen to be a member of the Select Committee on Transport. She is reported to have written to the Deputy Chief Whip as follows:

"'If I was a member of the select committee,' she adds, with compelling logic, 'it would, should it ever arise, be difficult (for Aslef) to argue that I was not money well spent.'" The link between money given and the influence that the unions expect to derive from it is clear.

**Mr. Riddick:** Like my hon. Friend, I had hoped to speak in tonight's debate, but he has been luckier than I have. I wrote to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson). Someone who I happen to know overheard a conversation in one of the buildings in the House of Commons in which a researcher to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) said that she had been told to find out the dirt on Graham Riddick. As I was raising the issue mentioned by my hon. Friend, the Labour party felt it necessary to find out the dirt on me. Of course, there is none, as my hon. Friend will know.

**Mr. Milligan:** I am shocked to hear of that revelation, but it will be a fruitless search as there is no dirt on my hon. Friend.

However, we have seen a gross act of hypocrisy from the Labour party Front Bench team which has raised a number of issues. We were accused of having received anonymous donations. Those who give money to the Labour party on the same basis have long been anonymous, as have those who have given money to the Liberal party. We have been accused of accepting money from foreign Governments, but that has been denied by every Conservative Member who has spoken.

I used to work on *The Sunday Times*, which was a responsible newspaper in those days. We published an interesting story——

**Mr. Graham:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Milligan:** No, I shall not give way—perhaps the hon. Gentleman is hard of hearing.

At that time *The Sunday Times* was the first to reveal that the National Union of Miners was seeking money from Colonel Gaddafi and had sent representatives to Tripoli to obtain finance for the miners' strike. It was later revealed that the NUM received £150,000 from Libya and also received money from the Soviet Union and eastern Europe. In that period, the NUM paid thousands of pounds to the Labour party in affiliation fees. I wonder if the Labour party will now recognise that that was tainted foreign money which should be returned. I suspect not.

The Labour party has accused us of receiving money from dubious sources and has said that it should be returned. However, it admitted that it received money from Robert Maxwell—because that was done openly, it believes that it has no responsibility to return it.

**Mr. Clappison** *rose*——

**Mr. Milligan:** I shall not give way as time is short.

*[Mr. Milligan]*

The fact that the money was taken from pensioners did not seem to weigh with the Labour party at all. The motion is hypocritical and I suggest that the Labour party should take the beam out of its eye before it seeks to take the mote out of ours.

8.57 pm

**Mrs. Barbara Roche** (Hornsey and Wood Green): In the spirit of openness and disclosure in which the Labour party firmly believes, may I first say that, although I am not sponsored by a trade union, at the last election my constituency party received a small number of donations from trade unions towards the election campaign.

In the past few weeks and days, all the papers and commentators have spoken of the need for openness and sunlight, which is the best disinfectant, on the murky subject of funding, particularly of the Conservative party. The spectacle of Tory Members of Parliament, party officials, ex-treasurers and others falling over each other to give us more information in recent days is illuminating.

Brendan Bruce, former director of communications for the Conservative party, told journalists that when he wrote in his recent book, "Images of Power" that he had taken Asil Nadir out to lunch

"in an attempt to extract money from him for Tory party funds"

he had wrongly recalled the occasion and money had not been discussed. It is amazing how opinions can change so rapidly.

In addition, as has been said, the Attorney-General and others refused to reveal the identity of the so-called furtive four. I do not know what Asil Nadir's contributions obtained for him or paid for, but a remarkable number of representations has certainly been made. This contradicts the efforts of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on open government and the Tory party's claims to be in favour of it. Indeed, one of the Prime Minister's earliest statements on taking office was on that very subject. Yet we are given no details about who made those representations. What sort of openness is that?

The position of Conservative central office when the Home Affairs Select Committee, of which I am honoured to be a member, decided to inquire into funding is also interesting. First, a spokesman for Conservative central office said that it was a bit early to say whether the party would co-operate with the Committee's inquiry. Then one Tim Collins, who I gather is the assistant to the party chairman, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), said that it was an impertinence that the Committee should look into the private funds of the party.

Unfortunately, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield would not allow me to intervene in his speech today. He seemed rather reluctant to take interventions. But I should be interested to know whether he dissociated himself from the impertinent remarks of his assistant.

**Mr. Garnier:** The hon. Lady had plenty of opportunity last Wednesday to question my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield in the Select Committee. Why did she put none of those questions to him then and why is she now complaining?

**Mrs. Roche:** I am glad that the hon. Gentleman asks. He will recall that I had a huge number of questions to put to the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield, none of which he answered satisfactorily. That was an additional little question that I wanted to put to him today, but he seemed curiously reluctant to take interventions.

Major General Sir Brian Wyldebore-Smith told the *Financial Times* that he frequently was not aware who donors were and from where the cheques came. He also said that he never refused a cheque. That is interesting since the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield told us proudly of the tremendous new rules, and that money was not accepted from foreign Governments. Sir Brian Wyldebore-Smith was the chairman of the Conservative Board of Finance for 22 years, yet he said that he had never known the Conservative party to refuse a cheque.

Then we had Lord McAlpine telling the world from Venice that the Conservative party was wrong to accept Asil Nadir's donation. The Conservative party tried to present Asil Nadir as a respectable business man, but consider from where his money came. Asil Nadir was allegedly the largest single source of income for Rauf Denktash, the so-called leader of the so-called Turkish republic of northern Cyprus, an illegal regime, not recognised by any country other than Turkey. It is not surprising that a fugitive from justice is there in that illegal regime. Mr. Nadir obtained his wealth from the illegal expropriation of property owned by Greek Cypriots. That is the sort of man from whom the Tory party was prepared to take money.

**Mr. Clappison:** Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Mrs. Roche:** No, time is short.

The Select Committee was also told by the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield that the party does not accept donations from foreign Governments. However, he refused to confirm or deny that the party had accepted donations from wealthy foreign individuals such as Mr. Li Ka-Shing and the late Sir Y. K. Pao. Why? What is the definition of a foreign Government? Mr. Li Ka-Shing is a member of the assembly of the Chinese republic. He is a close associate of the Chinese Government. [HON. MEMBERS: "That has been denied."] It has not been denied. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. I wish to hear the hon. Lady and I do not wish to have my hearing interrupted by a lot of stupid sounds.

**Mrs. Roche:** It has not been denied. That person had close connections with a foreign Government and the allegation has not been denied. In the Select Committee I put all the names to the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield and, as I pointed out at the beginning, he said:

"We do not reveal details of people either in this country or overseas who make contributions."

What nonsense.

**Mr. Graham:** Ordinary men and women want to know how the Government have taken £15 million from foreigners. Surely contributions of this kind should be shown in the party's audited accounts. In my constituency, a builder donated a house and the Tory party expected to make £68,000 from raffle tickets costing £500 each. Is there any record of that?

**Mrs. Roche:** My hon. Friend makes a very important point. We just do not have any information about overseas donations to the Conservative party, which refuses to publish proper accounts. In the United States it would be an offence for one of us to make a contribution to the

Republican party or the Democratic party at federal level —and rightly so, as we are not American citizens. No such rules of propriety govern the Conservative party, which takes money from wherever it can.

In this regard, the Saudis have been very much in the news today. I am thinking not just of the Government or the royal family but of private individuals.

**Mr. Soley:** With regard to the Saudis, the Government have been very defensive. I have received a letter from someone whom I know and in whom I have some confidence. The letter says:

"Prior to election time a meeting took place in the residence of Prince Sultan Ibn Abdul Aziz in the Boltons, SW10 between Prince Bandar, son of the aforementioned, and the ambassador of Saudi Arabia to USA, with Michael Heseltine and two other people unknown to me. The subject of the meeting was to aid the Conservative party financially in their efforts against the Labour party. As far as I have been informed by members of the embassy, this task has been delegated to Mr. Hattab Alonzi, Press Attache, via his supervisor, General Ali Al-Shaaier, Minister of Communications and Media."

This source is different from *The Guardian* article. If similar information had gone to the Conservatives, that party would have looked up the Walworth road accounts. These rumours can be scotched only by the Government's publication of accounts.

**Mrs. Roche:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who raised a very important issue. If the Conservative party has nothing to hide, why does not it disclose the names of foreign donors?

**Mr. Michael Bates** (Langbaurgh): Can the hon. Lady tell us why the Labour party's annual accounts do not list individual donations from trade unions or from individuals?

**Mrs. Roche:** The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting point. The Labour party publishes audited accounts, which are there for everyone to see. Tomorrow the Select Committee on Home Affairs will be able to put questions to the party's general secretary. The difference is that we have the "disinfectant of sunlight".

**Mr. Clappison:** Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Mrs. Roche:** No. I have given way three times and, as time is limited, I do not intend to do so again.

The allegations about funding from the Saudis will be raised time and time again until the Conservative party makes proper disclosures or admits that it is wrong to accept donations from foreign nationals. For example, there have been allegations about commission on arms sales. I do not know whether the assertions about where that commission has ended up are correct. It is alleged that it has gone into the coffers of the Tory party. I hope very much that the allegations are wrong, as such behaviour brings British political parties into disrepute. But it is very difficult to obtain answers. I have tried to table questions to the Secretary of State for Defence, but the practice is that Defence Ministers do not answer questions about arms sales. I have therefore tabled questions to the President of the Board of Trade. I have asked about total exports to Saudi Arabia and about commission on them. Most involve weapons. I have been told that information on the proportion of exports involving commission is not available; I wonder why.

We come back to the question of honours. We are told that it is a mere coincidence that those who contribute to the Conservative party end up with honours: they are just very successful business men. A good deal of academic research has been done and statisticians have concluded that the chance of its being a coincidence that 50 per cent. of honours go to Tory party donors is just under one in 1 million. That is an interesting statistic and I should like to hear a response to it.

In 1982, Sir William Cayzer, chairman of the fourth largest donor company, British and Commonwealth, received a life peerage. In 1990 the company went into liquidation, costing the City a great deal of money. More than three years ago, in June 1990, the Department of Trade and Industry appointed inspectors to investigate it. I asked the President of the Board of Trade a parliamentary question, which was answered today: I was told that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs had not yet received the inspector's report and that, when he received it, he would consider publication. In view of the donations to the Conservative party totalling more than £800,000, I urge him to publish as soon as possible. The same considerations apply to ballots. Shareholders' views are rarely sought and shareholders are rarely balloted. How different that is from the position of the trade unions.

Let us see what ordinary, grass-root workers in the Conservative party have had to say. Let us consider what has been said by members of the Charter Movement—long-standing Conservatives—about the culture of secrecy that surrounds the party. Even members elected to its board of finance have been unable to get to the truth of Conservative party funding—and this is the party that constitutes our Government.

Of course, there are honourable exceptions. Perhaps the leading example is the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), who spoke so well tonight. Over the weekend, he said:

"as long as things are done clandestinely and anonymously there is always a suspicion that they are done for motives that are not appropriate."

We have heard no arguments tonight that come close to refuting that sensible argument.

An ICM poll earlier this month showed that 71 per cent. of voters want parties to be legally obliged to disclose details of large donors. It is time that the Conservative party listened to the views of the British public and acted. Let us get some sunlight into its affairs.

9.12 pm

**Mr. Robin Cook** (Livingston): Let me begin by making a statement with which I hope I can carry the whole House. I welcome the Leader of House to the debate, but regret the necessity that has given rise to his presence.

**Mr. Terry Dicks** (Hayes and Harlington): I do not believe you.

**Mr. Cook:** It seems that I cannot carry the whole House with me after all; I cannot carry the hon. Member—if that is the right term—for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks).

Despite what he says, however, I ask the Leader of the House, on behalf of both Front Benches, to convey the concern of the whole House to the President of the Board of Trade, along with our best wishes for his speedy recovery and return to good health. In view of the evident distress of the right hon. Gentleman's wife and family, I

*[Mr. Cook]*

also invite the Leader of the House to join me in appealing to the press to respect the family's privacy and to give them some peace at this difficult time.

Had the President of the Board of Trade been able to join us, he would have listened to such a keenly fought debate with his customary relish, although the speeches that caused him pleasure might not have been the speeches that pleased me.

My hon. Friends the Members for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) and for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) all had plenty of material with which to develop the powerful case for disclosure; indeed, so strong are the grounds for disclosure that all my hon. Friends were able to deploy their case without engaging in repetition.

I share the puzzlement felt by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) about how the Conservative party can have strict rules about the donations that they can receive, when we learn from the party's chief fund raiser that no cheque has ever been refused. It is a curiously drafted rule that never leaves anyone offside.

As the debate has revealed, it is not just the Labour party that is concerned over the secrecy of donations to the governing party. The speeches from the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) have clearly conveyed the fact that every party in the House, except the Conservative party, accepts the case for more disclosure.

Even within the Conservative party, there are some who accept the case for disclosure. The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) made a passionate speech on the impossibility of defending secrecy. That speech gained strength from the meretricious arguments of those Conservative Members who attempted to defend that secrecy.

There were absences from the list of speakers who could not plead ill health. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), I had hoped to hear from the four more Tory Members who put in a good word to the Attorney-General for Asil Nadir but have yet to come forward. Why are they so furtive?

The three Members who have disclosed themselves as having made representations on behalf of Asil Nadir are still in the Government. We have the statement from the Prime Minister that it was not a hanging offence. We have been told that the Secretary of State for National Heritage was only doing his duty as a constituency Member of Parliament.

We know from the revelations of the past few days that Asil Nadir has several houses. There may have been several more Members doing their duty as constituency Members of Parliament. There must be a simple explanation, and we just want to hear it. Even at this late stage in the debate, I shall make an offer. I am willing to give way four times to any Tory Member who is willing to say that he or she made representations on behalf of that fugitive from British justice. I look forward to the takers with interest.

**Mr. Riddick** *rose*——

**Mr. Cook:** How can I resist if the hon. Gentleman may be willing to declare that he made representations or knows who did so?

**Mr. Riddick:** I did not make any representations about Mr. Asil Nadir. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) disclosed recently that, as far back as 1984, employees of the Mirror Group expressed concern about the behaviour of Mr. Robert Maxwell. Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House why the Labour party has not repaid any of the money to the Maxwell pensioners when it had evidence of what was going on?

**Hon. Members:** Answer.

**Mr. Cook:** Hon. Members cannot yell, "Answer," if they do not allow me to speak. The answer is perfectly simple. The resolution of the executive committee was that we would repay the money if it came from the Mirror Group pensioners. It was established that it did not come from Mirror Group pensioners, so it has not been paid to Mirror Group pensioners.

To put matters right, there has been one donation from Robert Maxwell to the Labour party. That donation was declared on the day it was made. There have been no other payments from Robert Maxwell to the Labour party or to the Leader of the Opposition's office. That sole donation is out in the open. This debate is to invite the Government to be just as open in the donations that they have received.

I am confident that the Secretary of State for Employment is not among those who have made representations on behalf of Asil Nadir. Any hon. Member——

**Mr. Riddick:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Cook:** The hon. Gentleman has already disappointed us once. I will not give way again.

Any hon. Member who believes that the revelations of the last two weeks have demonstrated what he called the integrity of our democratic constitution is a person of such invincible innocence that he has clearly never been tainted by contact with Asil Nadir.

The Secretary of State suggested that the affiliation fees that we receive from trade unions are the same as the donations that the Conservative party receives. It is late in the debate, but I think that I can speak on behalf of all my hon. Friends when I say that we will withdraw our motion if he is willing to put the acceptance of donations by the Conservative party on the same basis as that on which we accept union affiliations.

The affiliations that we receive from trade unions are open; they are declared by us and by the trade unions. No trade union affiliates to us in secret. No trade union pays a clandestine £1 million to us, as Hong Kong property developers do to hon. Gentlemen opposite. No foreign trade union affiliates to the Labour party. Trade unions affiliate only if there is a ballot of all members on setting up a political fund. How many companies that pay the hon. Gentlemen carry out a postal ballot of all their shareholders?

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** Will the hon. Gentleman answer the point that his right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) refused to answer when she opened the debate? Why does the Labour party not publish a list of private donors?

**Mr. Cook:** The answer is very clear. We have said that we will agree to name all donors above an agreed amount if the other parties will do so. Since the hon. Member is ready to identify contributions from high-value donors, which in aggregate come to less than half the sums the Conservative party received from Asil Nadir alone, I have to say that all those included in that list of high-value donors are well below any sum of which that lot opposite will agree to list the donors.

I have already said that, even when the majority in those trade unions vote to set up a political fund, the minority have a right to opt out. What shareholder ever has the right to opt out of a donation to the Conservative party from a company?

We were told that donations to the Conservative party were freely given and freely received. No consumer is getting a rebate from Thames Water for its donation of £50,000 to the Conservative party. That was not freely given; those consumers cannot opt out of buying their water from Thames Water. They cannot opt out of that forced contribution to the Conservative party.

I will give way to any hon. Member who is willing to answer this challenge. If they are so worried about trade union funding, why do they not bring their own sources of income up to the same standard? Why do they not give an open declaration of all big paymasters? Why do they not give every shareholder a vote on those donations? Why do they not give those shareholders the right to opt out if they do not agree? Why do they not have a certification officer to make sure that those companies obey the law and declare their donations?

If they do that, they will raise their sources of income to the same level as the trade union affiliations. If they do not, they should stop criticising a source of payment that is more open, more democratic and less forced than anything that they practise on the income side.

The Secretary of State issued another challenge. He said that this debate was all about state funding: that we want to get our hands on taxpayers' money. I will not take any lectures from hon. Members on this score. This Government would need a fork-lift truck to carry along Whitehall the money that they have poured into bogus advertising campaigns.

What did they do when they found that the public opposed school tests? They helped themselves to a quarter of a million pounds of taxpayers' money to convince the public that they were wrong and the Government were right.

The Secretary of State for Employment said that, if we want a party, we should pay for it. I say to them that, if they want an advertising campaign for their policy, they should pay for it.

**Mr. David Sumberg** (Bury, South) *rose*——

**Mr. Cook:** No, I will not give way; I want to deal with the Secretary of State.

He ended his speech by accusing my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) of making a speech of sleaze and smears. That would have been a more convincing accusation had it not been carefully typed in advance.

Let us look at what Lord McAlpine said—Lord McAlpine who has found the funds to pay for four election victories for the Conservatives and is so doubtful of the result that he is now in permanent exile.

Last night, I saw Lord McAlpine being interviewed on television about whether he and the President of the Board of Trade had talked about Asil Nadir. His reply was:

"Why come to Venice to talk about a sleazy fellow like that?"

It was not we who were saying that one of the biggest donors to the Tory party in modern times was a sleazy fellow. It was the man who took the money who was now calling him a sleazy fellow.

It was not always thus. This sleazy fellow was six times in Downing street and was once at Chequers for lunch. He received a letter from Lady Thatcher which said:

"I cannot thank you enough. It was a marvellous encouragement to know that you were so committed to the cause in which we believe."

Sadly, what was a marvellous encouragement has now turned into a marvellous embarrassment, proving the truth of the saying among my people that he who lies down with dogs will surely rise with fleas.

We were told in the debate that it was all right for the Tories to have taken the stolen money because they did not know at the time that it was stolen. I shall tell them what they did know. They knew that Asil Nadir had not declared his donation. The company accounts are on the public record, and what they say is unmistakable.

The company accounts of Polly Peck for 1987-88, the year to which the letter from Lady Thatcher refers, say:

"No political donations were made."

We have had repeated statements that it is not for the Conservative party to obey the law, but for the donors to the Conservative party to obey the law. Yes, but it is not just for the donors to observe the law; it is for Government to enforce observance of the law.

For over a year, it has been public knowledge that Asil Nadir made donations to the Tory party. For over a year, Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry have known that the Companies Acts were being broken by the failure to declare those donations. For over a year, no charges have been brought. When Companies house was asked why no charges had been brought, it said:

"We don't have a proactive role."

Here is the party of law and order. Why is the party of law and order not proactive on the issue of an offence against the law? Why has not one charge been brought under this head? Is it simply that a Conservative Government would be too embarrassed if the directors were convicted of making a donation without legally declaring it, because it would strengthen the pressure on the Conservative party to give it back?

The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) made a speech today in which he repeated his assurance that it was not the policy of the Conservative party to take money that was obtained illegally, and that he would give it back if it was proven to be stolen. Having worked us up, he rather left us disappointed by saying that he could not give a snap reaction to Touche Ross. As the right hon. Gentleman himself said that it was 601 days since he had had the previous letter from Touche Ross, one might have thought that he would be better prepared for the next one.

This is not a private dispute between the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield and Touche Ross; it is a public scandal. The nation will judge the party by its response. It will judge it on information already in the public domain, such as the information that the payments to the Tory party came from the same offshore account in Jersey in respect of which Asil Nadir has been charged

*[Mr. Cook]*

with making illegal payments, and that three of the payments to the Conservative party were made within days——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman's last remark, in which he made the accusation if illegal payments, is somewhat out of order at this stage.

**Mr. Cook:** I was under the impression, Madam Speaker, that I had said that Asil Nadir had been charged with making illegal payments. The charge sheet is specific, and spells out the days on which the alleged illegal payments were made. Three of the payments to the Tory party were made within days of payments to that same account which relate to the charges in the trial.

What more proof does the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield want? We know that the donor has been charged in respect of that stolen money. By any decent standard, that should be enough. The Conservative party should stop its prevarication and give the money back now.

The right hon. Gentleman also reminded us today that it was an offence to buy honours. He did not repeat to the Select Committee his statement that there was no correlation between donations to the Tory party and honours for company directors. I am glad that he did not repeat that assertion today. When I first read it, I thought that the right hon. Gentleman had been around too long, that he was in danger of believing too many impossible things, and that it might be in his interest to consider another resignation, this time to spend more time with Group 4.

The companies that make donations to the Tory party make up 5 per cent. of the companies registered in Britain, and 50 per cent. of the companies with directors who have received honours. They make up one third of the top 50 companies in Britain, and two thirds of the two companies that received honours.

**Mr. Bates:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Cook:** If the hon. Gentleman can explain that correlation, I shall happily give way.

**Mr. Bates:** By casting doubt on the manner in which awards are given, is the hon. Gentleman doubting the credibility and integrity of the Labour Privy Councillor who was a member of the Political Honours Scrutiny Committee?

**Mr. Cook:** No, of course I am not. The hon. Gentleman is overlooking the fact that the Committee vets the names in front of it; it does not choose the names, which come through the members of the Treasury Bench. It is members of the Treasury Bench who decide that the honours should be targeted on some industrialists. It is not open to the Committee to search for other industrialists who may deserve the honour more.

Let us be clear and fair to the right hon. Gentleman. The charge that he must answer is not that he ever arranged with the noble Lords to meet around the back of a motorway service station to pick up his bung and hand over the gong. The charge is much more urbane. Word gets around that the chances of a peerage or knighthood are generously multiplied by generous donations to the Conservative party.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I have done some research. I put it to the hon. Gentleman that the proportion of those receiving important honours and contributing to the Conservative party since 1979 is the same proportion as received honours under the previous Labour Government.

**Mr. Cook:** As not a single company made a donation to the previous Labour Government, that comment beggars belief. It was the practice of our previous Prime Minister, Lord Callaghan, to consult Walworth road to ensure that no industrialist that he nominated had ever made a donation to the Labour party. There is no substance whatsoever in the right hon. Gentleman's claim.

If one considers the 12 companies that have made the largest donations to the Tory party over the past 10 years, one finds that 10 have now received honours for their directors. There is a correlation. As a matter of fact, it is an 83 per cent. correlation.

Can the Leader of the House explain that dramatic correlation? Can he explain the credibility gap between the £19 million that the Tory party declared in donations and the £3·7 million declared by British companies last year? Where did the millions in between come from? When that question was asked during the opening speech, a voice from the Government Benches cried out, "Coffee mornings." I would love to see the audited accounts of those coffee mornings; even Turkish coffee mornings cannot raise the difference between £3·7 million and £19 million.

As long as the Conservatives do not publish their accounts, the suspicion must remain that the difference comes from large donations from private individuals—large donations which, in some respects, are even worse than company donations, because they are not published. The danger of secret donations is that they leave public government under private obligation.

We are not talking about people who put a fiver in an envelope and send it off to central office. People misguided enough to do that are entitled to privacy, to shield them from the ridicule of their neighbours. They will never be invited to dinner at Chequers; directors of communications of the Tory party will not write in their memoirs about lunches at Granby's trying to convince them that their fiver has been well spent on a marketing effort.

We are not talking about donations of £5 or £10; we are talking about the £2 million that John Latsis is alleged to have given. That donation has never been denied during the debate. If the Leader of the House wishes to deny now that such a donation was made, I shall happily give way to him to enable him to do so.

I am rather surprised that John Latsis should be so anxious to help the democratic process at work, because the previous Government that he supported with such large sums was the rule of the Greek colonels, who were given more to arresting their opponents than to arguing with them. What is the Conservative party doing dipping into the same source as Karamanlis? What is John Latsis doing investing his money in the Conservative party? What are foreigners doing bankrolling the election expenses of a party when they have no vote in the election for which they are contributing the money?

In case it should be alleged that what we say is more innuendos and smears from the Labour party, the Leader of the House should bear in mind what Lord McAlpine

said last week when he was asked where he got his money. He answered that it came from Greek shipping magnates, Hong Kong millionaires and Americans, adding:

"There were always a few Americans giving maybe $25,000, but it wasn't millions."

Taken together, those sums certainly amounted to millions.

**Mr. Richard Ottaway** (Croydon, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Cook:** No, I shall finish in a moment.

Lord McAlpine went on to say that there were always "tons of offshore accounts".

Britain has no right to interfere in the elections of foreign countries, and foreigners have no right to interfere in the elections of this country. That is not just a matter for the Conservatives——

**Mr. James Couchman** (Gillingham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to call into question the integrity of so many people, especially senior captains of British industry? *[Interruption.]* He calls people's integrity into question, and he should put up or shut up.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members are responsible for the comments that they make. It is up to them.

**Mr. Cook:** It was not I who produced the Greek shipping magnates, the Hong Kong millionaires and the Americans. It was Lord McAlpine, the party treasurer. The hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) and his hon. Friends were only too happy to take the money, so long as it remained secret.

This is not just a matter for the Conservatives; it is an issue for the nation. The Government are the nation's Government—God help it. The nation is entitled to know who the Government's paymasters are. Whatever the Government have to hide, the damage to their credibility cannot be worse than the frank consternation that they have shown since they were asked to open the books.

There is another reason why I believe that the Conservatives have been damaged by the events of the past week. It is the contrast between what the Conservative Government preach and what the Conservative party does. The Government preach open government, but the Conservative party will not even open its books. The Government preach sound money, but the party cannot even come up with audited accounts. The Government preach law and order, but the Conservative party will not give back the cash that it took from a fugitive from British justice.

No contrast is more offensive than the sight of the Government, even as they sharpen their knife to pare down the benefits of invalids and disabled people, being exposed as touching the wealthiest people in the world to pay their own party bills. The party of the foreign millionaire cannot be expected to understand the pressures on pensioners at home.

The best cure for a nasty smell is fresh air from open disclosure. Tonight we shall vote for all parties to open their books and to declare who bankrolls them. Only a party with something to hide will vote to keep the lid on its accounts.

I warn the Conservative party that the public will not trust a Government who will not trust them with the knowledge of who their paymasters are. The Government may vote down our motion tonight, but if they win the vote in the Lobby, they will lose the confidence of the nation.

9.39 pm

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** May I begin by responding to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) in the terms with which he, quite properly, very courteously started his speech when he expressed sympathy for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and for his family and asked that they should be left alone during the President's current difficulties. I know that my right hon. Friend will be grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said and that that sentiment will be shared by all Conservative Members.

As a result of what has happened to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, I find myself somewhat unexpectedly taking part in this debate which has undoubtedly been a debate of—how shall I put it?—considerable interest.

The most engaging contribution was perhaps that made from the Liberal Benches by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) if only because the hon. Gentleman engagingly acknowledged that the last people who would universally be accepted to have sold honours in this country were the last Liberal Government. Indeed, I have a copy of the price list—*[Interruption.]* This may be of some historical interest. According to the price list, a knighthood cost £12,000. However, that is at 1920s prices—the mind boggles. A baronetcy—we do not have those these days—cost £35,000; and a peerage cost from £50,000 to £100,000.

That was of interest, but the most interesting thing about the speech of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, engaging as it was, was his ineffable optimism—although that was perhaps complimentary to me—in suggesting that I might be able to talk him out of a position, into which he had clearly already arrived, where he said he was going to vote for a motion with 90 per cent. of which he disagreed. That task is clearly beyond me if he got himself into that position at the start.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment said when he opened the debate for the Government, we, and I particularly as Leader of the House, have spent several weeks during which time the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), the shadow Leader of the House, demanded from me week by week Supply days to discuss worthy and weighty subjects such as Bosnia, the economy and defence.

However, we are now debating this subject when only three days ago, when he was about to travel to Copenhagen, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said on the "Today" programme that the economy was the

"number one item on the agenda of the socialist leaders."

So what did the right hon. and learned Gentleman do? As soon as he had flown back from Copenhagen, he came in to Prime Minister's Question Time and focused on these disreputable allegations. He followed that up with today's debate in which one piece of smear and innuendo followed another.

The reason for all that is, from the Labour party's point of view, that there is not enough bad news about. Unemployment is falling. Retail sales have been rising. The housing market and the car industry are growing. The

*[Mr. Tony Newton]*

European Community is saying that ours will be the fastest growing economy in Europe, both this year and next year. No wonder the Opposition do not want to debate the economy and engage instead in this diversionary tactic.

That is the first reason for this debate. The second reason, which has become increasingly clear as the debate has progressed, is that the Labour party really wants the taxpayer to bail out the crumbling finances of the Labour party. I suspect that the electorate would be heartily suspicious of having to dig into their pockets to fund the campaigning and political activities of political parties. In the case of the Labour party, they would, frankly, be bound to wonder whether it was not a case of pouring good money after bad in financing one election defeat after another. It is typical of the Labour party that when it cannot get people to dig into their own pocket voluntarily to fund it, it wants to introduce a law to make them do so.

I make no apology for repeating something that my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) said. We take the view that the voluntary principle is a strength of our political system. It contributes to participation in politics and to close contact between parties and the electorate. As my right hon. Friend said, none of us can see how, in a country in which voting is not compulsory, it would be right to force voters to pay for political parties. Why should life-long Labour supporters pay for the refurbishment of central office or staunch Conservatives have their taxes diverted to bale out the Labour party?

I make no bones about the fact that we remain wedded to the principle that where individuals make donations for political or, for that matter, charitable purposes, they are entitled to the right of privacy, if that is what they wish.

To reiterate what my right hon. Friend said, the Conservative party does not accept money with strings attached; it does not accept donations which it has reason to believe contain illegally obtained moneys; it does not accept donations from foreign Governments; and it does not accept donations from unknown sources.

As my right hon. Friend also said—and this brings me to another point of interest—if the money from Polly Peck proves to have been stolen, it will be paid back. What I want to know is whether we will get the same guarantee about the Maxwell money. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] Answer, for the moment, was there none.

**Mr. Robin Cook:** The right hon. Gentleman will recall —[HON. MEMBERS: "Tell the truth, Robin."] I have always told the House the truth. I told the House the truth in my speech. The money was checked to discover whether it had come from the pension fund; it did not come from the Maxwell pension fund, from which money was stolen by Maxwell. *[Interruption.]* If, at any stage, that money, which was received in 1986, is proved to have been stolen, the Labour party will, of course, consider repaying it.

**Mr. Newton:** As the hon. Gentleman will have realised from some of the sedentary comments around me, some of us remember what the hon. Gentleman said during the general election. Frankly, I do not think that his comments tonight were any better.

I have been looking at a story which appeared in one of the newspapers in December 1991.

**Mr. Bruce Grocott** (The Wrekin): Which one?

**Mr. Newton:** The *Daily Mail*. *[Interruption.]* It is of some interest, because it stated:

"Senior Labour MPs were warned seven years ago about possible threats to the Mirror pension fund when Robert Maxwell bought the newspaper group, it was revealed yesterday.

Shadow Cabinet member"—

he was then—

"Bryan Gould admitted that they took no action despite their suspicions. He said that, not being in Government, there was nothing they could do."

**Mr. Robin Corbett** (Birmingham, Erdington): Is the Leader of the House aware that the *Daily Mail*, in a recent leader, called upon all political parties, including the Conservative party, to declare all donations of more than £10,000?

**Mr. Newton:** That conflicts slightly with some of the derision from Labour Members when I mentioned the *Daily Mail*. I disagree with the proposal in the *Daily Mail*. I see that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East has not been able to come back for the end of the debate. Leaving aside what the hon. Member for Livingston is saying, I want to ask the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East whether the money will be repaid if it is shown that it was illegally obtained. Against the background of what is known about Maxwell, I do not know what inquiries entitle him to say that the money was legally obtained.

On the "Today" programme on Saturday, when John Humphrys asked the right hon. and learned Gentleman the straight and direct question:

"Well, you could give the Robert Maxwell money back to the pension fund, couldn't you?",

he got a reply that fell conspicuously short of even offering to consider the point.

**Mr. David Shaw:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that £80 million went missing from a Maxwell company and a Labour Front-Bench spokesman, who took £750,000 of that amount, is sitting in the House of Lords representing the Labour party?

**Mr. Newton:** I heard that point made earlier, but I have yet to hear it convincingly disposed of by the Labour Front Bench.

The speech of the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) was not one of her better ones. Indeed, I thought that she might have recruited one of the script writers from "Eldorado". She started with a great list of people who had apparently been given honours on a dubious basis by the Conservative party. One could almost see the right hon. Lady collapse when, in the following speech, it emerged that the chairman of United Biscuits got his first honour in a Labour list. I then made the point that the person who is now Lord Hanson received his knighthood in the lavender list, no less.

We then heard about all of the foreign donations with much talk of Saudi Arabia. That was reinforced even after repeated denials by those who are said to have been involved by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). That collapsed in the face of a statement issued today by the person who was said to have been involved, Prince Bandar, the ambassador of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United States. The statement specifically says that all the allegations in *The Guardian* today are,

"untrue and wholly without foundation. No such meeting took place and neither Prince Bandar bin Sultan nor anyone connected with the Saudi Arabian government has made

donations to the Conservative party, whether directly or indirectly, or been asked for such donations. Also, HRH Prince Bandar was not in England during the month of March."

In the catalogue of allegations from Labour Members, we came to Mr. Li Ka-Shing. There has been a good deal of dispute on points of order and so on about the precise position of *Business Age* in all of this. I shall put on record the letter, of which I have a copy, signed by the editor of that magazine to the solicitors, Denton Hall Burgin and Warrens, dated 21 June 1993 and countersigned as agreed by those solicitors. I quote:

"In accordance with our agreement we state below the terms in which this matter is settled.

The terms are as follows:—

1. We will publish in Business Age No. 34 July 1993 an apology extending to the bulk of the right hand side of page 9. This apology will appear in the top column of the right hand page, at page 9 in the section entitled 'Follow Through from previous issues.' in the following terms:

Li Ka-Shing

An apology

In Business Age No. 32 May 1993 we published an article entitled 'Tory money' in the course of which it could be inferred that Li Ka-Shing improperly sought financial favours for himself or for companies with which he was connected.

We are satisfied that any such suggestion is entirely baseless. Li Ka-Shing has informed us that he neither sought nor received any favours. We accept that the article was based on information that we now know to be without any foundation whatsoever."

It goes on to list some specific points. It concludes:

"Business Age and its Editor undertake not, at any time in the future, to publish the same or similar statements about Li Ka-Shing, as made in the article referred to above. Provided we comply with the above Mr. Li Ka-Shing will withdraw the threat of legal action against us and indeed not take any further legal action with regard to the article published in Business Age No. 32 May 1993."

I will quote the immortal last sentence. [HON. MEMBERS: "Immoral."] I said immortal. It says:

"It is also hoped that normal harmonious relations with Mr. Li Ka-Shing will resume after the apology is published."

**Mr. Robin Cook** *rose—[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The House will come to order.

**Mr. Cook:** The Leader of the House will now acknowledge that none of that retraction does anything to withdraw the essential allegation by which the magazine stands that Li Ka-Shing was a major donor to Tory party funds. Will he answer yes or no? Did he receive a large donation from Li Ka-Shing? Yes or no in the four minutes that remain.

**Mr. Newton:** I will start answering in those terms——

**Mr. Cook** *rose——*

**Mr. Newton:** No. No. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The House will come to order before we proceed any further.

**Mr. Newton:** Madam Speaker—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes or no."] Nothing could have more conclusively demonstrated the Labour party's purpose in the debate than the way in which every time that allegations are shot down the Labour party seeks to repeat the very allegations that have been shot down.

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Newton:** No. I will not give way at this stage. That is the story of what this has been about. It has been about the desire to conduct, in the way that it has been conducted, a plain, straightforward campaign of smear and innuendo whatever information has come to hand. At the end of it all, what is it all about? It is about the fact that the one party in Britain with which one can buy votes and influence is the Labour party.

I remind the occupants of the Labour Front Bench, even though they know it already, of what the then Labour party treasuer said only eight months ago:

"I have a duty to say to those people who want to loosen the union link: look at our income figures"—

*[Interruption.]*—and then Mr. Tom Sawyer said: "No say, no pay." That is the message.

*Question put,* That the original words stand part of the Question:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 250, Noes 291.

**Division No. 303]** **[10 pm**

**AYES**

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*

Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and**
**Mr. Alan Meale.**

**NOES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick

McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman and**
**Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*Question*, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments)*:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 284, Noes 249.

**Division No. 304]** **[10.13 pm**

**AYES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*

Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman and**
**Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.**

**NOES**

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted

Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Alan Meale and**
**Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

MADAM SPEAKER forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.

*Resolved,*

That this House believes that the principle of voluntary funding underpins the strength of democratic parties in this country; records its concern at the purchase by trade unions of votes in the election of the Labour Party leadership, the selection of candidates and of votes on policy at Labour's Party Conference sufficient to secure binding commitments; and calls upon the Labour Party to end the control over its policy, organisation and leadership wielded by a small number of trade union leaders.

## PETITIONS

## Fuel (VAT)

10.25 pm

**Mr. Jim Cunningham** (Coventry, South-East): I beg to ask leave to present a petition:

To the Honourable The Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, the petition of residents in Coventry, Sheweth That the recent announcement of VAT increases on Gas and Electricity bills has filled the people of Coventry with deep concern because of the consequential hardship these increases will have on Old Age Pensioners, One-Parent Families and, in general, poorer members of society. They believe these increases to be to the long-term detriment of the least well off people of Coventry and the nation.

A total of 2,300 people in Coventry have expressed their concern by signing the petition because they feel that the increases are neither economically nor socially justified.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will take measures to see that these Increases will not proceed because of the social and economic hardship for many Pensioners, One-Parent Families and Communities.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

*To lie upon the Table.*

## Pensions and Benefits (Payment)

10.27 pm

**Mrs. Alice Mahon** (Halifax): I beg to ask leave to present a petition:

To the Honourable The Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of sub-post office users in Halifax, West Yorkshire sheweth that they are against the removal by the Government of their right to receive pension and benefit payments at local post offices. Wherefore, we request that your Honourable House request the Government to give people the right to choose to receive pension and benefit payments at their local post office; recognising the benefits of this to individual and community.

Nearly 10,000 people in Halifax have signed the petition.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

*To lie upon the Table.*

## Sudan

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

10.28 pm

**Mr. Tony Worthington** (Clydebank and Milngavie): This debate gives us the opportunity to raise the issue of Sudan and the Government's policy towards it. It has been sadly neglected. A tragedy has been occurring there on a scale comparable to that in Bosnia and Somalia, but relatively little attention has been paid to it, although the amount of human suffering has been intense. It has been called the silent death of Sudan.

As the Minister will know, I recently visited the part of Sudan under the control of the Khartoum Government. I went there in the company of the hon. Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks), who regrets that he cannot be here tonight. I want to raise questions arising from that visit. Obviously, if the Minister cannot deal with all the issues during the debate, I will be pleased to receive a letter from him afterwards.

I express my appreciation to the Overseas Development Administration and the Foreign Office for the assistance given to us. In particular, I thank our ambassador in Khartoum, Mr. Peter Streams, for the immense help that he and his staff gave, for the very fine work that he does in representing Britain there and for the concern that he shows for the suffering of the Sudanese people.

Perhaps understandably, we have been obsessed by Bosnia and, to a lesser extent, Somalia. Totally inadequate attention has been given to the tragic events in Sudan, a country of great size, variety and charm, with which, of course, Britain has the closest associations.

The term ethnic cleansing has been used and deplored extensively with regard to Bosnia, but it is also applicable to Sudan. We have had the accusation that fundamentalist Islam is seeking to impose its doctrinaire vision not just on the Christian south, but on those Muslims who do not share its purist view.

We also have the cries for help from the Nuba mountains, where the Nuba people claim that their ethnicity, their whole way of life, is being eliminated.

Unfortunately, the outside world is not allowed to see how great the physical, human and social destruction has been. There is no doubt that the scale of misery is huge. No one who has seen the starvation that has occurred in the south can be in any doubt that this is a tragedy of immense proportions. It is a tragedy that has many dimensions.

Literally millions of people have been displaced as a consequence of the civil war that has been going on for 10 years. Apart from the refugees to other lands from Sudan, there are over 1 million people in huge camps around Khartoum. They have been forced to live miles from anywhere, in the desert, in hot, windy conditions, where food, water and medical facilities are completely inadequate. In the past, their primitive homes around Khartoum have been demolished and they have been forcibly moved in their tens of thousands further out in the desert. It is safe to say that in Sudan as a whole there are 2 million to 3 million internally displaced people.

We now face the appalling problems whereby previously self-reliant people are dependent on being fed; they are not able to feed themselves and the international community is forced to feed combatants in a war.

In the Nuba mountains, the international aid organisations have been excluded. Many villages have been destroyed and tens of thousands of women and children have been separated from their menfolk. The Nuba people have been stripped of their lands, which have been sold to Arab business men and mechanised; the soil has been degraded and the Nuba have been used as cheap labour. The environmental consequences of this mechanised farming have been devastating.

There are appalling stories of so-called peace camps, where aid is delivered only in return for religious allegiance. Certainly the Nuba people themselves feel that their whole cultural identity is being frontally attacked.

The Sudanese human rights record has been condemned by the United Nations by 104 votes to eight and the United Nations rapporteur, Dr. Biro, has made it absolutely clear that there are great abuses of human rights in Sudan. Amnesty International has also made it clear that people routinely disappear in that country. In our visit to Juba, we personally established that over 50 people caught in the Juba disturbances of last summer and autumn have disappeared, with no proper trial and no information being given to their relatives about whether they are alive or dead. There is the fully documented instance of ghost houses or secret detention centres being used for the interrogation and torture of detainees without any reference to family or lawyers.

Political parties are banned and since our stay a large number of people associated with the former democratically elected Prime Minister Al Mahdi have been detained. The regime are now attacking their fellow Muslims as well as the Christians they have attacked before.

But, of course, much of the concern in this country has come from the Christian churches, because of the difficulties which have been put in the way of worship in Sudan. At the heart of the problem is the determination by the military dictatorship in Khartoum that the country will be run under a system of sharia—the imposition of a religious state, which is inevitably uncomfortable for those not of that faith, or not of that version of the faith.

The witness of Christians, for example, is not allowed in Sharia courts. Sharia extends to all areas of life, including banking and education. Public education systems have been Arabised and Islamised. It is inevitable that that gives second-class citizenship to all Christians or others not of a fundamentalist disposition. How can there be peace within a religious state in a multicultural society? Sharia means that religion determines national identity and is the framework for the political and civil structure. Religion allocates power and resources. There are bound to be problems in a multi-religious, multicultural state such as Sudan, where there is no equality between believers.

Economically, the country is bankrupt. The World bank has withdrawn from a country that does not pay its debts and there is an immense flight of private capital. Behind all the problems has been a civil war which has gone on for 10 years. The country is in dire trouble. There is formally a ceasefire, but the rebels in the south are now in factions and there is still fighting between those factions.

The Sudanese Government have no monopoly on brutality or on abuses of human rights. Appalling atrocities have been committed by the southern forces as well. The factions in the south have been impeding the delivery of food, with all the tragic consequences we have seen on our television screens. What has been especially

repulsive has been the way in which innocent Sudanese people have been starved for political or military purposes by all sides. In addition to the already complex situation, the Arab versus African dimension and the Islam versus Christian dimension, there is now a major inter-tribal conflict in the south of the country.

We now come to what we can and must do on our own, with our EC partners and with the United Nations. I cannot stress enough that, because of our colonial history, Britain is the country above all to which ordinary Sudanese look for help from the outside world. That came across to us with enormous force on our visit there. What can we do? First, we must do all that we can to ensure that Dr. Biro's work to investigate the human rights situation in Sudan is aided as far as possible. We must ensure that ordinary citizens can go about their business without fear and that the Sudanese Government give full access to Dr. Biro and his team. He must start his work soon and he must be fully resourced to do that work. What assurances can the Government give on that?

We have to insist that all parts of the country are open to international observers. The Sudanese Government say that they have nothing to hide. Let the Sudanese Government prove that. There is particular concern about the Nuba mountains. We must know whether there have been massacres and on what scale, what displacement has occurred and what abuse of human rights there has been, as has been extensively reported in this country and elsewhere.

The international non-governmental agencies—the aid organisations—are not allowed to work in those parts of the country. Only Sudanese Islamic relief organisations are allowed to work there. For the protection of those people, we must insist that the international aid organisations can work there. There must be unhindered access for humanitarian work. What pressure are the Government applying to allow that to occur? What has been the finding of an EC troika, which has recently visited the country? What has it found and what does it say should occur?

It is not just that the international aid organisations must be allowed to work in the north of the country. There is a continuing problem of access in the south. It is estimated that only one quarter of the population in the south has access to the Operation Lifeline aid programme. The Sudanese Government are also impeding the international NGOs which do not have access to the thousands of southern people who are displaced throughout the country.

One must be even-handed and say that the factions in the south also impede the delivery of food with the appalling consequences that we have seen. Assistance needs to be increased and the logistics from Khartoum and Nairobi to be improved. The world food programme based, or headed up, from Nairobi has been described as overwhelmed by the scale of the task, partly through lack of resources, partly through incompetence and partly because it stops work at the first sign of difficulty while aid organisations such as Goal of Ireland continue their work.

Richard Dowden in *The Independent* has been devastatingly critical of the United Nations' performance in Kenya from where southern Sudan has to be serviced. What is the Government's view? What are they going to do to remedy the deficiency? It is not merely a problem of food; there is a major public health disaster featuring epidemic diseases such as kala-azar. What assessment have the Government made of the food and medical needs?

There is also a need for safe havens or demilitarised zones and the withdrawal of the fighting factions, especially from the Waat-Ayod-Kongor areas, or the famine triangle. In effect, that seems to have been agreed between the factions on 28 May following the intervention of the American ambassador. Has a safe haven been established? Have the forces been withdrawn? What pressure is being applied? If there is an agreement for a safe haven or demilitarised zone, it is something on which to build.

We must maintain pressure on the Government of Sudan. It is clear that poverty is increasing and that the ordinary Sudanese are facing ever-greater difficulties. The Nigerians have been hosting peace talks in Abuja, and we must be grateful to them for doing that. There is no sign, however, that progress is being made and it is doubtful whether John Garang, the leader of the SPLA, has credibility as the sole representative of the splintered south. There is a grave suspicion that the Khartoum Government are stalling and that the insistence on Sharia is the main obstacle to progress.

Other talks being held in Nairobi between the Government of Sudan and the SPLA united faction seem more optimistic. In Nairobi it has been reported that the Sudan Government have conceded the right of the southern Sudanese to self-determination through a referendum, although it is complicated by northern politicians who still regard the war as a fight against the Government in Sudan for the whole of Sudan and who are not interested in peace or the southern issue.

What information do the Government have on the progress of the Nairobi talks? The British ambassador in Khartoum recently visited the south. What information and views did he bring back? Surely the time has now come for the United Nations and the international community to put pressure on all parties in the dispute. Should not the British Government take up the plight of the Sudanese people at the Security Council to try to find a satisfactory outcome?

All sides seem to agree that Sudan cannot be a unitary state. Whether it becomes a federation, a confederation or two separate states is for the people of Sudan to decide. We must press for genuine steps to be made towards democracy. It is good that in Nairobi there seems to have been some agreement, or movement, on the need for a referendum. Neither the northern Government nor the factions in the south are elected. There is a complete absence of democratisation in Sudan. Will the Government press for a referendum at least in the southern states, if not in the whole of Sudan?

I have raised this issue for debate because of the concern of many hon. Members and of the many people outside, especially the groups that support the aid organisations in this country. I look foward very much to the Government's reply.

10.43 pm

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad):** I am grateful to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) for giving the House the timely opportunity to discuss the Sudan. I am sure that the House will be grateful, as I am, for his first-hand account of the situation there, following his recent visit accompanied by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks). I am grateful for his

*[Mr. Alastair Goodlad]*

tribute to the work of Her Majesty's ambassador in the Sudan and his staff, who, like those elsewhere in the diplomatic service, fulfil their tasks with dedication and considerable courage.

I found myself in broad agreement with the hon. Gentleman's assessment of the situation and of the causes of the disastrous condition in which the Sudan finds itself. The hon. Member paints a grim picture, and it is all too clear from the many sources available to us that it is an accurate one.

The root cause of the humanitarian crisis is the civil war which has wracked the country for so long. There will be no lasting solution to the problems in the south unless there is a peace settlement. It is crucial that all sides in the conflict—the Sudanese Government and the rival factions in the south—seize the opportunity afforded by the peace talks under way in Abuja. There can be no military solution. We whole-heartedly support the efforts of the Nigerian Government, who are chairing these talks. The Governments of Uganda and Kenya also continue to play a helpful and constructive role.

It is right that the regional powers should be addressing the problem. But it is also our duty and that of our European partners to give every support to the process. This we have pledged to the Nigerian Government. We have also continued to insist in discussion with the parties —the regime in Khartoum and the rival factions of the south—that they seize the opportunity which now exists. We have put this point strongly to Sudanese Ministers. The international community will not understand if any of the parties fails to make the maximum effort. The SPLA leader, John Garang, received that message when he called in at the Foreign Office last month. The British ambassador who, as the hon. Gentleman said, visited southern Sudan two weeks ago, made the same point clearly to rival southern factions. As I speak, the Danish Minister for Development Co-operation is, as the hon. Gentleman also said, leading a troika delegation—on which we are represented by the permanent secretary at the Overseas Development Administration—on a visit to southern Sudan and Khartoum to underline the message.

The Troika will also—this will be a primary objective —underline the seriousness with which the Community and its member states view the humanitarian crisis. It will underline the massive popular concern throughout the western world for the plight of the Sudanese people. There will be a strong message to the Sudanese Government and to the southern leaders that they must ensure that relief aid reaches all those in need throughout the country. Too often in the past the Government or the southern factions have obstructed relief. It is their duty to facilitate and to provide all necessary support and protection for the non-governmental organisations that distribute it. I have to say that in recent months it has been the fighting between factions in the south rather than action by the Sudanese forces that has obstructed our distribution.

The hon. Member referred to the UN relief operation in south Sudan. That is known as Operation Lifeline Sudan —OLS—and it covers a large area of over 100,000 sq. miles of scattered settlements and towns. Much of the area is swampy during the wet season, making some areas inaccessible by road or airlift. Since the beginning of this year, OLS has had agreement from all parties to the conflict to reactivate the relief network to more than 30 locations by air, river, road and rail. That is a complex operation requiring careful assessments to determine the needs and priorities of each area and then to establish the right delivery and distribution systems. The operaton has been disrupted by continuing hostilities, largely by the SPLA factions, which has brought further misery to the civilian population, and destroyed some relief facilities.

The United Nations agencies of the OLS and the international NGOs—non-governmental organisations— have shown courage and tenacity in maintaining relief services, but much remains to be done to relieve the suffering in the most severely affected areas. We await a full report of the visit of the EC troika Development Ministers. But they have already reported that the OLS has done a great deal to alleviate the suffering of more than 600,000 people at risk from shortages of food, medicines and other basic necessities. Those people will need more help to piece together their disrupted lives. Closer co-operation between all those involved and a willingness to give priority to humanitarian aid are essential next steps. The troika is continuing its report on how this can now be achieved. We have provided nearly £23 million since OLS was established in 1989, and we shall now consider ways in which we can continue to help those in need.

**Mr. Worthington:** I realise that the Minister cannot directly criticise UN operations. However, there have been some very savage criticisms in the press, particularly in *The Independent*, about the competence of the UN operation in Kenya serving southern Sudan. Will the Minister undertake to look into those criticisms and the references to four co-ordinators for seven or eight planes and to the fact that the UN cuts its activities down when the NGOs are willing to carry on? Those criticisms applied in Somalia where international NGOs were willing to continue, but the UN services backed off from Somalia. Those criticisms must be answered.

**Mr. Goodlad:** I undertake to examine the criticisms that have been made. However, I do not wish to comment this evening on whether they are valid. I will leave it at that for the moment.

I should like to take a moment here to pay a tribute, which I am sure will be supported by the hon. Gentleman, to the British relief workers in the Sudan. The account we received from the British ambassador on his visit to the south this month vividly describes the devotion and courage of hundreds of volunteers, many of them young —including many girls—working for relief agencies such as Save the Children, Oxfam, Care, Concern, Goal and others. They live in conditions of appalling deprivation and, in many cases, considerable danger. Their efforts are essential to the delivery of relief. They have saved the lives of countless Sudanese. Their selflessness is magnificent and humbling to witness.

Her Majesty's Government have committed about £65 million for humanitarian assistance since November 1990 including our share of EC aid. All of that is channelled through the United Nations or non-governmental organisations. We were the second largest donor of bilateral food aid last year. We attached no political strings to that. The priority is to save life and meet basic needs. In addition, we gave our full support to the appointment by the United Nations Secretary-General last

month of the Italian diplomat, Mr. Traxler, as senior co-ordinator for the Sudan. He could have an important role in co-ordinating international humanitarian assistance. It is important, as we have made very clear to them, that the Sudanese Government stop procrastinating on this appointment. They should welcome it and they should receive Mr. Traxler for discussions in Khartoum as soon as possible.

The hon. Gentleman referred to human rights. The Sudanese Government like to claim that their appalling reputation on human rights is the result of some form of international propaganda conspiracy against them; and that we play a leading role in a campaign of falsification. Of course that is not the case. There is overwhelming evidence, as the hon. Gentleman said, from many sources of systematic abuse of human rights throughout Sudan, of the regime's lack of respect for fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion, of brutal interrogation and of enforced movement of population, to which I will refer in a moment. These abuses occur not only in the south. There are persistent and ugly stories of persecution of minorities in the Nuban hills. Obviously, I cannot give the House details of that because the Sudanese Government do not allow sufficient access to the area.

The hon. Gentleman also quite rightly drew attention to the fact that it is not only in the south that the people of the Sudan are enduring misery. Many Sudanese, rendered destitute by civil war and drought, have sought sanctuary around the cities of Khartoum and Kosti ekeing out a meagre living where they can. The visible evidence of large-scale deprivation around the capital has prompted the Government to pursue a policy of forcible relocation of more than 700,000 displaced people to more remote sites, without basic facilities or reasonable access to employment. The Government have also restricted the access of those people to humanitarian assistance.

We and other aid donors have called on the Government of Sudan to halt those inhumane policies. We have sought to replace them with planned, voluntary resettlement to properly prepared sites and pressed for increased access by international NGOs to provide humanitarian assistance where it is needed. We have also provided practical support with grants of about £1·5 million to British NGOs to support their relief programmes.

The settlements are still being bulldozed, however, and families uprooted. The EC troika Ministers are visiting one of the sites today to see conditions for themselves and to renew efforts to secure improved conditions for displaced people throughout Sudan.

That the evidence against the Sudanese Government's overall record is widespread and conclusive is reflected in the remarkable vote in the United Nations General Assembly in December, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, when a resolution highly critical of the Sudanese record was adopted by 104 votes to eight. We co-sponsored that resolution and worked hard to secure its adoption. We also co-sponsored a resolution earlier this year in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights which secured the appointment of a rapporteur to investigate the human rights situation in Sudan on a public basis. That is an important step. We shall continue to do everything we can to keep the spotlight of the world on Sudan in the hope of bringing about change. There have been signs that the regime does react to international pressure. There have been promises to improve co-operation on the distribution of aid. In recent weeks, the regime has also declared a ceasefire in the south. Those signs are, obviously, to be welcomed.

Affection is felt in the House and in the country, traditionally, for the people of the Sudan. Our shared destiny goes back a long way. The colonial legacy comprised mutual respect, rather than bitterness. That makes the turmoil and the misery experienced in the Sudan all the harder for us to contemplate. We will continue to do all that we can to help. I wish that I could assure the hon. Gentleman and the House that I was wholly confident that we could expect a sustained improvement in the attitude of the Sudanese Government and the warring factions to the vital tasks of peacemaking, rebuilding the shattered infrastructure and protecting the human rights of all Sudanese people.

I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for his service to the House in bringing the issue before it. I assure him that we will continue to press for those vital tasks to be undertaken.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Eleven o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Wednesday 23 June 1993*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

### DOUBLE TAXATION RELIEF

The VICE-CHAMBERLAIN OF HER MAJESTY'S HOUSEHOLD reported her Majesty's Answer to the Address, as follows:

I have received your Addresses praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Uganda), (Ukraine), (India), and (Ghana) Orders 1993 be made in the form of drafts laid before your House. I will comply with your request.

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

### DAWAT-E-HADIYAH BILL

*Lords amendments agreed to.*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Trading Standards Officers

1. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the impact of local government reform on the work of trading standards officers.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin):** The aim of local government reform is to improve the accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of all local government services.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Does the Minister accept that an increase in the number of local authorities with trading standards powers will mean their having to set up their own specialist teams to deal with specific sectors of trade? How does he intend to ensure that that does not exacerbate the current national shortage of qualified trading standards officers, and that the money will be available to provide the extra numbers required?

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The hon. Gentleman prejudges the Local Government Boundary Commission. That is a dangerous thing for him to do. I am aware of concern about small unitary authorities providing training standards services. However, the reform process involves extensive consultation and affords an ample opportunity for any potential difficulties to be anticipated and solutions developed. The hon. Gentleman's own borough council is a unitary authority, and perhaps he is concerned because it does not provide a good service. That would not be surprising, as it is Labour controlled.

**Mr. Waller:** Is my hon. Friend aware that the joint committee arrangement that enables the five districts in West Yorkshire to run a combined countywide trading standards service is regarded as successful? Does he agree that the range of expertise required to fulfil the wide responsibilities that trading standards officers have these days makes the economies of scale afforded by joint arrangements most valuable, and that that should be considered in the context of the Local Government Commission's recommendations?

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. His example shows how joint arrangements can work successfully. The matter can be considered in the context of the proposals of the Local Government Commission, when the House eventually decides on them.

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** Does the Minister realise that when the Government abolished the metropolitan county councils there was a surge in consumer frauds, counterfeit goods and activities by loan sharks? Does he recall that Tory councils, such as Westminster today, have slashed their budgets for consumer protection? Will he answer the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) asked: what will he do to ensure that the 220 vacancies for professional trading standards officers are filled immediately?

**Mr. McLoughlin:** That is a damning indictment of Barking and Dagenham, Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Hounslow, Islington, Lewisham, Merton, Southwark and Waltham Forest, which are all Labour controlled. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that those authorities are incompetent in carrying out their duties?

### Manufacturing (North-East)

2. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to strengthen the manufacturing base of the north-east.

**The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury):** My Department's policies and programmes are aimed at strengthening the manufacturing base of all regions.

**Mr. Mandelson:** Is the Minister aware of the high expectations among people in the north-east of the Government's new industry policy following the Chancellor's Mansion House speech last week? When the Chancellor was asked for details of that policy at Question Time last Thursday, he said that he could not pre-empt the work of the President of the Board of Trade. What would the Chancellor have been pre-empting?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I hoped that the hon. Gentleman would recognise what was done for industry in the recent Budget of my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), which was much appreciated by industry. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is also well aware of the initiatives that my Department has taken and is continuing to take in dialogue and partnership with industry to broaden and strengthen Britain's manufacturing base.

**Mr. Bates:** Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the 50 north-east manufacturing firms that met in Middlesbrough on Monday of this week to launch the Teesside Manufacturing Challenge? Is he aware that

that excellent initiative is a self-help initiative designed to fund manufacturing apprenticeships at the excellent Teesside Training Enterprise, Ltd., which already provides similar apprenticeships for more than 600 young people in the region? Is not that further evidence, if it were needed, of the dynamism, vitality and foresight of manufacturing industry in the north-east?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** It is indeed, and I am happy to join my hon. Friend in congratulating the private sector on the initiative, which has the ambitious target of doubling manufacturing output and has rightly identified training as one sector which needs attention and improvement if the target is to be met.

**Mr. Jack Thompson:** Is the Minister aware of the vast number of skilled personnel in the northern part of the northern region who are unemployed? The result is that skills related to the shipyards, mines and heavy engineering are now decaying as there are no longer the skilled personnel to pass on their skills. That is a major problem in that part of the region along the Tyne valley and Northumberland, which is not receiving the necessary response from the Government. I accept the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson), who represents a constituency in the southern part of the northern region. Instead of Ministers making a two-hour visit to the region—which the Minister and his colleagues have done—would it not be better if they visited the region, perhaps during the recess, for two or three days or even two or three weeks to discover the truth of the northern region?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I know that the hon. Gentleman is concerned about such issues. He will be aware that there has been too high a level of unemployment in that region for a long time—since before the last world war. We have discussed the issue and my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy has been to look at the position on the ground, and will be visiting the district again soon. We shall continue with a range of initiatives, about which the hon. Gentleman is aware, to do all that we can to help to provide employment opportunities for those wanting jobs in his region and throughout the north-east.

**Mr. Devlin:** Is my right hon. Friend aware of the high concentration of manufacturing businesses in the north-east of England that have already achieved BS5750? Is that not part and parcel of the excellent initiative that the Government have pursued in bringing one third of all inward investment to the European Community into this country? The emphasis on quality, which is now moving through north-east manufacturing business at all levels, will enable them to compete much more strongly in future.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** My hon. Friend is right to identify the importance of quality as one way in which we can achieve success for our manufacturing industry. He is also right to recognise the contribution to jobs in the north-east made by inward investment. That contribution will continue to be made by inward investment, because the Government believe in promoting it.

## Post Office

3. **Ms Estelle Morris:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to make a statement on the future of the Post Office.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** No decisions have yet been taken on the future organisation and structure of the Post Office; a statement will be made to the House once decisions have been taken.

**Ms Morris:** Does the Minister realise how unsatisfactory his reply is? Does he further realise that we have been waiting almost a year for the Government's plans on the future of Parcelforce and the structure of the Post Office? Does he accept that that unjustfiable delay is the worst possible environment for the Post Office to operate in? Will he take this opportunity to acknowledge that the Post Office is popular, successful and profitable, and that the best way in which he can help it is to leave it alone?

**Mr. McLoughlin:** It is rather typical of the Opposition to oppose any changes. They are following their usual practice of opposing the changes that we have introduced in the nationalised industries and nationalised structures over the past 14 years. It is rather a pity that the hon. Lady did not take time to praise the Post Office for the way in which it showed increased profits yesterday and announced a very good annual report.

**Mr. Dover:** Is not it true that the Post Office is currently constrained in its ability to invest because it has to compete with other nationalised bodies? Is not there a real risk of the sub-post office network closing because there are restrictions on what those post offices are allowed to do? Would it not be by far the best bet to opt for privatisation, when all those restrictions will be removed?

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As I have said, we are still considering several points. With regard to Post Office Counters Ltd., of the 20,000 post offices, 19,000 are in private ownership.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** Will the Minister recognise that a new pressure group for the Post Office was launched last week called PPS—Protecting Postal Services? That pressure group has been founded because there is widespread concern about the Government's intentions in relation to the future of the Post Office. Would not it be helpful if the Minister relaxed the external financing limits so that the Post Office can invest? The Minister lifted restrictions to allow sub-post offices to develop their services. However, further delay on the ideological privatisation of the Post Office is not what is needed: what is needed is the continuation of the service that is so necessary for urban and rural communities throughout the United Kingdom.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I am not quite sure what the hon. Gentleman is talking about, because 19,000 of the sub-post offices are already in private hands and therefore have no restrictions whatsoever.

**Mr. Page:** I congratulate the Post Office on its recent and most successful figures, but when my hon. Friend the Minister considers the future of the Post Office, will he set in place a structure that will attack the present estimated deficit of some £400 million to £500 million in losses through fraud and organised crime in respect of the distribution of benefits and pensions?

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. His work on the Public Accounts Committee provides him with extra experience of these areas. The Government remain committed to the maintenance of a nationwide

network of post offices. It would not be appropriate at this time to prejudice contractual negotiations between Post Office Counters Ltd. and Government Departments. However, total Government business transacted by Post Office Counters Ltd has increased over the past three years and is expected to increase this year.

**Mr. Cousins:** Does the Minister accept that it is a disgrace that, after a year, no conclusions have been reached and there have been no statements to Parliament? How does he propose to celebrate the first anniversary of the Post Office review—with the price hikes, loss of investment and export business and the loss of tens of thousands of jobs which the chairman of the Post Office predicted yesterday? Is not the Government's policy on the matter now a combination of fumble, fright and fat fees for consultants while the British people, the British Post Office and British business suffer?

**Mr. McLoughlin:** No.

**Sir Michael Grylls:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the best way to improve the service from the Post Office is to encourage competition? What plans does my hon. Friend have to do just that?

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As I said earlier, we are considering a number of options in the review. Some of the points that my hon. Friend has made will be very much borne in mind.

## Warship Yards

4. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans his Department now has to ask the European Commission for access to the intervention funds for British warship yards; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I asked Commissioner van Miert on 26 May to reconsider the circumstances under which British warship building yards might become eligible for the shipbuilding intervention fund.

**Mr. Clelland:** It is regrettable that the President of the Board of Trade cannot be here to deal with this matter and we sympathise with him about his illness—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] My hon. Friends must be patient. There are thousands of people in this country whose health has also suffered as a result of 14 years of Tory Government, but they are not being looked after quite as well as the President of the Board of Trade.

Is the Minister aware that what the people of Tyneside now want from him is direct action? He should get across to Brussels, speak to the Commission and obtain the preventive medicine which is needed to relieve the stress on the workers of Swan Hunter. As the Minister's right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will no doubt now confirm, it is far better to prevent collapse in the first place than to have to live with the hope of recovery afterwards.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said about my right hon. Friend—I am only sorry that he ruined it by what he said subsequently. As for Swan Hunter's eligibility for the shipbuilding intervention fund, I wrote to the Commissioner. I have not yet had a reply to my letter. I hope that it will be a reply in the affirmative. If it is not, I shall certainly be ready to go to Brussels to discuss the matter with him, because I share the hon. Gentleman's belief that eligibility for the shipbuilding intervention fund would help the receiver in his task of finding a buyer for the Swan Hunter yard.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** Has not Swan Hunter had a unique capability among British yards over the years in being dual-capable, inasmuch as, in addition to building some of the very best warships that the Royal Navy has ever received, it has built geographic survey vessels for the Antarctic, cable-laying ships and auxiliaries? In those circumstances, how can the Commission of the European Community rightfully deny intervention funding to that yard? Is it not about time that Her Majesty's Government did what is in the interests of the British shipbuilding industry and the British nation, rather than always acting at the behest of Brussels?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I am sure that my hon. Friend would like the Commission to exercise restraint in giving state aid in other countries of the Community. Quite rightly, the shipbuilding intervention fund is regarded as a state aid and is, therefore, controlled under the seventh directive. If we were to go against the arrangements, we should be doing what we sometimes rightly complain about other countries doing.

My hon. Friend will also be aware that the arrangements under which warship building yards are not eligible for the shipbuilding intervention fund were approved by the Commission in 1985 because we had considerable state aid to the shipbuilding industry at the time, which we agreed with the Commission on the understanding that warship building yards would not be eligible for the shipbuilding intervention fund. I have approached the Commissioner now because I believe that the circumstances have changed sufficiently to justify reconsideration of that ruling.

**Mr. Bell:** The House will welcome the Minister's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland). The Minister will know that there are those who wish to buy Swan Hunter's yard. Will he confirm that Swan Hunter has a role to play in the building of warships and merchant vessels? If he could see Commissioner Karel van Miert very early on, he would give the country and the people of the north-east the impression that his Department is serious, anxious and positive about the matter.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, the receiver has received a number of strong expressions of interest from reputable parties for the Swan Hunter yard. We are keeping in the closest possible touch with the receiver and we will certainly do all that we can to help him in his task of finding a buyer. I recognise that the Swan Hunter yard has had great achievements in the past and has great skills in the present which could be used in warship and merchant shipbuilding.

## Trade Trends

5. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on recent trends in *(a)* exports and *(b)* imports; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** In the past 12 months, export volumes of goods have risen by 6·6 per cent., while imports have risen by only 5 per cent. This sustains the marked improvements in our export performance in recent years,

and I know that United Kingdom exporters will build on those gains as they reap the benefits of our improved competitiveness.

**Mr. Dickens:** Does my hon. Friend believe that those encouraging figures are based on the advantage that the United Kingdom has from the floating pound, or is it possible that some British companies are selling abroad at a favourable price because of the shallow domestic market —in other words, dumping? If that is the case, I would be a very happy man. We would be giving many nations a taste of their own medicine, which the textile companies in my constituencies have received for many years.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I am not sure whether I would go along with my hon. Friend in respect of United Kingdom companies dumping. United Kingdom companies are winning export markets in very competitive areas, and I am sure that we all welcome that.

**Mr. Purchase:** Despite the Minister's assurances on exports, is not it true that, although there has been a welcome start of a recovery in manufacturing, imports are set to grow at twice the rate for exports that was given by the Minister? Is not that due entirely to the Conservative party's antipathy to manufacturing and the wipe-out of capacity that has taken place during the past 13 years of their rule?

**Mr. McLoughlin:** It will come as no surprise to the hon. Gentleman that I neither follow nor recognise his figures. The hon. Gentleman talks about a reduction in manufacturing. He represents a Wolverhampton constituency, and will remember well that British Steel Bilston closed down under the last Labour Government.

**Mr. Batiste:** Is not one of the most important factors in our improving export performance the fact that, over the past decade, we have had the lion's share of inward investment into the EC? Is not it time that we acknowledged that the best companies in the world believe that Britain is the best place in Europe in which to manufacture?

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. My constituency benefited from a huge inward investment of £770 million from Toyota. That investment could have gone anywhere in Europe, but Toyota chose the United Kingdom because it recognised this country as the best place to invest.

**Ms Short:** Will the Minister admit that we have a disastrous problem in the British economy, as we are losing £1 billion on our balance of payments every week? After 14 years of Tory rule, the British economy is in deep crisis because our manufacturing—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members should not be so ignorant. These are the facts. The British economy is in deep crisis and the strategy of the Government towards manufacturing has been a disaster. The economy will not prosper unless the Government adopt an industrial strategy that will encourage long-term investment in manufacturing. Will the Minister admit that that is the truth and say whether the Government have any strategy to deal with the crisis?

**Mr. McLoughlin:** We had a very good debate only the other Friday about the factors contributing to Britain's competitive advantage. Between 1974 and 1979, our competitiveness fell dramatically, and the Government have gone a long way towards improving the position.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) referred to exports. Compared with the first quarter of 1993, exports of medical and pharmaceutical equipment are up by 28 per cent; of power generation equipment by 42 per cent; of office machinery by 45 per cent; of machine tools by 47 per cent; of radar equipment by 60 per cent; and of computer hardware by 70 per cent. I should have thought that even the hon. Lady would regard that as good news.

**Mr. Butcher:** Does my hon. Friend agree that, of all the countries in the European Community, Britain more than any other shares with the United States a common attitude and a common policy to free trade? Does he therefore agree that Britain is uniquely placed to lead a discussion with the United States Government on the creation of a North Atlantic free trade area encompassing north America and the EEC, which would have the advantage for us of stimulating the western coasts of western Europe and for the Americans of stimulating the north-eastern seaboard of America, which is currently a depressed area?

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The Government believe in removing or minimising all obstacles to trade. We will certainly consider my hon. Friend's suggestion.

### Consumer Guarantees

6. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the date on which he received the last representations on consumer guarantees; and when he expects to announce the results of his consultation.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The last response was received in April of this year. However, the Director General of Fair Trading has embarked on a further study of consumer guarantees, and the EC Commission is also preparing a discussion paper. We have thought it best to await the outcome of these initiatives before making any announcement ourselves.

**Mr. McKelvey:** For heaven's sake, the DTI has been sitting on these responses since October—it has had nine months in which to consider these matters. Does not the Minister feel that British firms would gain an advantage if we had proper and effective consumer guarantees? We should then be more than able to compete with the import of foreign goods and thus do something to help our balance of trade deficit.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Since April, when representations were last made, a number of matters have moved on, and we have thought it best to await the outcome of the initiatives that I described to the hon. Gentleman.

### Business Regulation

7. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to remove unnecessary administrative and regulatory burdens on businesses.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton):** Departments are conducting comprehensive reviews of regulations for which they are responsible and will shortly provide me

with their candidates for repeal and simplification. Seven private sector business task forces are producing their own hit lists, which I hope will be radical and extensive.

Among many other initiatives, we are determined to force EC institutions to recognise the job-destroying effect of over-regulation from Brussels and roll back the tide of Euro-regulation.

**Mrs. Winterton:** Is my hon. Friend aware that regulation is stifling business? Does he agree with the Institute of Chartered Accountants, which seeks to abolish burdensome auditing requirements on small firms? Is he aware that, when businesses register for value added tax, they are sent a 180-page book, a 20-page leaflet, a 17-page leaflet, a 14-page leaflet, a 12-page leaflet and two six-page leaflets, all of which warn of dire consequences if the contents are not fully understood? When do the Government intend to put their money where their mouth is and reduce burdensome regulations on business?

**Mr. Hamilton:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on her enthusiasm for the cause which I have embraced. I am most grateful to her for coming to the House today with that catalogue to demonstrate to hon. Members on both sides of the House the difficulties that small companies must endure before they can even get on with the business of trading at all. As my hon. Friend will know, there is a consultation exercise under way at present, which we hope will lead to the removal of an important but unnecessary regulation—the requirement for a compulsory audit for small companies. I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for the strong support that she gives to this worthwhile cause.

**Mr. McAllion:** Is the Minister aware that, if the Government persist with their policy of promoting inward investment on the back of reducing what they call the burdens of labour and social costs, they will find themselves in competition with the likes of Thailand, where the social costs are so low that health and safety regulations are generally ignored and where recently more than 200 workers lost their lives in a factory fire? Does the Minister understand that although that policy may make Britain a place in which it is easy to do business, it will also make it a place in which workers' lives are held to be cheap and of no account? Labour Members want no part of that strategy.

**Mr. Hamilton:** The Government are concerned with inward investment. What the hon. Gentleman and his party would produce is not only outward investment but the export of jobs. As the Member for Dundee, East, the hon. Gentleman has significant experience in these matters because, as a result of his neanderthal attitude and that of the Transport and General Workers Union, a large number of jobs that would otherwise have gone to Dundee did not go there.

### Manufacturing Base

8. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to prevent the erosion of the United Kingdom's manufacturing base.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The success of United Kingdom industry is the primary concern of my Department and all the policies of the Department are directed towards that end.

**Mr. Winterton:** Although I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's response to my question, is he aware that the United Kingdom continues to export its manufacturing base, whether in traditional industries or even in high-tech ones? If he wants chapter and verse, I will give it to him. Does my right hon. Friend accept that the way in which the Government can improve the position of United Kingdom manufacturing industries, which are the only real source of genuine economic growth in this country, is to achieve a further modest reduction in interest rates, introduce 100 per cent. capital allowances and give my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer every encouragement in his Mansion House speech to have a Budget in November for economic growth?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I know that my hon. Friend has great enthusiasm for manufacturing industry, but I hope that he will not entirely neglect the contributions made to employment and, indeed, exports by other aspects of British business. He made suggestions which are, as he knows, matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor. My hon. Friend referred to exporting our manufacturing base. I am not sure to what he is referring, but I hope that he will join me in congratulating British manufacturing exporters on their achievement in increasing exports by 6·5 per cent. last year in extremely difficult world trade conditions.

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** Will the Minister accept that the Under-Secretary of State for Technology has a selective recognition of trade figures, because the deficit grew in April and May, with imports growing by 0·6 per cent. and exports falling? The basic cause of that is the size of our manufacturing base. When will the Government have some underlying strategy to improve the situation?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** May we be clear about exports? Total exports, excluding oil and erratics—which is the most sensible way of looking at them—were at a record level in the first quarter of this year and 6·5 per cent. higher than a year earlier. Having said that, of course we all share the objective of broadening our manufacturing base and enabling British manufacturing industry not only to increase exports but to gain a larger share of the home market.

**Mr. Knapman:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that our manufacturing base will be helped by the initiative introduced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to cut red tape and bureaucracy? Is my right hon. Friend the Minister aware that, according to the Library, 265 new rules, regulations and directives will come from Brussels in the near future? Can we help my right hon. Friend best by supporting or by opposing those directives?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** My hon. Friend is right to identify excessive regulation and over-zealous application of bureaucratic rules as damaging to all industry, but particularly to small industry. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs is doing a magnificent job. We all wish him the greatest success in wielding the axe against regulations that are unnecessary, excessive or over-bureaucratic, from whatever direction they come—Whitehall or Brussels.

**Mr. Bennett:** Does the Minister agree that one of the most successful parts of manufacturing industry in Britain is our mining engineering equipment industry? Does he realise that it faces devastation of the home market as a result of so many rapid closures of pits? What does he intend to do to help it to win export orders, especially in eastern Europe where there is clearly a major need for mining engineering equipment?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I recognise that our mining engineering industry has considerable skills. My hon. Friend the Minister for Energy has met representatives of the industry and is working closely with the industry to help it at a time when obviously there has been a reduction in demand for deep-mining equipment in Britain and internationally.

**Mr. Clappison:** Will my right hon. Friend join me in acknowledging the warm welcome that has been given by exporters of manufactured goods to the improvements in the Export Credits Guarantee Department scheme announced in the autumn statement and the Budget? Does he agree that those exporters who benefit from the scheme have a vital role to play in developing and sustaining our improving export trend?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend. As he knows, the announcement in the Budget of additional ECGD support followed earlier announcements at the end of last year and a reduction in rates by the Department earlier last year. There have been successive moves to improve the service provided by ECGD to our exporters. I am glad to say that our exporters have responded magnificently to that encouragement.

## Brewing Industry

9. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received alleging abuses of monopoly power within the brewery industry; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I have received several representations about the brewing industry, but these have mainly been about the treatment of tenants. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence of abuse of monopoly power or other anti-competitive practices, it is open to him to raise these with the Director General of Fair Trading.

**Mr. Wareing:** Is the Minister aware of the so-called white knight policy administered by Inntrepreneur estates on behalf of Grand Metropolitan breweries, which seeks not only to circumvent the Government's Beer Orders but to extinguish the rights of its tenants in the brewery trade? Indeed, every year, 9 per cent. of those pubs go into bankruptcy. An examination of the document will show that the company's practice is sheer exploitation of the tenants and a dereliction of its duty under the Beer Orders. Will the Minister carry out a full public investigation into the activities of that brewery and that scheme?

**Mr. Hamilton:** The Department was sent anonymously a copy of the document to which the hon. Gentleman referred. It has been examined by my officials. Following a minute examination of what it contained, they discovered no apparent breaches of the Beer Orders.

As the hon. Gentleman will know, as a result of the intervention of Ministers, which secured sympathetic treatment of the tenants of many companies—not only the one to which he referred—we have managed to secure a significant improvement in the lot of many people who were otherwise worried about the circumstances in which they found themselves. It must be in the interests of brewers to develop a constructive relationship with their tenants. I hope that Grand Metropolitan will continue in the course of action that Ministers have urged on it.

**Mr. John Greenway:** Does my hon. Friend agree that, if there is one monopoly in the brewing industry that people should welcome, it is the small brewers of real ale? Does he agree that small brewers, such as Malton brewery in my constituency, provide an excellent beer for visitors to Ryedale during the summer months? If there is a problem in the brewing industry, we should address the Treasury about it to ensure that our brewers have fair and equal treatment under the tax regime affecting beer

**Mr. Hamilton:** I am a great personal supporter of the British brewing industry. This evening, I shall attend the launch meeting of the all-party beer group and would welcome the presence there of as many hon. Members as possible to enjoy the wonderful product, unique to this country, which offers so much enjoyment and so many employment opportunities to so many people.

**Mr. Fatchett:** When the price of beer has gone up above the rate of inflation, when consumer choice is still restricted and when many tenants are being pushed out of their home and business by the practices of companies such as Grand Metropolitan, why have the Government taken such a soft line with the brewers? Is the real explanation that the brewers have always been large donors to Conservative party funds and that Sir Allen Sheppard, the chairman of Grand Metropolitan, is a member of the management committee of the Conservative party? Is not this another case of the Government standing against small businesses and in favour of the vested interests that contribute to their funds?

**Mr. Hamilton:** I think that it is the hon. Gentleman who sounds as if he is under the influence. I doubt very much whether his evaluation accords with that of the brewers, who certainly do not think that the Government have let them off lightly. As the hon. Gentleman would know if he bothered to examine the facts, in many respects there is more competition in the industry today than before the supply of beer report. The development of independent pub chains in the industry is significant and is a consequence of the Beer Orders. Does the hon. Gentleman know, for example, of the significant reduction in the amount of beer sold through tied pubs and that recently the wholesale price of beer has diminished significantly? Perhaps one reason why the retail price of beer has increased is that pub chains and, in particular, breweries that have maintained tied pubs have greatly increased the facilities available on their premises, the costs of which must be recouped.

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** Having tried to implement the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report that suggested that our former regime was anti-competitive for beer, in trying to help the small brewers, surely my hon. Friend realises that the small brewers do not think that our intervention has been helpful. Will he reconsider whether

we should simply remove the Beer Orders and allow the brewers, including the small brewers, to run the market as they did previously, when it was more competitive?

**Mr. Hamilton:** The best thing that the Government can do for the time being is nothing. The brewing industry has been through a period of convulsion, which, as far as I can see, has not been welcomed by any party. Consequently, I am not in a position to announce that we shall review the Beer Orders. They became effective fully only last November, so it is too early to determine the full consequences. We now need a period of stability to allow the industry to settle down. In due course, further inquiries will be instituted by the European Commission when the review of the block exemption for tied pubs comes along in a few years' time. These issues will not go away, but it would not be right for the Government to stir things up yet again at this time.

## Coal Subsidies

10. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many requests he has received from British Coal for a portion of the subsidy for expanding the coal market.

**The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar):** My right hon. Friend and I have not received any specific requests for subsidy from either British Coal or private sector producers.

**Mr. Etherington:** Does the Minister accept that that is likely to be the position for the foreseeable future? Does not he understand that, in effect, this subsidy was offered merely as a panacea to Tory Back Benchers who objected to the pit closures? Was not the White Paper whose proposals included the subsidy based on efforts to thwart the many positive aspects of the Select Committee's report, which had widespread support among the population?

**Mr. Eggar:** The hon. Gentleman seems conveniently to ignore the Select Committee's major recommendation—that the Government should make a subsidy available to bridge the gap between the cost of British-produced coal and world import prices. That is exactly what we did. My understanding is that, at present, independent coal producers and British Coal are having discussions with the generators about the possibility of agreeing additional contracts for the sale of coal. It is clear that, until those negotiations are at an advanced stage, it will not be appropriate for the Government to get into the business of handing out subsidies. We cannot do that in an open-ended way.

**Dr. Michael Clark:** Does my hon. Friend agree that, following publication of the White Paper, adequate financial provision was made to assist the British deep-mined coal industry? Does he share my disappointment that none of this funding has yet been called upon? Can he assure the House that the two major generators, which are major users of fossil fuel, are not abusing their dominant position and are aware of their national responsibilities?

**Mr. Eggar:** I very much agree with the sentiment behind my hon. Friend's question, which concerns the clear national responsibility of generators. During the coal review, the generators made it quite clear to my right hon. Friend and me that they believed they would be in a position to contract for additional supplies of coal. We look to them to fulfil that indication. It is clear that, at a time when they have large stockpiles—coal burn is normally low at this time of the year—it is difficult for them to contract for supplies. However, we hope that they will enter into serious negotiations in the very near future.

**Mr. Cohen:** Will the Minister be honest with the House and the country and admit that the Select Committee's recommendations were totally ignored in terms of the central point that the President of the Board of Trade made on 13 October—unless the market for coal is enlarged, there will be no extra sales? The Government negated their responsibility. They gave a fix to Back Benchers and deceived the country by failing to address the central question of a larger market for coal.

**Mr. Eggar:** The hon. Gentleman simply cannot get away with rewriting the Select Committee's report, although he tries to do so time after time. The Select Committee did not recommend a restriction on gas stations; nor did it recommend the closure of Magnox stations. The hon. Gentleman should not go around misleading the country about what the Select Committee said; he should refer to the words of its report.

**Mrs. Peacock:** Is my hon. Friend aware that the two generating companies are refusing to negotiate any further contracts with British Coal unless the price is well below 80p a gigajoule? Is not that ridiculous when world prices are around 120p a gigajoule? The companies are looking for huge Government subsidies. Would not those simply transfer taxpayers' money into the companies' profits?

**Mr. Eggar:** The issue of the exact level of the world price is very complex. [HON MEMBERS: "Oh."] There is no point in the refusal of Opposition Members to recognise the marketplace. They cannot simply pluck a figure out of the air and claim that it is the market price. It was precisely because there are different perceptions of the world market price that, about 10 days ago in the House, I answered a question by saying that we were inviting from British Coal and from the independent coal producers indications of their production costs and of what they thought the world price was. Once we have received their responses, we shall be able to enter into discussions about the appropriate level of subsidy.

**Mr. Robin Cook:** Does not the Minister know that, since March, British Coal has been offering extra contracts at 40 per cent. below the core contract price? At that knock-down price, the generators can produce electricity more cheaply than they can from gas, nuclear power or even imported coal available on long-term contracts. Does not the fact that the generators would still rather ask consumers to pay for electricity produced from more expensive sources provide the final proof, if any were needed, that the market is rigged against coal?

Why does not the Minister admit that the White Paper was a fraud and was never intended to save the jobs of miners at the 12 pits, but was intended to save the jobs of Ministers in the House?

**Mr. Eggar:** Why does not the hon. Gentleman, for once, make his position clear? Does he want to close down

the nuclear industry and the North sea oil industry and stop the development of gas-fired stations? Where does he want jobs to be lost?

**Mr. Cormack:** Is my hon. Friend aware that there is widespread feeling in this country that British Coal has not been as zealous in protecting the industry over which it has charge as it might have been?

**Mr. Eggar:** I hear what my hon. Friend says. It is because of the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), both today and previously, that the Government have determined, and British Coal has agreed, to go forward with the sale and lease of pits to the private sector that British Coal does not wish to continue to operate. It has already advertised nine such pits for leasing, and I understand that there has been a degree of interest from the private sector in examining further the possibility of taking them on.

## Polly Peck

11. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about recent discussions between his Department and the administrators of Polly Peck.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** My officials have in the past held, and continue to hold, long meetings with the joint administrators of Polly Peck International plc and their legal advisers in respect of matters arising in and about the proceedings under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 currently being brought against various persons involved in the management of Polly Peck International.

**Mr. O'Hara:** The Minister will be aware that the rise of Polly Peck began in stolen orange groves in occupied northern Cyprus. I know from a previous answer that his Department does not keep statistics of trade with northern Cyprus, but is the Minister aware that, according to recent statistics from the so-called Central Bank of Northern Cyprus, no less than two thirds of exports from that area were to the United Kingdom and that no less than 60 per cent. of those exports were agricultural produce from a subsidiary of Polly Peck? Will the Minister make it clear to the administrators of Polly Peck that those so-called assets of Polly Peck in northern Cyprus belong not to Polly Peck, or to Asil Nadir but, legally, to displaced refugees, such as those from Morphou? Will the Minister at last do something to stop the illegal trade between northern Cyprus and this country?

**Mr. Hamilton:** It behoves all Members of the House, by virtue of the great latitude that parliamentary privilege gives them, not to abuse that privilege and hence prejudice the outcome of any current criminal proceedings. To prejudice those proceedings could result in a failure to convict the guilty.

**Mr. Anthony Coombs:** I appreciate what my hon. Friend has just said, but does he appreciate that many of the assets held by Polly Peck and regarded as its own were actually illegally acquired from Greek Cypriot owners as a result of the Turkish invasion in 1974? Is there not a very strong case, given the recent behaviour of the Turkish Cypriot regime, for the British Government to toughen trade sanctions against the illegal regime in northern Cyprus, particularly on citrus fruits and tourism?

**Mr. Hamilton:** I think that we have strayed a little from the affairs of Polly Peck. I put my hand into the middle of a hornet's nest, which I had not anticipated. My only concern is to ensure that the administration of Polly Peck is conducted as quickly and efficiently as possible, so that creditors of the company are paid out and those who have committed offences are brought to justice as a consequence.

**Mr. Robin Cook:** Is the Minister aware that for the guilty to be convicted, they must first be charged? It is now two years since the administrator discovered seven separate donations to the Conservative party. Can the Minister tell us whether Companies House, the Department of Trade and Industry investigation unit or the Serious Fraud Office have investigated why none of those donations was disclosed in Polly Peck's accounts? If they have been investigated, can the Minister tell us why, in the two years, no charge has been brought for such an obvious breach of the Companies Act 1989?

**Mr. Hamilton:** I can easily explain that to the hon. Gentleman. Whether he will understand is another matter. As he is aware, criminal proceedings are currently outstanding against a number of the directors of Polly Peck. If Asil Nadir returns to this country, he will be subject to charges. As a consequence of being convicted of those charges, it would be possible for the court to disqualify him as a company director for a period of 15 years. As a bankrupt, he is currently disqualified as a company director. As a matter of course, my Department does not seek to impede the way in which the Serious Fraud Office carries out its investigations, because that might prejudice the outcome of proceedings. If we did as the hon. Gentleman suggested, we would prejudice the possibility of bringing Mr. Nadir to justice, because if we were to embark on disqualification proceedings against him at the same time as the Serious Fraud Office, he would inevitably apply to the court for a suspension of proceedings on grounds of prejudice. That could well delay the possibility of bringing the main action against him on which greater and more draconian penalties could be imposed.

**Mr. John Marshall:** Does my hon. Friend agree that it is most unfortunate that Mr. Nadir said that he would co-operate with the administrators of Polly Peck and then sought to frustrate them at every turn? Is not it equally unfortunate that he says at press conferences that he wants justice and then flees from it? Is not it high time that he came back to Britain and faced the music?

**Mr. Hamilton:** I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Mr. Nadir should put up and shut up, and I commend that last piece of advice to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook).

## Coal Industry

12. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the President of Trade what recent discussions he has held with British Coal on the future of the coal-mining industry.

**Mr. Eggar:** My right hon. Friend and I meet members of the board of the British Coal Corporation as necessary to discuss a range of issues.

**Mr. Corbyn:** Will the Minister confirm that, in those discussions, he has talked to British Coal about the principle of market testing the 12 pits? Does he agree that market testing is a cruel con and a deception because the Government have already ensured that there is not a market for that coal and that there is a rigged market against the coal industry? What they are trying to do, and have been trying to do since 1979, is punish miners by closing pits and destroying the coal-mining industry, when it could be a safe and secure source of energy for the next 300 years.

**Mr. Eggar:** The hon. Gentleman would not recognise a market if he fell over it. He simply does not understand that British Coal has to find customers for the coal that it is producing. Currently, about 45 million tonnes of coal is stockpiled, either with the generators or with British Coal. If British Coal is to get additional sales—it has told us that there are additional markets available for coal—it must be able to compete with other forms of electricity generation. Surely the hon. Gentleman recognises that.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Will my hon. Friend remember in all the discussions with British Coal, that gas, nuclear and oil-producing communities are just as important as coal-mining communities? Will he accept that I am grateful for the robust comments that he made earlier, and may I ask him to obey the instruction on my badge, "Don't bash gas"?

**Mr. Eggar:** I always pay close attention to whatever my hon. Friend says.

**Mr. O'Neill:** The Minister said that the difficulty in selling coal to the generators is attributable in part to the summer weather and high levels of stocks. In order that the collieries can sell coal and benefit from the subsidies that he is apparently still prepared to provide for some time, will he be prepared to extend the enhanced redundancy arrangements so that collieries are not closed prematurely before 31 December, when the agreement expires?

**Mr. Eggar:** Clearly, we extended—partly in response to points that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends made—the period up until 31 December. It is too early to say what the future for those terms will be, but we want to allow a proper opportunity for market testing to take place and we want the private sector as well as British Coal to be able to enter into serious discussions with generators. I recognise that we have to give that a reasonable amount of time.

**Mr. Oppenheim:** Bearing in mind that, for decades, British Coal was protected from low-cost imports, that, for decades, it was protected from competition from gas-fired generation and that for decades, the Government insisted that it should be given cosy, Government-inspired contracts with generators, if the market has been rigged, surely it has been rigged in favour of coal. Everyone is concerned about miners' jobs, but should not we remember that there are consumers as well as producers of coal and that if we further rig the market in favour of coal, we will lose jobs in other sectors of the economy that rely on cheap energy?

**Mr. Eggar:** My hon. Friend makes a very good point. The basic core contracts that have been agreed between British Coal and the generators contain a subsidy from British consumers directly to the British Coal Corporation of about £500 million for every year of the contract, making certain assumptions about world prices. In addition, since 1979, some £18 billion of taxpayers' money has gone into the British Coal Corporation on restructuring and other grants. It simply is a complete misrepresentation of the situation to pretend that the market has been rigged against coal. In fact, a considerable subsidy has been available to it for a number of years, both from the Government and the consumer.

# London Specialty Review

3.31 pm

**Mr. David Blunkett** (Sheffield, Brightside) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to make a statement on the conclusion of the London specialty reviews.

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley):** In my statement to the House on 16 February, and in the accompanying document, "Making London Better", I set out the framework for improving the health service in London. The Government's key objectives are clear: to improve the quality of patient services and the health of Londoners, to improve, in particular, family doctor and other community health services and to preserve and enhance London's national and international reputation as a centre of excellence in treatment, teaching and research.

The independent reviews of specialist services were announced at that time in response to a recommendation in the Tomlinson report. They were set up to address a problem that is recognised throughout the health service by professionals, practitioners and beyond—the extensive duplication and fragmentation of specialist services across the capital. There is a wide consensus that accepts that not only is such duplication not cost-effective but that it can inhibit the full potential for excellence in patient care and in teaching and research.

The independent advice from the specialty reviews published today will be an important consideration as we take forward the long overdue changes that London's health service genuinely needs. I am grateful to the chairmen and their teams for their hard work.

Their advice, although important, is only one of many considerations. The process of change is one of evolution and direction, not of imposition. The specialty reviews are not a blueprint for the future. Proposals for improving services are already being developed locally by the institutions themselves, by health authorities and by others directly concerned. They have all shown an impressive degree of commitment to forming practical solutions to London's problems.

The Government believe that it is paramount that proposals are guided by the needs of patients. We shall take decisions on the basis of sensible plans that take the whole picture into account and that will lead to a better health service for London and for Londoners.

There are difficult decisions ahead. As I told the House before, no change is no option. I also recognise the need for acting as swiftly as we reasonably can, not least because uncertainty is in nobody's interest. We will concentrate on inner London, where the most serious problems exist.

The Government have shown their strong commitment to the NHS in London. Seventy eight major new capital developments will take place this year to improve family doctor and local health services. We will invest an extra £170 million in capital development over the next six years, building up primary care services where they are needed. We are targeting a further £10 million this year on reducing waiting times, improving on the one third fall in waits for hospital admissions of more than one year that has been achieved since March 1992.

I want London to have the best specialty centres in the world into the 21st century, alongside other first-class services. To achieve this will require effort, determination and change. The process is well under way. The will exists. The task now is to build on this commitment to build the modern health service that our capital city deserves and demands.

**Mr. Blunkett:** My thanks to you, Madam Speaker, for agreeing to this private notice question. I concur with the Secretary of State in thanking the members of the review groups.

Does she agree that it is not an academic exercise? It is about real patients and real centres of excellence, from training and research at Hammersmith to highly renowned, high productivity at Harefield. Having moved from Tomlinson and the London review to the four Thames regions and beyond, will she tell the House what needs assessment has been carried out to make a judgment against which we, as representatives of the public, can make our decisions?

Will she now acknowledge that Labour Members were right on 16 February to call her statement a "fudge" which misled her own Back Benchers to believe that not many hospitals were threatened and no hidden agenda existed?

How can anyone trust the Secretary of State to provide one extra penny when the Government's whole agenda is cut and closure, when the chairman of the London Implementation Group is suggesting in today's *Evening Standard* that existing funding promises have already been dropped, and when the Secretary of State talks about £170 million—I use her word—"extra" investment in primary and community care and it turns out to be money taken from other areas and not extra to the health service?

How can anyone have faith in the Secretary of State when she refuses to accept responsibility and fails to be accountable? This afternoon she said nothing at all about the specialty reviews. Is the market in charge, is the right hon. Lady in charge or, more likely, is nobody in charge of what is going on? What is the agenda? What is the timetable? How is consultation to be meaningful when one report conflicts and overlaps with another?

Will the Secretary of State now agree to establish a London regional health authority to do the job? Will she agree to pause, to think and to be open and honest with us all? Will she agree to start again?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I am disappointed that the hon. Gentleman seems to take every opportunity to develop a great scare story about the proposals. The hon. Gentleman himself said that the status quo in London is no longer an option. I believe that to be the case. We have set out in "Making London Better" a sensible framework for making decisions, but they need the ownership of local districts, who are the purchasers and commissioners for health care.

We also need to broke a change with the research institutions and the universities because the treatment of patients needs to be considered, as well as research and education. They are certainly extremely complex matters.

The independent reviews play an important part in that decision making, but they are independent, they have declared their independence and will now want to be considered across the service.

The task is to achieve change. There are a great number of discussions under way across London. I commend the

way in which so many have already constructively participated in that. There are also substantial improvements such as the £200 million Chelsea and Westminster hospital that opened only the other day. We have the £11 million approval to go ahead at the Homerton and the improvements to the accident and emergency services at King's College hospital as well as the Royal London.

The hon. Gentleman is always doom laden. The only capital in which he is interested is political capital. We are interested in a health service for the future in London, and the necessary decisions will be made as fast as is reasonably possible.

**Mrs. Marion Roe** (Broxbourne): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the most pressing need in London is for primary health care services to be built up from family doctors and others in the community? Does she also agree that it is very hard to justify such extensive duplication of specialist services when more resources need to be diverted to no less vital services at local level?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** My hon. Friend has identified the issue precisely. That is why, when we announced "Making London Better", we gave a clear commitment that progress would be made only as the primary care services were developed. That is the significance of the 78 capital schemes that are already under way to improve the family health and community services, and the further falls in waiting times.

The duplication and fragmentation of the specialty services will increasingly inhibit the ability of London and Londoners to benefit from the best of modern medical treatment and research. There are too many examples of smaller units duplicating the service provided by a neighbour, involving patients travelling between the services. The specialty reviews identify precisely how we can have those specialist services, but in such a way that they can compete not only nationally but internationally in the future.

**Ms Liz Lynne** (Rochdale): Has the Secretary of State any intention of maintaining national centres of excellence such as Harefield hospital? Does she agree that to break up specialist teams that have been highly successful would be an act of sheer folly? Will she allow us to see the full costings of the reviews, so that we can know the real reasons behind the proposed changes?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** The position is clear. Our proposals are about improving services and strengthening excellence. As the independent reviews made clear, the proposals were not costed; it is now for the London Implementation Group, along with the regions, to say what are achievable and realistic changes.

We shall start in the centre in introducing the changes, but I hope that the process will not take as long as it took St. George's hospital to move from Hyde park corner to Tooting. That took well over 20 years. I do not believe that staff in London's health service could sustain the uncertainty for as long as that.

All agree that change is needed; we want to make that change effectively and well.

**Mr. Roger Sims** (Chislehurst): Is it really a proper use of what will always be limited resources to provide 14 centres for cardiac surgery and 13 for cancer treatment in London? Does it not make sense to try to concentrate resources in a more limited number of areas, for the benefit of the patient?

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the reviews are simply advice, and not firm proposals—which is how parts of the media have already interpreted them?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** My hon. Friend has got it exactly right. The reviews consist of independent advice. There is, however, widespread agreement that the size of London's specialist services inhibits their ability to achieve the excellence that many would wish to achieve. As I have said, there has been wide support for our introduction of what all will agree is complex and difficult change. The president of the Royal College of Physicians, for example, said that the proposals in the specialty reviews were "fair, reasonable and rational".

**Mr. Peter Shore** (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Among the recommendations are proposals to close the Queen Elizabeth hospital for children—a 130-bed hospital—and to transfer its services to the Royal London hospital, which has capacity for only 50 beds. I do not know how that can improve the services available to sick children in north-east London.

At the same time, the closure of Bart's—particularly that of its accident and emergency department—will mean that more patients will attend the London accident and emergency department. As the right hon. Lady well knows, only four months ago the accident and emergency department of the Mile End hospital was closed. Can she at least guarantee that there will be proper consultation with all concerned before any decisions are made, and that no closure or transfer will take place until alternative and adequate facilities have been put in their place?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I give the right hon. Gentleman an absolute assurance on both those points. The need for consultation before significant changes take place is clear, and we have made it our commitment time and again to introduce changes only on the basis of improvement in services. I ask him to look at some of the primary care developments taking place in his constituency, because there has been a substantial investment in underdeveloped GP services: 78 capital projects; hospital at home; and facilities for community nurses and general practitioners. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, I have some knowledge of his constituency and the underdevelopment of the family doctor services always created heavy pressure on some of the hospital services. These changes matter for London and Londoners.

On the two matters about which the right hon. Gentleman seeks assurance, the answer is yes.

**Sir John Wheeler** (Westminster, North): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that distinguished medical people and others who constituted the review teams have advised that there is a real danger of specialist research services in London being overtaken by those elsewhere in the United Kingdom unless those services are concentrated on specific sites to enable their continuation?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** It is understandable that Members of Parliament will be concerned about their own hospital or institution when they think that change must be under way and I accept and recognise that. My right hon. Friend makes a very important point when he talks about the

*[Mrs. Bottomley]*

opportunity of change, because there are real opportunities for strengthening specialist centres, research and teaching, and it is very difficult to find any member of the medical, the academic or the research community who will do anything other than warmly endorse the approach that we are taking.

**Mrs. Audrey Wise** (Preston): To what extent was there unanimity or disagreement within the review teams? Will the Secretary of State also tell us whether consultation will involve the people who live in the areas affected?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I do not know whether there was disagreement among the review teams because they were independent. I met all the chairmen and they took to the task with great diligence. They are people of significant eminence and calibre within the health service. They spoke with a range of people on their teams to bring forward their recommendations for strengthening and improving the specialist services. Of course, before any significant changes take place in London, as elsewhere, those matters have to be the subject of public consultation. I repeat that changes will be made only on the basis of improving services for patients.

**Mr. David Congdon** (Croydon, North-East): I recognise the need for change in London's health services, but will my right hon. Friend clarify how the process of change will be managed—especially the interaction between the proposals announced earlier in the year, following Tomlinson, and the specialty reviews announced today?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** The London Implementation Group will be working with the regions to take forward practical and sensible proposals. It will be informed by the independent reviews and also by the review of research in the special health authorities. It will then be its job, within available resources and on the basis of the improvements in primary care, to consider the needs of patients and above all to discuss realistic options for the future with the district health authorities—the people who commission health care for patients.

I repeat that no change is no option. Patients are already being treated in their constituencies, closer to home. London hospitals have fixed overheads based on the past; we have to help them to build and reconfigure the health service for the future.

**Ms Glenda Jackson** (Hampstead and Highgate): Will the Secretary of State explain the criteria exercised by the independent review bodies, which have recommended that the renal transplant unit at the Royal Free, where the first successful kidney transplant outside the United States of America was undertaken, must be moved to the Middlesex because of the lack of academic development on site but that a plastic and burns unit should be moved to the Royal Free although it claims that there must be professional links with UCH? There seems to be a grave discrepancy about what constitutes a specialty in this instance.

**Mrs. Bottomley:** It is not for me to justify every last element of the independent reviews; that is precisely the nature of the reviews. The Labour party believes that everything must be done with a command and control approach. We wish to achieve the change. Our responsibility is to ensure that London has a health service for Londoners and that research and education is consolidated and strengthened. The recommendations, as they affect the Royal Free, will no doubt be a subject for discussion with the region, with local hospitals and with the implementation group to ensure that all points are properly satisfied.

**Mr. Michael Shersby** (Uxbridge): In view of the fact that Harefield hospital is situated not in central London but on the furthest extremity of the county of Middlesex, and in view of the fact that its world famous heart transplant unit is a national asset, can my right hon. Friend give me any assurance about its future?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** My hon. Friend would not want me to rule out change for ever and a day. No holder of my office would ever say that any particular hospital or institution will never be subject to change. This proposal has been made in the past. However, the most serious and intense problems are in central London where there is great competition and where fixed overheads are becoming ever more acute. I do not see any prospect of Harefield moving from its present site in the near future.

**Mr. Brian Sedgemore** (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Will the Secretary of State confirm that a number of the specialty review teams have recommended that even in the instances where St. Bartholomew's has better clinical and research facilities they should, nevertheless, be transferred to the Royal London hospital rather than vice versa? Does not that make a mockery of the democratic process and consultations about a merger between St. Bartholomew's and the Royal London? Does she not recognise that it will end with herself, Sir Tim Chessells of the London Implementation Group and Admiral Staveley from the North East Thames regional health authority being dragged before the courts in a series of judicial reviews for improper and unlawful conduct?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I somewhat resent the hon. Gentleman's comments. In all matters concerning the specialty reviews, I believe that we have acted with great reasonableness, and we established those reviews precisely so that we could have such questions answered. I urge the hon. Gentleman to consider the remarks that I understand were made by members of the review teams at their press conference this morning where they made it clear that there had been no collusion between the different review groups and that they had in no way been subject to pressure from the centre in making the proposals that they thought were right to improve and strengthen specialty services.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** (Eltham): The original proposal was to spend more than £50 million moving the regional neurosciences unit from the Brook on Shooter's Hill to King's College and Maudsley. There would be a general welcome if that proposal, which would clearly waste much of the capital in south-east London, were scotched. Will my right hon. Friend try to ensure that the Ministry of Defence can agree with the national health service that the Queen Elizabeth military hospital should be made available so that the local area and the commissioning agency can consider using the Queen Elizabeth military hospital as a substitute for the Brook and the Greenwich district hospital?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** My close Friend—[HON. MEMBERS: "And honourable?"]—and honourable Friend, indeed, most of the time—has raised a matter of great concern in his constituency. He makes a point that applies to all the specialty reviews: each is considering a particular specialty, but for each there is a local context. We have already discussed costing, but there is a broader context, too. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health is already having discussions with the Ministry of Defence on the future options for the Queen Elizabeth military hospital, to which my hon. Friend referred, and the role that it may play in the reviews.

**Ms Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall): Will the Secretary of State confirm that no decision to close either St. Thomas's or Guy's hospital has been taken and that, in spite of some of the rumours that have been going round, the joint trust board is still considering the issue? Will she also confirm that if some of the specialty reviews went ahead there would be no possible way in which St. Thomas's or Guy's could close, because of the extra work that would be necessary at both those sites?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I give the hon. Lady a clear assurance that no decision has been taken on that matter. As I understand it, the decisions on the site appraisal for Guy's and St. Thomas's will be influenced by the specialty reviews. However, it is important for all hon. Members to appreciate that the specialty reviews are not a map of how any of us believes that the services will be precisely distributed. The distribution will need to be affected by the site options, and by a realistic appraisal of the way forward. The warmest praise must be given to the staff at both the hospitals mentioned by the hon. Lady. They realise that in such a small area of London we cannot have King's, Guy's and St. Thomas's all competing with each other and all having a flourishing future. The reviews will be closely considered before final decisions are made.

The hon. Lady is concerned about her constituents, so I say to her that within Southwark, Lewisham and Lambeth no fewer than 112 proposals to improve the family doctor service are going ahead. As 90 per cent. of care takes place in the community, that is most important to her constituents.

**Mr. Matthew Carrington** (Fulham): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Charing Cross hospital has been highly commended by the specialty reviews, especially for its work with cancer, plastics and neurosciences? When reviewing the future of hospitals in west London, will she bear in mind that the Charing Cross is not only a superb hospital but that it is also by far the best located to serve the population of west London?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** Once again, my hon. Friend is a great advocate for the hospital that serves his constituents so well. As he says, the independent reviews have identified a number of areas in which it provides a high quality specialist service. That fact now has to be considered alongside viable long-term options, and my hon. Friend knows as well as anybody that, within range of his constituency, his constituents can go to the Hammersmith, the Chelsea and Westminster, the Marsden, the Royal, Brompton and also to St. Mary's or Queen Charlotte's, which are not so far away. The duplication of specialist centres in London is extremely costly and inhibits the ability to make the progress that we all want to see in London.

**Mr. Simon Hughes** (Southwark and Bermondsey): Given the undertaking that the Secretary of State gave to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), and given that there is all the difference in the world between rationalisation and reduction, can the right hon. Lady say that no resident of London, worker in London or visitor to London will have any services that are currently available taken away as a result of the review process?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I give the hon. Gentleman a clear assurance that the changes in London are about improving health and health care. He will know that in his area there has already been investment in King's accident and emergency department, and the £10 million development of the theatre blocks. The changes will be designed to ensure that there is further progress in reducing waiting times and in improving primary care—the 112 schemes in Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham that I mentioned to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) are an example of that—as well as in strengthening the district general hospital services and in the proper development of the specialist services. The changes are about improvement.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. We shall move on. The subject will doubtless be with us time and time again.

# European Council (Copenhagen)

4 pm

**The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major):** With permission, Madam Speaker. I will make a statement about the European Council Copehagen, which I attended with my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

The principal issue before the Council was how to promote economic growth throughout the Community. Although Britain is now emerging from recession, a number of European countries are still seeing their economies shrink—five are expected to be in recession during this year. Unemployment has grown throughout the Community and now totals 18 million—in most countries it is still rising, and in some it is rising quite sharply. Against that background, the President of the Commission presented options for economic revival in the medium term. That document has been placed in the Library of the House, together with the conclusions of the Council.

I largely agreed with the diagnosis set out by the President of the Commission, although not with all his proposed remedies. In the subsequent debate, I was encouraged by the wide recognition that the Community had to improve Europe's overall competitive position and to address the trend of rising unemployment throughout all of the past 20 years.

The Council agreed a number of practical measures to improve Europe's economic prospects. We stressed the importance of low inflation, specifically in order to improve cost competitiveness and achieve sustainable growth; we reaffirmed the priority given at the Edinburgh Council in December to growth and investment in our public expenditure programmes; we decided to expand the temporary lending facility of the European Investment Bank from 5 billion to 8 billion ecu, with a particular emphasis on helping small and medium-sized companies; we agreed that it was vital to reduce fiscal deficits—without that, much of Europe will not be in a position to reduce its interest rates.

The argument that the Community had to keep down costs in order to improve competitiveness and create new jobs was widely supported at the Council. It was felt that, unless that was achieved, we would find ourselves increasingly uncompetitive against, not only the Pacific countries, but also our primary competitors in the United States and Japan. It was also recognised that all Europe, without exception, had to face the problem of the rising costs of social provision, brought about by demographic and other changes.

The European Commission has been invited to present a White Paper on a medium-term strategy for growth, competitiveness and employment for discussion at the European Council in December. Member states will be submitting proposals for the White Paper. I believe that that will enable the Community to build on the European Council's new emphasis on competitiveness. Over the next six months, we shall press for reforms to increase flexibility in the labour markets and reduce unemployment. I hope that that will lead to a genuinely radical report at the December Council.

Following earlier Council discussions of subsidiarity, the European Commission has now produced a first list of items on which it has decided not to propose legislation. I will place that list in the Library. At the next Council, the Commission will produce a further list, showing existing legislation that will be either repealed or amended. Subsidiarity was a controversial provision in the Maastricht treaty some time ago, but we now have strong support for our position from a number of member states. Subsidiarity is becoming a central element in the Community's decision making.

There was a substantial discussion of the Community's external policy. I would draw attention to only four specific items. First was the importance of urgent progress in the Uruguay round. I am in no doubt that a general agreement on tariffs and trade will benefit all Community members without exception, but there is a long way to go in a short time if a satisfactory agreement is to be reached during this calendar year.

Secondly, the Council was keen to see rapid progress in the enlargement negotiations with Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden. We set 1 January 1995 as the target date for their entry—earlier than previously expected. Their membership, in my judgment, will strengthen the Community.

Thirdly, looking to the longer term, the Council agreed that the six associated countries of central and eastern Europe should be invited to join the Community in due course. It will, of course, take some time until they are ready. In the meantime, we will help them by increasing the Community's political links and by opening our markets more rapidly to their goods. A package to that effect was agreed.

Fourthly, the Council acknowledged the need to recognise Russia's international status, and agreed to my proposal to offer summits between the Community and Russia twice a year.

The deteriorating situation in Bosnia was discussed both by Foreign Ministers and by Heads of Government. Those discussions included the possibility of lifting the arms embargo. We agreed that the Community should encourage the efforts of Lord Owen and Mr. Stoltenberg to promote a fair and viable settlement. This view was widely shared, and is reflected in the Council's declaration on Bosnia-Herzegovina.

I argued that lifting the arms embargo would jeopardise the humanitarian operation and provoke a bloodier and perhaps wider war, with perilous consequences. We agreed after discussion that it was better to seek a peaceful settlement acceptable to all sides. But, as the Council made clear, this cannot be a solution dictated by the Serbs and Croats and at the expense of the Muslims.

The Council also agreed that the Community should support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to secure additional troops and funds to implement the safe areas resolution. The United Kingdom is, of course, as the House is well aware, already making a full contribution.

This was a practical Council. It addressed directly the concerns of the peoples both east and west. It put in hand work on a new economic approach to make Europe more competitive and increase growth and employment. We will return to those matters at Brussels in December.

**Mr. John Smith** (Monklands, East): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his statement. I should like first of all to welcome some aspects of the Council's deliberations and conclusions.

On enlargement, it is gratifying that the Council agreed that the objective should be to have the accession of

Austria, Finland, Sweden and Norway agreed by 1 January 1995, and that a positive approach has been taken to the associated countries of eastern and central Europe. I welcome also the positive statement on racism and xenophobia in Europe, which is timely and constructive. I hope that the Prime Minister will find it possible to do the same.

On the need for growth in the Community's economies and the vital importance of reducing unemployment, I welcome the increase in funds available to the European Investment Bank, which I hope will be of advantage to British enterprises. I also welcome the recognition in the communique that the recovery must be investment led.

However, there are some issues covered in the Council's discussions which must be a cause for concern to the House. The first of those concerns the grave and deteriorating situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was important that the Council did not agree to the lifting of the arms embargo, which would have made a bad situation even worse. However, does not the Prime Minister recognise that such proposals gain currency because of the total failure to achieve the previously agreed policies in a number of crucial areas?

First, is it not the case that the designated safe areas are not in fact safe and that extra troops are required to make them more secure? The Secretary-General has asked for an extra commitment of 7,500 personnel. What is the United Kingdom Government's response to that request? Should not the Government follow the French example by agreeing to augment the British provision?

Secondly, is it not the case that the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina have not been sealed? Why do the Government still rule out the use of limited air strikes to help achieve that objective?

Thirdly, is it not the case that sanctions are still wholly inadequately enforced? Should not they now be extended to include Croatia in view of the recent deplorable activities of the Croats towards their Muslim neighbours?

Fourthly, is it not obvious that there is a lack of any clear political objective since the Washington agreement effectively torpedoed the Vance-Owen plan? What is the point of making declarations about not accepting a territorial solution dictated by Serbs and Croats at the expense of the Muslims if they are not made effective?

On economic recovery, I note with interest that the United Kingdom Government are party to a communiqué which invites consultations to be encouraged among the social partners. Would it not be helpful if the Government accepted the need for such a dialogue here in the United Kingdom?

Do the Government not appreciate that the importance of public investment in the economic infrastructure and in skills development, which the Council has recognised in its conclusions, is just as relevant to the United Kingdom economy? Is it not the lack of such investment over the past 14 years which has caused Britain to be ranked 19 out of 22 in terms of economic strength by the World Economic Forum, below Spain, Portugal and Finland?

Surely the Government are not in a strong position to give advice or a lead to our partner nations when the same survey showed that, after 14 years of Conservative government, Britain was rated 21st out of 22 in the funding of research and development, and bottom—22nd out of 22—in industrial production.

Instead of seeking to turn the clock back by opposing social progress in Europe, should not the Government have as their objective the creation of a high-productivity, high-skill and high-wage economy in Britain and in the Community, instead of seeking to compete on the basis of low costs and low skills, with all the adverse consequences that that would have for the people of this country?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. and learned Gentleman raises a number of points that I will deal with in turn. I am grateful for his welcome to the agreement on enlargement for the European Free Trade Association countries and our further approach to the eventual arrival in the Community of the central and east Europeans. That is the right way forward.

There was no dissent whatever on the racism and xenophobia proposals that were made and agreed in the conclusions of the Council. It is precisely for that reason that I did not mention them, but I welcome them; they were partly inspired by British initiatives, and I am delighted that they were generally agreed.

As for growth and the European Investment Bank the extra funds for the European Investment Bank are more modest than we ourselves would have accepted. We would have accepted a larger increase in the European Investment Bank funds, and that may yet come about when the matter is discussed in ECOFIN over the next few weeks.

On the subject of Bosnia, I am grateful for the right hon. and learned Gentleman's support for the position that we have taken on the arms embargo. I know that it is not shared universally in the United Kingdom, but I believe passionately that it is the right position for the United Kingdom Government to take at the moment.

As for safe areas, the Secretary-General has indeed called for an extra 7,500 troops, and I understand this afternoon that the French Government have agreed to send an extra 800 towards that particular contingent. I understand that some other European Governments—in some cases, perhaps, some who have no troops there—may also consider sending further troops. I do not immediately have that in mind, but we are sending 12 Jaguars to assist with other elements of operations in and around Bosnia, and they will depart very shortly..

On sanctions, their extension to Croatia may indeed be necessary. We do not judge it necessary at the moment, but it is certainly not something that I would wish to rule out. We may wish to go down that path.

As for the political objective, it is really the most straightforward of all political objectives. We want first and foremost to stop the fighting and stop the killing. That is why we have made such a substantial contribution to the humanitarian effort, and also the diplomatic effort, over recent months.

On the various points on economic recovery that the right hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned, despite his criticisms of the position in the United Kingdom, we are now clearly coming out of recession. Five of our European partners are now heading into recession. A number of our European partners now have unemployment on a very sharply rising trend, whereas ours is on a downward trend. In addition, we now have rising exports, in sharp contrast with a number of our European partners.

As for the low-wage, low-cost economy, I have to remind the right hon. and learned Gentleman of some underlying realities in terms of job creation and prosperity

*[The Prime Minister]*

right across Europe. It is to address those realities that we have raised the question of competitiveness and of social costs.

Taking the Community as a whole, labour costs in manufacturing—dear, I know, to the hearts of Opposition Members—rose by 4 per cent. a year throughout the 1980s. The increase in the United States was 1 per cent. a year, and in Japan there was no increase. That trend cannot continue unless we wish to see rising unemployment in this country.

Average labour costs were 20 per cent. higher in the Community than in the United States and Japan, and non-wage labour costs—predominantly social on-costs—were almost twice as high on average in the Community as in the United States. That is not a coincidence, given the rising level of unemployment over the 20-year period.

I shall illustrate that point for the benefit of the right hon. and learned Gentleman. In Europe, growth achieves far fewer jobs than in the United States and elsewhere. I say that with no pleasure. However, in recent years, four times as many new jobs have been created in the United States as in Europe, from the same amount of economic growth. That suggests that dramatic changes are needed if we are to attack the problem of the 17 million people in Europe who are unemployed.

I understand the attraction of improving the terms and conditions of people in work. I should have thought that people would also be concerned with bringing back into work the 17 million people who are out of work. That is why we have raised the question of competitiveness and the need to look carefully at social costs.

**Mr. David Howell** (Guildford): Is not the sheer common sense of my right hon. Friend's emphasis on competitiveness and minimising overheads—thus maximising the growth of private sector jobs—becoming more obvious as time goes by? Does he agree that those who took a different line at Copenhagen and urged that social overheads be increased were paving the way not only to fewer jobs in Europe but also to protection, which would in turn lead to still fewer jobs and still less prosperity in Europe?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my right hon. Friend, particularly about the dangers of going down the route that would lead ultimately to protection. That would be the only way in which an uncompetitive industry could be safeguarded within the EC.

There has been a sharp change in the attitudes of a number of our European partners to competitiveness and social costs—a change not just in their oratory but in what they are doing in their countries. For example, the German Government are proposing to cut the levels of unemployment and other benefits because they believe that to be necessary. In Holland, cuts are planned in social security benefits and child allowances. The Italian Government plan to raise pension ages and introduce new health service charges.

That is not because, ideologically, those countries wish to do that, but because they must recognise that there is a limited amount that can be afforded unless all our industry is to be priced out of business. We would then have unemployment on a scale that would be unimaginable. *[Interruption.]* At that point, the hon. Members who sit below the Gangway would blame the politicians who did not take action in time.

**Mr. Paddy Ashdown** (Yeovil): The Council's emphasis on unemployment was welcome. The Prime Minister may have found it odd that the Council was dominated by the question of unemployment and of getting people back to work, whereas the Chancellor, in his Mansion house speech, could scarcely bring himself to utter the word "unemployment".

In my judgment, the Prime Minister is absolutely right to say that the challenge to Europe is how competitiveness can be maintained and improved while the social cohesion of our nations is maintained.

The Prime Minister talked about underlying reality. He should visit one of our most successful employers such as Toyota, where I was on Monday. The company will tell him of the underlying reality of maintaining competitiveness. It will tell him that that underlying reality lies in investing in the work force. It lies in investing in training. It lies in valuing one's work force and in providing them with the necessary social benefits. That is what Toyota believes will provide the high-value-added, high-investment, highly skilled work force that we need for the future. Does the Prime Minister realise that, by tracking a different course and cutting Britain out of that debate, he is doing our country, our workers and our economy considerable damage for the future?

I want to refer to Bosnia. The emphasis that the Council has at last placed on taking steps to protect the Muslims is very welcome, but if it is to will the ends, it must also will the means. Where will the troops come from? Is it not the case that the French have more troops in Bosnia than we have? If the French are prepared to reinforce, are we not prepared to make a contribution beyond that which we have already stated we will make? Does the Prime Minister realise that, if we are not prepared to say where the troops will come from, we shall yet again be condemning the European Community to make a statement that will not be put into practice?

Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that the present wretched situation in Bosnia was entirely inevitable from the very moment when we let the Serbs understand that they could carry out aggression and that we would not stop them? Has he any idea of the size and cost of the failure, not of the soldiers on the ground but of the politicians in Europe these last nine or 10 wretched months?

**The Prime Minister:** First, let me try to respond to the right hon. Gentleman's second point, on Bosnia. Right from the start, there were, in reality, only two ways of dealing with this whole wretched miserable war. [HON. MEMBERS: "For whom?"] For anyone. The first alternative was to put in literally hundreds of thousands of western troops. *[Interruption.]* That is the view of every political or miltary leader who has been deeply involved in the matter. No one was prepared for that.

I wonder whether, if we had done that, we would have had the right hon. Gentleman's support when the dead and injured troops came back here. The only other way to deal with the problem was the way that we have chosen, which is to deal with the humanitarian aspects and seek a negotiated settlement—painful and difficult though that may be. That is what we have sought to do.

The right hon. Gentleman is wrong to say that the French have more troops in Bosnia than we have. The French have more troops in Yugoslavia as a whole but Britain has more troops in Bosnia than any other nation at present.

The right hon. Gentleman asked where the 7,500 troops will come from. The commitment of troops arises from a United Nations resolution. It is not just the countries of the European Community that have committed themselves to contributing towards those troops: we have made a substantial contribution. Other European Community countries have indicated that they are considering doing the same.

Beyond the Community, others will also make a contribution. It does not help anyone for the right hon. Gentleman to assume that it is just the Community that must deal with this matter, when that is patently not the case.

On the right hon. Gentleman's earlier point about investment, it is not odd that we spent so long discussing these matters at the European Council. We had been pressing for a long time for a realistic and frank discussion in the Community of what really deals with growth. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has been stressing the need for flexibility and social changes for a long time; he was doing so long before he became Chancellor—sometimes, when he held other positions, to the frustration of others.

If the right hon. Gentleman wants to know about investment, he asked the wrong question of Toyota. He should have asked, "Why did you invest in this country?" The answer to that question lies in the supply side policies that the Government and their predecessors have followed since 1979.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Before we proceed any further, I remind the House that I am now looking for single direct questions to the Prime Minister. I want brisk exchanges so that I can call as many hon. Members as possible.

**Mr. John Biffen** (Shropshire, North): I welcome the proposals for Community enlargement, and congratulate my right hon. Friend on his work to that end. But in the spirit of what is practical, which he said underlined the Copenhagen Council meeting, was consideration given to revising the timetable for economic and monetary union in the light of the current state of the European economies?

**The Prime Minister:** In the interests of observing your admonition, Madam Speaker, I am tempted simply to say "No", but my right hon. Friend's question deserves a more comprehensive answer. Revising the timetable was not considered but, of course, the convergence criteria that we agreed in Maastricht need to be met before there can be any progress. As I have told the House before—I am happy to reiterate it today—I do not think that there is a snowball in hell's chance of those criteria being met on the previous timetable.

**Mr. Neil Kinnock** (Islwyn): I say to the Prime Minister with regret that, coming from him, "flexibility" and "deregulation" in the labour market are euphemisms for lower wages, lower skills and greater insecurity. That is no way out of the difficulties that this country and other comparable countries face, because attempts by economies such as ours to go down market in the world economy simply mean impoverishment and social fragmentation, as they have in many parts of the United States.

I share the right hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm for competitiveness. The road to that competitiveness, lower costs and wealth creation must lie in encouraging innovation, deepening and broadening skills, and achieving greater success in the modern world, not in a wage-cut world.

**The Prime Minister:** On the right hon. Gentleman's latter point about innovation and deepening and broadening skills, I stand full square with him. It is not least for that reason that we have greatly increased the number of our young people going into higher education —our target of one in three by the turn of the century is nearly met. The encouragement that we have given people to develop skills in polytechnics and elsewhere is well known to the right hon. Gentleman. On his earlier point about euphemism, I tell him that it is a euphemism for more jobs, more prosperity and more growth.

**Sir Peter Hordern** (Horsham): Does my right hon. Friend believe that Mr. Delors and the European Commission have any idea of the risk to employment that is brought about by the working time directive and other such measures, and increasing competition from the far east and the United States? Does my right hon. Friend see a serious risk of protectionism and a lack of will to bring about a successful conclusion to the Uruguay round?

**The Prime Minister:** In my remarks to the European Council, I stressed again specifically the damage that we believe is done by the working time directive and a number of other directives that I particularly specified. There are differing views in the Community about that, but I think that the views that oppose ours are less strongly held today than they were a few months ago.

There is a danger that some nations in the European Community may have a tendency towards protectionism, rather than dealing with the underlying problem of making changes that will ensure that they are competitive around the world. That view is not shared across the Community.

A number of other states join us strongly in our belief that we need to deal with our costs—employment on-costs are perhaps predominant among them—to ensure that we are competitive. If we were to get in a position where protection led to a trade war among the United States, Japan and Europe, let no one be in any doubt whatever of the devastating effect that that would have throughout Europe, and the devastating impact that it would have on jobs in each and every country of the Community.

**Mr. James Molyneaux** (Lagan Valley): Is the Prime Minister aware of the widespread support for his determined efforts to instil some common sense into the deliberations of the Council, not least in the area of the irresponsible meddlings in Bosnia? In the past, it would seem that our European partners have tended to say "Go on" instead of "Come on" in terms of military commitment.

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. Some of our European partners have, of course, made a substantial contribution. Others perhaps have tended to stand back a little more. I think that the

*[The Prime Minister]*

right hon. Gentleman puts it more crisply than I would have done, but I understand, as does everyone else, precisely what he meant and whom he means.

**Mr. Bowen Wells** (Hertford and Stortford): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there was no discussion of the social charter at Copenhagen? Was there any recognition of the serious harm that it does to competitiveness throughout Europe?

**The Prime Minister:** There was certainly a recognition of the harm it does, because I referred to it in the remarks that I made. I am bound to say that there was less obvious enthusiasm for the social charter, and there was no indication from other member states that they were inclined to take a harshly critical view of us for not being part of it. Clearly, many of them still have their old oratory and their own ideas to cling to. But I have hopes that, as month succeeds month, reality will dawn ever more clearly across the Community.

**Mr. Andrew Faulds** (Warley, East): As for safeguarding the future of Bosnia, we have nothing but words, words and words. Does the Prime Minister realise that he should be ashamed of himself, as should his Foreign Secretary and the supposed leaders of the European Community, for his total spinelessness and pusillanimity? *[Laughter.]* Stupid bastards! They are laughing about this.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman had better calm down—as indeed Ministers on the Front Bench had better calm down.

**The Prime Minister:** In the interests of brevity and in view of your injunction a moment ago, Madam Speaker—no.

**Mr. Alan Howarth** (Stratford-on-Avon): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a large constituency across Europe for the Conservative vision of an unbureaucratic, decentralised Community of member states joining together for sensible, practical and limited purposes, and that that has been increasingly reflected in the willingness of other member Governments to follow his lead in embracing both subsidiarity and enlargement?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is right about the changing mood across the European Community. When there was clear year-on-year growth of 3·5 per cent. a year, many people were inclined to overlook some of the difficulties of central bureaucracy. Now that that 3·5 per cent. year-on-year growth has disappeared, public opinion is perhaps ahead of political opinion across Europe in being suspicious of moves towards centralisation. I regard that as an attractive change of opinion, because I believe that it will bring more realism among politicians of all shades across Europe about what can and should be attempted in any reasonable time scale.

**Mr. Alfred Morris** (Manchester, Wythenshawe): What is the Prime Minister's assessment now of the prospects for success in the Uruguay round, and what discussions did he have with other Heads of Government in Copenhagen about the pace of progress, in particular with Mr. Mitterrand?

**The Prime Minister:** I have often said how important I believe the settlement of the Uruguay round is. I bitterly regret that we have not had a settlement for the past two years. For far too long, Heads of Government across the world have committed themselves to reaching a settlement of the Uruguay round by the end of that year. The end of that year has come and no settlement has come with it. I regret that very much. So I am concerned that we do not yet have an agreement.

There are clearly problems to be overcome. Some progress has been made. The progress made on the oilseeds agreement in the Community was definite progress. We may be able to form a clearer judgment after the G7 summit in Tokyo in a month or so.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton** (Macclesfield): Is my right hon. Friend aware, as I suspect he is, that Europe is becoming more and more uncompetitive with the rest of the world year by year, and that, in addition, Europe is losing manufacturing capacity to the rest of the world? Is it right that, when we are beginning gradually to come out of recession and most of Europe is going into recession, we are not spending more time seeking business in north America, south America and the Pacific rim, where the real wealth of the world is currently being created?

**The Prime Minister:** I am certainly aware of the competitiveness points. I am keen to ensure that primarily Britain but also the whole of Europe seeks to become more competitive and goes to those markets to pick up the business that can best be undertaken in Britain or elsewhere in Europe. We must do that.

But that will not be achieved, as my hon. Friend said, unless we are competitive. That means that we must address seriously all the component costs that go into the cost of our goods. Predominant among those are labour and social costs. I know that that will be interpreted by Opposition Members in the way that they always interpret it—as recommending a sweatshop economy. That type of thinking about a sweatshop economy leads to 17 million people being unemployed across Europe. The people who genuinely care about creating jobs and employment are the people who will take action to make this country competitive, and they sit on these Benches.

**Mr. Peter Shore** (Bethnal Green and Stepney): On the key question of unemployment and recession in the Community, is not the Council of Ministers' policy becoming almost completely schizophrenic? Is it not strange indeed that we should be urged to increase public expenditure, including public investment in infrastructure and other projects and that money should be put aside to subsidise interest rates up to a production of 3 per cent. when at the same time all member states are committed to economic and monetary union and are prisoners of the exchange rate mechanism that keeps European interest rates more than twice as high as the interest rates in Japan and the United States of America? That is not merely schizophrenic, but completely absurd.

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman is perhaps addressing his remarks to the wrong Head of Government. Within existing levels of public expenditure, we have sought to ensure the priority of capital investment as against revenue expenditure. That is what happened in

the public expenditure survey carried out last autumn, and certainly that will be a priority in our public expenditure this year.

The right hon. Gentleman touches on an intriguing point with the proposition that is to be discussed by ECOFIN to have subsidised interest rate lending by the European Investment Bank to small and medium-sized companies. He may be interested to know that a reason why that has gone to ECOFIN is that I flatly opposed it on the grounds of competition.

**Sir Peter Tapsell** (East Lindsey): Did any Head of Government at Copenhagen make the point that it was somewhat futile to have a Community summit with unemployment at the head of the economic agenda when the terrible and still worsening unemployment position in the Community has been caused largely by the past, present and continuing high interest rate policies of the independent central bank of Germany?

**The Prime Minister:** No one entirely agreed with the point made by my hon. Friend. The clear indication in the summaries that we saw and discussed is that, although the recessionary impact of the past few years has accelerated the growth of unemployment across the Community, there has been an underlying growth in unemployment that has gone on through boom and slump during the past 20 years. There has been an inexorable rise during the past 20 years.

Apart from the impact of the recession over the past few years, it is the realisation of that underlying and inexorable rise over two decades that has finally prompted so many European Heads of Government to decide that they must address this problem seriously and urgently.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): When the Prime Minister talks about unemployment, is he aware that he is making a good case for getting out of the Common Market? When I saw the press conference during the past few days, for the life of me I did not realise that they were discussing some of the things that he has mentioned today. Every time, he was asked when he was going to sack his Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office. I will ask him that now: is the Prime Minister going to sack him or keep him?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman may be surprised to know that that was not discussed in Copenhagen.

**Sir James Kilfedder** (North Down): May I congratulate the Prime Minister on a successful summit, in which he played a positive and leading role? Can he say whether there was any discussion of federalism, as expected, or did the summit concentrate on the need to deal with competitiveness to get rid of high unemployment and inflation?

**The Prime Minister:** It may have been a subliminal theme, but it did not see the light of day too often. At the outset, I invited colleagues to throw away Euro-theology. Perhaps federalism comes under that heading.

**Mr. Peter Mandelson** (Hartlepool): Does it not worry the Prime Minister that, as the public see splits over policy in Bosnia, inaction over unemployment and disagreement about some of the most fundamental social rights and standards in Europe, they will become increasingly disillusioned about Europe's ability to act together? Does not the right hon. Gentleman think that he has some pesonal responsibility, above all, for ensuring that Europe's ability to work together is increased, rather than constantly frustrating and undermining it, as seems to be his approach to European affairs in general?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman's idea of how Europe should work together is that Britain should roll over and do what everybody else invariably wants. That is not the way I see European co-operation; it is not the way for any British Government to behave; and it is not what we are going to do.

**Mr. Patrick Cormack** (Staffordshire, South): While disagreeing emphatically with what the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) has just said, may I ask my right hon. Friend what steps the Community is now taking to inform the Serbs—those in Serbia and those in Bosnia—that safe havens in Bosnia will be made safe and that they will not be allowed to keep territory that was acquired brutally?

**The Prime Minister:** That, essentially, was the message of the communiqué that resulted from the summit. Today, the European Community's co-chairman, Lord Owen, will meet the partners—the Serbs, the Croats and the Muslim representatives—to discuss their ideas about the search for a settlement. I have no doubt that that point will be made again by Lord Owen, just as it is being made frequently by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and other European Foreign Ministers. My hon. Friend is right: this point needs to be emphasised continually. He has my promise that it will be emphasised.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): In Copenhagen, did anyone think to send to Mrs. Brundtland an indication that Norway would be more welcome if it were to change its policy on whaling?

**The Prime Minister:** I know the point that the hon. Gentleman has in mind. My right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State for the Environment has on a number of occasions made very plain the British Government's position on that matter; but it was not a subject for discussion at Copenhagen.

**Mr. Tim Rathbone** (Lewes): Will my right hon. Friend remind the House of the fact—and re-emphasise it—that there seemed to be across-the-board agreement about the importance of low interest rates to the re-establishment of growth and the reduction of unemployment?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, there certainly was some agreement about the attractiveness of that. However, perhaps just as important is the fact that there was agreement that the way to achieve the economic circumstances that would enable interest rates to come down is to reduce fiscal deficits right across the Community. We in this House are well aware of our own difficulty with the fiscal deficit. It is a difficulty faced by many other European countries. The need to reduce fiscal deficits throughout Europe in order to achieve low interest rates was well understood and clearly expressed.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray): While welcoming the accelerated time scale for enlargement of the Community, may I ask the Prime Minister what discussions took place about the implications of that extension for the various institutions of the Community? We have to deal with this matter in a practical manner, but we must also ensure that

*[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]*

there is democratic accountability to every citizen of the Community. Will the Prime Minister be more forthcoming about the time scale that is envisaged in the case of eastern and central European countries?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Lady has touched upon a very practical and important point. As part of the enlargement negotiations, some consideration will have to be given to institutional change. The voting weighting of the incoming countries is an obvious illustration. But really substantial institutional change is likely to be discussed at the next intergovernmental conference, which will follow the EFTA states' entry to the Community.

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson** (Aberdeen, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way to secure stability and democracy in eastern Europe would be to bring the countries there into full membership of the European Community and, in the meantime, to open up free trade with them?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is quite right. I can say with absolute conviction that we have been the foremost proponents of ensuring that the central and eastern European countries are enabled to join the Community when they are ready and if they wish to join. Two or three years ago, it seemed a rather forlorn hope that the whole Community could be persuaded to agree to that policy; it has now not only agreed to the policy but set it out as a firm Community objective.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): In the course of the discussion of the competitive position, did the Heads of Government consider the position of farmers and a cut in the common agricultural policy, which accounts for most of the £2·5 billion that this country pays each year? Do the Heads of Government ever sit back and consider the benefits that are supposed to flow from membership of the Common Market? Or would an unaccustomed silence fall if they were to try?

**The Prime Minister:** An unaccustomed lot of unemployment in the hon. Gentleman's constituency would follow if we were to fail to consider the benefits of joining the European Community. Sixty per cent. of our exports—this will apply to the hon. Gentleman's constituency, as well as to every other Member's—result from our trade relationship with the European Community.

If the hon. Gentleman thinks that his constituents will stay in work without jobs, he is living in cloud cuckoo land. On the question of agriculture, it may have escaped the hon. Gentleman's notice, as he lives in his own fantasy land, that this country led the way to securing an agreement on reform of the common agricultural policy.

**Sir Teddy Taylor** (Southend, East): Is it not a shame that no time was given to discussion of the crisis in agriculture? Despite these wonderful reforms, spending this year is breaking all records, as is the size of the cereal mountain. Does the Prime Minister agree that the best way of cutting costs and creating jobs would be to wind up this absurd policy, or to promote the idea that member states should be able to disengage from it, in the interests of farmers, consumers and jobs?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is not right.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** Want to bet?

**The Prime Minister:** I did not know that my hon. Friend was a natural better, but I may well be tempted to take him on. I do not think that he is right about this matter. The common agricultural policy has been discussed on many occasions. If it were to be discussed at every meeting of Heads of Government, it might be attractive to my hon. Friend to have Council meetings lasting three weeks, but it would not be attractive to me.

**Ms Joyce Quin** (Gateshead, East): Can the Prime Minister explain, why, in television interviews after the Council meetings, the Dutch Prime Minister and the French Foreign Minister both repudiated his views about European Community social legislation? Can he explain also why employment in the Netherlands has dropped sharply throughout the past four years even though that country has high levels of employment protection?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Lady is clearly unaware that the Netherlands is at present cutting social protection.

**Mr. James Paice** (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Is not the best news for Britain the decision to bring enlargement forward to 1 January 1995? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that that would not have happened without the commitment at Maastricht; that, as a result, Britain will for the first time be one of a majority who are net contributors; and that, for the first time in Europe, those who pay the bills will be the voting majority?

**The Prime Minister:** I can confirm what my hon. Friend has said. There will be many advantages in a larger Community, including the EFTA states. It will certainly be a material advantage to have four more net contributors to the Community budget: that will add very dramatically to proper financial discipline when the Community makes decisions on spending.

**Mr. Harry Cohen** (Leyton): How do lower wages, less social provision and greater unemployment, allegedly for the sake of competitiveness, differ from the policies that led to the great depressions of the 1920s and 1930s?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman would do well to go back and study the causes of the great depression. The policies that he advocates, with great sincerity and great regularity, are precisely those that would ensure that we had more unemployment. It would be worse and longer—in fact, for ever.

**Mr. Ian Taylor** (Esher): The Prime Minister showed at Copenhagen that, when we argue positively about a wide range of European issues, we have nothing to fear about the Community or its Councils. Will my right hon. Friend continue in that positive vein by stressing that economic convergence may take longer than expected, but that it is still in this country's interests that it should occur, and that the same thing applies to fiscal balances? In those circumstances, will he come forward, before the next summit, with positive ideas about how the European Monetary Institute might conduct its affairs from 1 January, and perhaps revive the idea of the hard ecu?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is entirely right about the importance of economic convergence and the specific fiscal and other criteria that we set out in the Maastricht treaty. Quite apart from the part they play in the move to economic convergence across Europe, those

criteria are right on their own merits for control of the economy in each and every European country. All the countries will consider how the EMI will work.

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): Did any discussion take place in Copenhagen about the nightmare scenario involving the thousands of obsolete and leaking nuclear weapons held in the old Soviet Union? Has the Prime Minister any firm proposals to assist the various states of that former country to decommission and get rid of those terrible weapons?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, that issue has been discussed in the past, and it was discussed again in Copenhagen. We are helping the Russians and other eastern European countries, bilaterally and as part of the Community, to deal with that problem. It is my intention and that of the other European Heads of Government to raise that matter yet again at the G7 summit in Tokyo. We require the assistance of the United States and Japan in particular if we are to make a comprehensive attempt to tackle the problem.

There is no doubt that any repeat of the accident at Chernobyl would have devastating consequences across a wide part of Europe. It is therefore very much in our interests to take this matter seriously now, and to seek to do something about it.

**Mr. Roy Thomason** (Bromsgrove): Has my right hon. Friend seen the article published in yesterday's edition of the *Financial Times* which said that Mr. Delors is now having to temper his ambitions as power is moving from Brussels to the member states within the Community? Does my right hon. Friend believe that the Copenhagen summit was a further step in that welcome direction?

**The Prime Minister:** I think that we see in many parts of the Community a more philosophical approach than was once the case.

**Mr. William Cash** (Stafford): Given that my right hon. Friend has conceded that the convergence conditions under the Maastricht treaty are unworkable and are likely to lead to higher unemployment, would he care to explain how, in the movement towards 1996, we could get the unanimity required to unravel that treaty? How will that be achieved when about six of the member states have a vested interest in the subsidies they get, and are likely to continue to ensure that that treaty stays in force?

**The Prime Minister:** No, no: my hon. Friend has, uncharacteristically, misunderstood the point. It is not my view that convergence is unworkable. I think that it is necessary and desirable, quite apart from being part of the move towards economic and monetary union. What I believe to be unrealistic is the belief that convergence will be reached across the Community according to the timetable set out in the Maastricht treaty.

I thought that that was unlikely when we were asked to sign up to that treaty, which is one reason why we did not do so. Since then, however, the change in economic circumstances throughout the Community has made it even less likely that that convergence will be achieved. It is desirable in its own right, but, in my judgment, it is now unrealistic to expect it by 1996 or anything like that date.

**Mr. Anthony Coombs** (Wyre Forest): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, although Britain currently attracts more than one third of foreign investment into the Community, the chairman of Daimler-Benz recently said that, due to unrealistic social and environmental costs, he would never build another car factory in his home country? Is that not a demonstration of how right the Prime Minister has been to emphasise the huge improvements and advantages that the British car industry now enjoys over that of Germany? Our car costs are 60 per cent. lower than those of Germany; that is one reason why Rover is currently outselling Mercedes-Benz in Europe.

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is right. I am happy to quote, approvingly, the President of the Commission, who referred to this country as a "haven for foreign investment".

**Mr. Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the main reasons why the terrible war in the old Yugoslavia has erupted as it has was Germany's rush to recognise Bosnia and Croatia, against our better judgment? Many hon. Members are concerned that, in Copenhagen, the Germans once again attempted to drive us into a position that is wholly untenable. Does my right hon. Friend accept that we would not think of deploying further troops without a full debate in the House?

**The Prime Minister:** As I said earlier in response to a question from an Opposition Member, I do not envisage that any further British troops will be sent to Bosnia in the near future.

On the substantive point in my hon. Friend's question, the biggest single element behind what has happened in Bosnia is the collapse of the Soviet Union and of the discipline that that exerted over ancient hatreds in the old Yugoslavia. Once that discipline had disappeared, those ancient hatreds reappeared, and we began to see their consequences when the fighting occurred. There were subsidiary elements, but that collapse was by far the greatest.

**Mr. David Shaw** (Dover): Can my right hon. Friend recall the amount of job creation from small businesses from 1983 to 1987? Did he explain to his European colleagues how we achieved that? Can he confirm that the policy in Europe on small businesses and deregulation will be improved in the future?

**The Prime Minister:** I can tell my hon. Friend that we argued strongly for a policy that would lead to job creation across Europe. We will contribute to the White Paper which is now being produced and which will be discussed at the Brussels summit. I have no doubt that the contributions to it will be many and varied. We will certainly set out a series of supply side considerations of the sort to which my hon. Friend referred.

## Points of Order

4.55 pm

**Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** (Amber Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Yesterday, during the debate on party funding, the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) quoted from a letter alleging links between the President of the Board of Trade and an alleged fund-raising operation involving the Saudi Arabian Government. The author of that letter was not identified, and no substantiated evidence was produced to show that anything in that letter was true. The letter was quoted after the Saudi Arabian ambassador had specifically denied the allegations that appeared in *The Guardian*, and after the chairman of the Conservative party had also denied them.

I warned the hon. Member for Hammersmith that I intended to raise this matter with you, Madam Speaker. Although it is understandable that he should wish to divert attention from the appalling performance of the Opposition spokesman, was he not stooping low by raising an unsubstantiated allegation, and doing so when the President of the Board of Trade was patently not in a position to deny it?

**Madam Speaker:** Whatever happened yesterday or on previous days is a matter for the occupant of the Chair at that time. The incidents raised by the hon. Gentleman are not points of order. Points of order are not a court of appeal on what happened previously. If hon. Members believe that points of order should be raised, they should be raised at the time and dealt with. This is not a court of appeal at which we look back on something that took place previously.

**Mr. Andrew Faulds** (Warley, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should like to apologise to you and to the House for my temporary lapse a few moments ago, but it is aggravating to witness hilarity when one is discussing the sufferings in Bosnia.

**Madam Speaker:** Sometimes I have to exercise judicial deafness.

### BILL PRESENTED

CIVIL RIGHTS (DISABLED PERSONS) (SCOTLAND)

Mr. Gordon McMaster, supported by Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. Tom Clarke, Sir David Steel, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mr. Bill Walker, Mrs. Irene Adams, Mrs. Maria Fyfe, Mr Jimmy Wray, Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie, Mr. Archy Kirkwood and Mr. Adam Ingram, presented a Bill to prohibit, in Scotland, discrimination against disabled persons on the ground of their disability; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July 1993, and to be printed. [Bill 213.]

### STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

PARALYTIC SHELLFISH POISONING

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) (No. 6) Order 1993 (S.I., No. 1523) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## Young Offenders (Detention)

4.58 pm

**Lady Olga Maitland** (Sutton and Cheam): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to permit the detention in secure units of young offenders below the age of 14 years; and for connected purposes.

The Bill would give juvenile magistrates the power to commit persistent young offenders below the age of 14 direct to a secure unit, without having to refer that decision back to social services.

The Bill is needed urgently. All too often, local authorities thwart public opinion and the police by refusing to take advantage of the law, whereby only they can apply to have young thugs sent to a secure unit, either while on remand or for sentence. Those local authorities, with their soft liberal attitude, prefer to send the offender back into the community, where, within hours, he reoffends. There is nothing that the law can do to stop them, but society has had enough. It is time to act against persistent offenders who do not respond to normal cautions. Juvenile crime today has reached spine-chilling levels. The crimes are nastier and on a greater scale than ever before. It is a nationwide crisis.

The Association of Chief Police Officers and the Police Superintendents Association of England and Wales estimate that the true rate of juvenile crime has leapt by 54 per cent. in the last decade. Not a week goes by without a report of grotesque misbehaviour by a young teenager, who then gets away with it.

Those thugs, who are aged between 10 and 14, must be kept off the streets. Magistrates are in despair over having to hand the offenders back to the social services; legally they cannot do otherwise. It is no use the Government planning more secure units or secure training establishments if it is not possible to send young offenders to them. My Bill seeks to redress that.

The inability to put a persistent offender into secure accommodation was highlighted in November by the tragedy in Stockton, when a stolen car, occupied by a number of runaways from children homes, collided with another car, killing one woman and injuring three others. The driver was typical of the hard core of persistent offenders for whom magistrates were completely unable to insist on the provision of secure accommodation. Had that offender been put into a secure unit at the time, that woman would not have died.

My constituency of quiet, leafy and prosperous Sutton is not an area where one would expect to find a hard core of tough, young criminals. However, we have a gang of a dozen youngsters, who, with another dozen acolytes, have run up scores of offences of burglary—of both shops and residential premises—drug dealing, stealing cars, joyriding, ram-raiding and so on. The gang are all aged 14 or under. As they operate in pleasant suburbia, they are more money-oriented than their violent brothers in the inner cities, and can earn up to £2,000 a night with the help of adult Fagins.

Money and robbery becomes a drug to them. One young thug admitted to being addicted to stealing. The boys are arrogant and defiant, and know that they are above the law. They are skilled, fast and sophisticated in their work, and the scale of their crimes is disproportionate to their numbers.

The group to which I have referred call themselves the Sutton burglary posse. They are so confident that they stole a printing press and ran off calling cards, which they leave at the addresses that they rob. The cards say: "Sutton Burglary Posse was here—phone 999." In 18 months, those youngsters, all aged between 12 and 14, have stolen £1·5 million-worth of goods and caused hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of damage to property, for which long-suffering retailers and householders have to bear the entire cost in increased insurance premiums and repairs.

The Sutton burglary posse even has the nerve to telephone rakish minicabs, which, for a percentage of the profits, will collect the youngsters and their loot and cart them off home. If caught, the boys stand hands in pockets, boasting of their successes and telling the police. "There is nothing you can do to me." At present, they are right.

Moreover, they know their rights—telephoning solicitors before their parents, or, in other cases, calling social services in the middle of the night to get them out of the police cells. Once free, they escape back into crime.

They have no fear of the consequences, for there will be none. Instead, they laugh when arrested and joke with friends when they appear in court. When released, having been given yet another supervision order to cover perhaps scores of charges, they celebrate in an almost carnival atmosphere.

One ringleader in Sutton has been arrested more than 40 times, with 200 charges against him. He has admitted twice as many offences. On one occasion, he appeared in court to face 21 charges ranging from actual bodily harm to burglary, receiving, stealing cars, carrying an offensive weapon and so on. All that the frustrated magistrates could give him, accepting that social workers would not put him into a secure unit, was a one-year supervision order. Afterwards, he was congratulated by fellow posse members and his social worker on getting off so lightly.

His mother was furious. She had pleaded, "Lock him up for his own good." Not surprisingly, the local newspaper, the *Sutton and Cheam Herald*, ran the headline,

"Posse boy walks free—age saves chronic burglar from harsher sentence."

Since then, he has committed another six offences. So much for social services' claim that he is a reformed lad. His solicitor pleaded for him by saying:

"He has not offended for three weeks now."

His friends are no different. One has been arrested 31 times, with scores of charges. Do not be taken in by his small size and completely angelic looks. He can barely reach a car's pedals, but he has no compunction about stealing high-performance cars and purposely baiting the police into a car chase.

Another one was barely 13 when he was first arrested. Today, aged 14, among his many offences is a charge of blinding another boy with a pen. He carries a double-edged Stanley knife, which I am told is now highly fashionable among his group. It is good for heavy scarring.

Another boy, by his 15th birthday, had been arrested 60 times, and on each occasion only conditional discharges and supervision orders could be passed. There was absolutely nothing that the magistrates could do, and the local authority was not prepared to apply to commit him to a secure unit. Now he is at last in Feltham, but the damage to society has already been done.

There are such posses all over the country. Many are nastier, with hideous reports of bloody violence. Police are angered, and society is furious at the contemptuous way in which they swagger back to the streets.

We would not be facing such a serious crisis if social workers and their political masters were more responsive to society's needs. The fact is that they are ideologically against putting a persistent offender into secure accommodation. Their argument is that such units are universities for crime and that, in any case, it is cruel. These juveniles are already in highly select schools of crime by virtue of the company that they keep.

What seems to be forgotten by social workers is that society pays an intolerable price for these crimes that far outweighs the cost of re-educating juveniles. I have visited three such units—Orchard Lodge at Crystal Palace, Glen House near Southampton, and Middlesex Lodge at Hillingdon. They are small, with a high ratio of adults to youngsters; the maximum number that a unit takes is eight.

Their purpose is as much re-education as removing them from society. They teach youngsters how to lead structured, normal lives, and give regular schooling with plenty of one-to-one teaching. Years of truanting have left such youngsters largely illiterate. Evidence shows that, by keeping a young person for several months, or ideally for a year, much good work can be achieved.

The decision about whether social services should refer a child to a secure unit is a geographical lottery. Sutton local authority is resistant, but Newcastle upon Tyne made more than 160 referrals in 1986, whereas in nearby Gateshead, only one child was locked up for similar behaviour. In Sunderland, crime was halved when an 11-year-old who had committed more than 200 offences was put in a secure unit. Research in Northumbria has shown that one in three juveniles reoffend while on bail.

Time is against us. It is quite unacceptable for youngsters to continue to punish the community. Magistrates must have the power to send them to secure units. The Bill will redress the balance.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Lady Olga Maitland, Sir John Wheeler, Sir David Mitchell, Mr. John Gorst, Mr. Nigel Forman, Mr. Michael Shersby, Mr. Patrick Cormack, Mr. Michael Stephen, Mr. David Lidington, Mrs. Cheryl Gillan, Dr. Robert Spink and Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown.

YOUNG OFFENDERS (DETENTION)

Lady Olga Maitland accordingly presented a Bill to permit the detention in secure units of young offenders below the age of 14 years; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 214.]

# Orders of the Day

## Agriculture Bill *[Lords]*

*As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered. Ordered.*

That the Agriculture Bill *[Lords]*, as amended, be considered in the following order, namely, new Clauses relating to Part I, amendments relating to Clauses 1 to 3, Schedule 1, Clauses 4 to 11, Schedule 2, Clauses 12 to 22, new Clauses relating to Part II, amendments relating to Clauses 23 to 26, Schedule 3, Clauses 27 to 33, Schedule 4, Clauses 34 to 45, new Clauses relating to Part III, amendments relating to Clauses 46 to 49, remaining new Clauses, amendments relating to Clauses 50 to 57, new Schedules, amendments relating to Clause 58, Schedule 5, Clause 59.—*[Mrs. Gillian Shephard.]*

### New clause 18

PUBLICITY FOR DETERMINATIONS (NO. 2)

'.-(1) As soon as reasonably practicable after granting an application under section 2 or 5 above, the authority granting the application shall make public in such manner as it thinks fit—

(a) the fact that it has granted the application, and

(b) the principles of the approved scheme or, as the case may be, of the approved variation.

(2) As soon as reasonably practicable after deciding under section 6 above to withdraw an approved scheme's approval, the authority making the decision shall make its decision public in such manner as it thinks fit.'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

*Brought up, and read the first time.*

5.10 pm

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack):** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Government new clause 17—*Publicity for determinations (No. 1).*

**Mr. Jack:** With your indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall make a short statement for the clarity of the House. I wish to inform the House that my wife and I held between us some 4,000 shares in Northern Foods plc which were acquired as a result of the company I worked for before coming into Parliament being taken over by Northern Foods. I say this as a matter of courtesy to the House.

I turn now to new clause 18 with which there are clearly parallel measures in clause 17. The Bill would require a milk marketing board to bring the principles of its reorganisation scheme to the attention of registered producers. Ministers would have to consult representatives of producers, processors, retailers and consumers of milk.

The principles of the scheme will be in the public domain. Under the provisions of clause 4, the reorganisation scheme may be modified between submission and approval if Ministers cannot approve the scheme in its original form. A scheme as approved may therefore be different from that originally submitted for approval.

If Ministers decide to approve a scheme, it is important that those affected by it should know what has been approved. The new clause would require Ministers to make public the principles of an approved scheme. The same format would apply to any proposed changes to the potato marketing board. The new clause would also require Ministers to publicise any approved variations to the scheme. That is in the spirit of ensuring that all those who need to know what is going on can find out the facts.

**Dr. Gavin Strang** (Edinburgh, East): I preface my remarks by congratulating the Minister on his appointment. I hope that he finds his term of office rewarding and worth while.

The new clause is better than nothing. It focuses attention on one of the Bill's great weaknesses. We have received considerable support from industry, and certainly from the Dairy Trade Federation which agrees that it is wrong that the new scheme is not subject to parliamentary approval.

The Bill should have provided for the approved reorganisation scheme setting up the successor body and associated matters to come before both Houses of Parliament for approval. There is no question but that we are talking of something of tremendous importance to the agriculture industry, food industry and consumers in Britain.

My second point focuses on what we consider to be the other flaw in the legislation. The new clause makes it clear that the applicants will be the boards. It refers to "after granting an application", but an application may be made only by the England and Wales milk marketing board, the Northern Ireland milk marketing board or the Scottish milk marketing board. That substantially predetermines the outcome of the revised arrangements.

If the only scheme that can be approved is one that is submitted by a board, the boards will put forward single co-operative arrangements or something along those lines. The new clause rules out completely the option of integrated regional milk co-operators which certainly should have been given careful attention. That option would have provided for a number of integrated co-operatives owned by the producers covering England and Wales.

The requirement that the only scheme that can be approved is one submitted by the board pre-empts us. We will have a huge, voluntary single co-operative, probably dominating the marketplace. We are grateful to the Minister for his clarification of the new clause. Of course it is desirable that such matters should be brought to the attention of the public. We simply regret that the revised schemes are not subject to parliamentary approval.

**Mr. Jack:** I understand the points that the hon. Gentleman makes and I thank him for his most courteous and kind words of welcome to the Dispatch Box. However, there was uniformity of agreement in Standing Committee that everyone wanted these matters to be dealt with as quickly as possible. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will understand that the additional process that he suggested would slow up the measure.

The hon. Gentleman's remarks were very much addressed to the successor to the milk marketing board, but that will not be the only thing on offer. As we already know, other interested parties are proposing their own schemes which involve the taking of milk for the purposes of manufacture or liquid milk delivery. Those in the dairy industry will have to consider a multiplicity of alternatives.

In Standing Committee, on Second Reading and now, Ministers who will have to make the decision on what is an appropriate scheme, as detailed in clause 3, will obviously

take into account the concerns put to them in the House, but bearing in mind the large number of people who will look carefully at the successor schemes and the points that they put forward. There will be a widespread public debate as people consult and discuss the issue and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the principal details will be laid in the Library of the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

### New clause 13

FUNCTIONS UNDER SECTION 19 OF THE AGRICULTURAL MARKETING ACT 1958

'. The functions of a committee appointed under section 19 of the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958 (consumers' committees and committees of investigation) shall not include the consideration of anything done by a milk marketing board—

(a) by way of preparing for the enactment of this Part of this Act, or

(b) in connection with an application under this Part of this Act or the carrying out of an approved scheme.'. —*[Mr. Jack.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Jack:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this it will be convenient also to discuss Government new clause 14—*Functions under section 19 of the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958.*

**Mr. Jack:** In taking these two clauses together, it is important to stress that the establishment of committees of investigation and consumer committees is provided for by the Agriculture Marketing Act 1958.

The committees' purpose is to consider complaints about the operation of the milk marketing scheme and the parallel operation for potatoes and to monitor their effect on consumers respectively. The approval and monitoring of the implementation of the reorganisation schemes are dealt with not by that mechanism but by the Agriculture Bill and, as the Bill says, are matters specifically for Ministers. It is unnecessary for the committees to oversee reorganisation.

The new clause makes it clear that the committees have no particular or specific role in boards' activities relating to schemes of reorganisation before or after enactment.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): I welcome the Minister to the Dispatch Box and look forward to sparring with him many times in the future.

As the Minister will know, I agreed with the former Minister of State that I would not speak about the new clause on Report, as he had agreed to withdraw it to allow consultation to take place outside the House. The Minister may also know that his hon. Friend has subsequently released me from that commitment.

Some concern is being expressed about the new clause. It appears to preclude the right of a consumer organisation outside the Government, the House and the milk marketing boards to complain about the operation of the scheme during the transitional period preceding vesting day when that transition might be considered to be the cause of any difficulties caused to milk consumers by the scheme. In effect, the transition could be used as an excuse for failure to report to Ministers and to put that report in writing. Moreover, by removing the power of the committee of investigation to investigate any act or admission by the board through the use of the same "transition" arguments—or excuses—the new clause may well prevent a perfectly legitimate investigation from taking place.

Ministers may have had in mind the possibility of prolonged and delayed investigation when the new clause was tabled, but it does not necessarily follow that an investigation will be prolonged or delayed. At a time when the milk marketing board is in turmoil—it is going through a period of great uncertainty—the new clause may well act against the public interest. Indeed, precisely that has happened on more than one occasion in recent months.

We believe that the powers in the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958 should be retained, in the widest possible sense—if only for brief investigations—and that other powers that might be available to Milk Marque or to consumer organisations are insufficient.

**Mr. Jack:** I thank the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) for his words of welcome. I have listened carefully to what he has said.

At times of change, there is a danger that people will use certain language to try to create a crisis where none exists. The hon. Gentleman said that the board was in a state of turmoil; my early observation suggests that it is working extremely hard to establish its future, while continuing to serve both consumers and providers of milk. Certainly, no flood of letters has arrived on my desk suggesting that it is in turmoil or that it is paying insufficient attention to detail.

The purpose of the committees, under the 1958 Act, is to consider complaints about the operation of the milk marketing scheme and to monitor its effect on consumers. By "complaints", I mean specific complaints about the day-to-day operation of the board. The committees are intended to examine the details of complaints; they were never designed to examine matters of policy. That is what the elected members of the board are there to do. They are the farmer representatives: they sit on the board to consider the complaints and concerns of the industry. It is important not to confuse the two sets of activities.

The committees were not established to judge what might be the nature of a successor organisation. The Bill sets out clearly the terms on which that job would be done. The hon. Member for Workington put his points precisely. Let me say to him with equal precision that this is not the committees' task, that I do not think that the board is in a state of turmoil and that the terms on which the interests of consumers, producers and others will be taken into account are clearly defined in clause 3.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Claused read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

### New clause 1

MARKET DISTORTIONS ARISING OUT OF REORGANISATION

'.—(1) Where it appears to Ministers that distortions have arisen in the supply and marketing of milk, Ministers may by regulation introduce measures to assist in the orderly supply and marketing of such product.

(2) Measures may only be introduced under subsection (1) above where Ministers are satisfied that there has been an abuse of dominant market position arising out of—

(a) favourable treatment as to price and supply of milk to customers with whom a qualifying successor body is connected by reason of equity; or

(b) favourable treatment as to price and supply of milk to customers with whom a qualifying successor body is connected by reason of equity held by producers where such producers hold a majority share of the issued capital.

(3) Where Ministers are satisfied that such an abuse of dominant market position exists, they may specify a course of action to be taken by the qualifying successor body.'.—*[Dr. Strang.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Dr. Strang:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this it will be convenient also to discuss the following: new clause 7—*Future regulation (No. 1)*—

.—(1) In the case of a scheme of re-organisation submitted by the Milk Marketing Board of England and Wales the approval of the appropriate authority shall be deemed withdrawn if by vesting day any successor body to the said board has failed to appoint to its Board of Directors or equivalent a nominee of the appropriate authority for a period of three years from vesting day.

(2) It shall be the duty of such nominee to report quarterly to the appropriate authority on all matters relating to the purchase and sale of milk by the successor body including matters which in the opinion of the nominee could affect competition in the marketing of milk in England and Wales.

(3) Each report of the nominee shall be issued by the appropriate authority to such persons as in its opinion are representative of the interests of producers of milk and processors of milk within 14 days of its receipt.

(4) For the purpose of this section reference to a "successor body" shall mean any body proposed by a board in a scheme of re-organisation to be engaged in milk trading and in respect of which a statement of the nature required by section (2)(c) has been submitted.'.

New clause 8—*Future regulation (No. 2)*——

.—(1) In the case of a scheme of re-organisation submitted by the Milk Marketing Board of England and Wales it shall be a requirement of any approval of such a scheme that on vesting day or, if the target figure specified in subsection (2) below is attained before that date then on the day it is attained, the appropriate authority shall be advised by any successor body to the said board of the names of the producers contracting to supply milk to it and by the said board of the volume of milk which those producers had sold to it in the year 1st April 1992 to 31st March 1993 ("the period") and the total volume of milk sold to it during the period.

(2) Where the milk sold to the said board during the period by the producers contracting to supply a successor body represents 50 per cent. or more of the total volume of milk sold to the said board during the period ("the target figure"), the appropriate authority shall refer the trading practices and operations whether actual or intended of any such successor body to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for investigation.

(3) For the purposes of this section reference to a "successor body" shall mean any body proposed by a board in a scheme of re-organisation to be engaged in milk trading and in respect of which a statement of the nature required by section (2)(c) has been submitted.'.

**Dr. Strang:** The new clauses are designed to focus attention on the threat posed to consumers by the arrangements following the winding up of the milk marketing boards. The Milk Marketing Board of England and Wales will be replaced by Milk Marque—an organisation that may well command at least 80 per cent. of the milk produced by farms in England and Wales. Equivalent bodies will replace the Northern Ireland and Scotland boards.

Completely new arrangements will operate; there will be no control over the price of milk. It has already been made clear that milk prices will rise by 20 per cent. as a direct result of the winding up of the boards. That will have a serious impact on many people: families on low incomes, with children, spend about one seventh of their total food expenditure on milk or milk products. Such an immediate and sharp increase in the price of milk is surely a matter for concern.

An important related aspect is the impact on the doorstep delivery system. One of the strengths of our present arrangements is that a substantial amount of milk is still sold on the doorstep; a sharp price increase will undoubtedly put even more pressure on the system.

It is generally believed that about 80 per cent. of farmers will join the new organisation, Milk Marque. Indeed, the figure may be nearer 90 per cent. I well understand why so many farmers are choosing to join Milk Marque. A further threat arises from the fundamental issue of EC quotas, which prevent farmers from increasing milk production in response to higher prices. In a normal marketplace, if prices rise sharply and a product becomes more profitable, the industry will produce more of it; supply relates to demand. The rigid milk quotas—a dairy farmer suffers a tremendous penalty if he exceeds his quota—pose a real threat to the future arrangements for both consumers and the dairy industry. A large, voluntary, private virtual monopoly over 80 per cent. of milk production could well operate against a background of tight quotas.

Some hon. Members will ask, "What about imports from the continent?" It is true that there is no problem with cheese and butter, in which there is a free movement of trade; but, given the cost of moving fresh milk across the channel to provide a proper service, I doubt whether anyone seriously believes that there will be an adequate brake on the dominant market power of Milk Marque. One consequence may be increased imports of UHT milk, but that remains to be seen. There is no doubt that it is a matter of serious concern that we should move from a highly regulated arrangement—which has had the support of producers, dairy companies and consumers in the past—to an unsatisfactory and unstable system.

The Government have been warned by various voices in the industry. Perhaps the new Minister was not aware of that; I shall therefore quote an observation made at the end of last year not long after the Bill was published. Mr. Brian Smith described the Bill as a

"recipe for a price explosion."

He continued:

"In a year when the regulatory bodies of privatised previously state monopolies have stepped in to curb price increases, the Government is creating a situation where a very dominant selling organisation of a product whose supply is fixed by quota is to have no regulatory checks and balances at all".

Mr. Brian Smith is the president of the Dairy Trade Federation, which I believe represents about 87 per cent. of the dairies in this country.

5.30 pm

To their credit, the milk marketing boards have made no secret of the fact that they intend to increase the price of milk by 20 per cent. We are worried not only about the increase in price following the winding up of the boards' arrangements but about what may happen if Milk Marque dominates and exploits the market to secure higher prices than can reasonably be justified.

On 5 March, Milk Marque launched its two-stage customer initiative, a document setting out the new arrangements for buying milk from Milk Marque. The document provoked quite a reaction and, as a result of representations from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Office of Fair Trading, it had to backtrack to some extent. It appeared that Milk Marque was already threatening people as early as last March that if they did not sign up to buy milk from Milk Marque they might have difficulty in getting milk supplies in future. As a result of the representations, Milk Marque withdrew some of the statements in the document.

I remind the Minister of what the Dairy Trade Federation said about Milk Marque's document in its official press release of 9 March. It reads:

"The Dairy Trade Federation expressed concern about the proposals by Milk Marque (the dominant private co-operative designated to succeed the Milk Marketing Board) to increase milk prices by 20 per cent.

'This proposal is exactly what we feared when we learned of the Government's proposals to remove the present statutory controls from the MMB' said DTF President Brian Smith. 'It is a monopoly using its power to increase prices to consumers . . . We ask the Government to set up independent supervision of this dominant monopoly'."

This is the purpose of the new clauses. A number of other new clauses, which have not been called for debate, propose a range of options, but we are not too concerned about the nitty-gritty of them; we are keen to focus attention on the dangers of the new arrangements and to ask the Government to establish a regulatory body.

I said that the boards had made no secret of their intention to secure an increase in the price of milk. It is also fair to say that they have made no secret of the potential threat to doorstep delivery. Let me make it clear: everyone wants the service to continue and recognises that it is an important asset, which is especially valuable for the elderly and sick. It should also be maintained because many jobs are involved. It is not unique to this country, but a higher proportion of milk is sold through doorstep delivery here than in many other European countries.

In an interview on 9 March on "Farming Today", Mr. Derek Beresford was asked:

"So you could see the doorstep delivery being squeezed by increased costs, lack of . . . supplies and more milk going into the supermarkets?"

Mr. Beresford replied:

"This is true. And it's something that we have to address. I, for one, and I'm sure a lot of my colleagues are wanting to . . . sustain the doorstep delivery as long as we possibly can."

As the House will recognise, it is all very well to want to sustain it but what counts are the hard facts of the marketplace.

Figures from the National Dairymens Association show that in 1982 about 86 per cent. of all liquid milk was sold through the doorstep delivery system. In 1992, the proportion had fallen to 56 per cent. The milk marketing board's annual accounts, which were presented the other day, record a further dramatic fall, and I estimate that roughly half of all milk is now sold through doorstep delivery.

There must be a point at which the system becomes unviable. If there is much more of a decline in the proportion of milk sold in that way, it could have a catastrophic effect on the system. Within the framework of the new arrangements with which we are, sadly, to be saddled, the Government should surely do all they can to encourage the industry—I admit that there is probably not a great deal that they can do—to sustain the doorstep delivery service.

The problem arises out of the nature of the successor body. The options have diminished to the extent that there will be one large producer co-operative. The Minister of State rightly said that we should not lose sight of the fact that there are other companies in the marketplace. For example, Northern Foods has made clear its intention to enter directly into supply contracts with farmers. It is seeking to secure a substantial proportion—or all, if possible—of their supplies by that means, but that does not alter the fact that all the signs are that Milk Marque will account for about 80 per cent., or perhaps even 90 per cent., of the milk sold from our farms. The existence of one huge, single operator in the marketplace gives us cause for concern.

I do not believe that it is a very satisfactory long-term arrangement for the producers. The only protection is that offered by the Office of Fair Trading or the European Commission. The Commission has given an undertaking that it will not intervene for two years, and what happens then remains to be seen. That does not apply to the Office of Fair Trading, whose director general could, I suppose, intervene within a few months of the new arrangements coming into force. He could decide that there was an unsatisfactory monopoly which should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

I merely point out that such a situation would not be very satisfactory. It would place farmers in an insecure position if they were to join a co-operative knowing that it might soon be referred to the MMC because of its dominance over liquid milk. In view of what we are to be saddled with, there is clearly a need for a regulatory body. Regulation should not be left to the Office of Fair Trading. We should establish a body with the explicit aim of monitoring the situation, advising Ministers and, if necessary, referring the issue to the MMC.

There are alternatives. New clause 7 suggests that such a body should include as a director—if I may use that term—someone appointed by the appropriate authority. In practice, it would mean that the Scottish co-operative would include a representative from the Scottish Agriculture and Fisheries Department. The same would apply for Northern Ireland. The Milk Marque board would include a representative from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who would be charged with preparing a quarterly report which would be passed to the Ministry so that a close watch could be kept on what was happening.

**Mr. Geoffrey Clinton-Brown** (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said, and I listened carefully over many weeks to what he said in Committee. I am surprised that he takes that stance on Milk Marque's dominance of the market, when the whole thrust of the Bill is to free up the

*[Mr. Geoffrey Clinton-Brown]*

market so that any buyer can come in and buy milk if he wants to. What on earth is wrong with farmers coming together in a strong co-operative to face a market of strong buyers?

**Dr. Strang:** The problem is simply that whereas, under the present arrangements, there are clear controls—the price negotiated between the Dairy Trade Federation and the boards—the new situation will not be a proper free market, because quotas will control production, and a very large organisation will almost certainly be able to dominate the marketplace. That is not our fear alone; it is expressed by others in the industry, including the Dairy Trade Federation. Indeed, I have already quoted the federation to that effect.

We must not lose sight of one fundamental fact, which is more important than the boards—the existence of quotas. That control of supplies is so important because it means that the market will never operate as it should. That is why we have expressed concern. I hope that, even at this late stage, the Government will show some appreciation of the dangerous path that we could take. They should be aware of the need to be alert to what might happen and to take action to prevent the development of a milk market that could not be justified, in which consumers would be exploited and the dairy companies could set unrealistic and unjustifiable prices.

**Mr. Paul Tyler** (North Cornwall): First, I add my welcome to the Minister of State, and to his right hon. Friend the new Minister of Agriculture. I hope that they have discovered from their bedtime reading of the Committee proceedings what a constructive Committee it was. There was all-party agreement on objectives, if not always total unanimity about the solutions.

I approach the new clauses tabled by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) with much sympathy. Clearly we are intervening in a difficult balanced market, but I feel that the hon. Gentleman is aiming at the wrong target. The threats to consumers are likely to come not from the monopolistic tendencies of Milk Marque or of the new boards in Scotland and Northern Ireland, but from a dominance of the whole market by the buyers, to which the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) obliquely referred. The problem in this country is that, for so many years, the buyers have dominated the milk market, just as they have dominated the food market.

5.45 pm

The people most concerned about the situation are the producers, to whom the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East referred. I am not sure how many dairy farmers there are in his constituency, but I have a great many in mine, and they are constantly concerned, in relation to other commodities as well as milk, about the domination of food buying and processing by a small number of huge companies—the processors and the supermarket cabals.

In recent years, as we have all seen, despite the recession in so many other areas, and the severe depression in agriculture, those companies' profits have bucked the trend and broken all bounds. Surely that is the background against which we should be concerned about what will happen to consumers. The threat to consumers comes not from 80 per cent.; or even 85 per cent., of producers signing up with Milk Marque, but from the weakening of Milk Marque and the other boards so that they cannot exercise real power in the marketplace.

We know, too, of the growing discrepancy over the lifetime of the Government between farmgate prices—the prices that producers receive—and retail prices. That discrepancy has been created not by market boards but by retail chains and the processors behind them.

I believe that the solutions proposed by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East are misguided. The whole concept of "Ofmilk", if I may use that shorthand description, is sour. It does not seem intelligent to impose new disciplines and boards when we are trying to improve competitiveness, vis-a-vis not only the buyers to which I have referred, but the strong organisations in other member states of the EC, where significantly, over many generations, producers have come together to form strong co-operatives.

My hon. Friends and I come in the main from farming communities, and we strongly believe that we now have the best chance, perhaps the last chance, to create a continental-style producer co-operative in this country. As hon. Members on both sides of the House have said, clearly the market will be competitive. Anyone who has met the buccaneers of the Northern Milk Partnership will know that Milk Marque will not get an easy ride.

There will be many people in the market, and the competitive restraint that they will impose, plus the important disciplines available through the Office of Fair Trading, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the EC Commission, will be sufficient in terms of regulatory authorities and restraint.

I believe that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East was technically wrong when he said that the Community would not intervene for two years. The Minister gave us an explicit assurance in Committee that the Community had given an undertaking that, if there were complaints, it was prepared to intervene during the first two years of Milk Marque and the other boards. With so many organisations clearly already in the field and watching every move that Milk Marque makes, I cannot believe that there will not be a complaint if there is any real cause for concern.

I followed, with great concern, what the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East said about the milk quota. When the Bill is finally put to bed with Royal Assent, and Milk Marque and its competitors are on the road, there will still be an extraordinary marketing situation because of the quota. Again, in Committee we were given many assurances by the then Minister about the Government's future policy on quotas. I hope that those assurances will be repeated today by the new regime.

As a country, we must not dilute our efforts to ensure that the redistribution of quota among member states meets more sensibly the natural provisions and needs of each state's market requirements. It is rather absurd that quota has become so set, and so difficult to shift and adjust.

I hope—I believe that the Minister agrees with me—that, in the long term, quota can become a tradeable asset across national boundaries. I am convinced that our producers in this country are by far the most efficient, and we have some of the best territory and climatic conditions for the production of milk, especially in Cornwall.

We are told both by the industry and by Ministers that our milk producers are the most efficient in the world, so surely they will be able to compete effectively if milk quota

becomes a buyable asset throughout the Community. We should press hard for that development; that is how we should try to loosen up the present regime for quota. We received assurances to that effect in Committee, and I hope that the Minister and his right hon. Friend will ensure that that aim remains a priority in their negotiations around the Council of Ministers table.

The issue is not how successful Milk Marque and the other boards will be in attracting producer support, nor is it whether they obtain 85 or 75 per cent. or only 51 or 49 per cent. support. The critical issue is how they use their market position.

In Committee, the Minister gave assurances that the critical criteria will be the adjudication of the proposed scheme or schemes and the way in which the organisations monitor the new regime after its vesting day. I think that there was broad support for that on both sides of the Committee.

If the regime behaves in a monopolistic way, there will be many avenues of redress for those affected by its behaviour. It would be wrong to set up yet more regulation, regulatory boards and bureaucracy at a time when industry is crying out for less.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock** (Batley and Spen): I welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box today and to his new office of Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I am sure that he will bring his extensive experience of the food industry to his new post and that that will be an additional advantage. I also welcome my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

The House will recall that on Second Reading I said that my interest in manufacturing industrial matters was well known. As chairman of the all-party wool textile group, I spoke about the wool guarantee and perhaps we shall return to that subject later. For many years, I have been closely involved in the milk industry, although not in a financial way. I declare an interest in that my husband is employed by one of the largest dairy companies in the country.

One aspect of the reform of the milk marketing scheme fundamentally contradicts the principles of our party and the Government and the purpose of the Bill that we are being asked to support. We are told that the Bill's intent is to create a free market in bulk milk so that our farmers and milk processors have a stimulus to compete more effectively with our European counterparts—that is wholly acceptable and welcome. However, we are also asked to give the Minister powers to approve the creation of a monopoly milk broker, the Milk Marque, which has aspirations to control 80 per cent. of the bulk milk market of England and Wales. We would not permit a processor to control 80 per cent. of the market in England and Wales, so why are we, the party of competition, even considering allowing such a position to develop?

There is now more demand from processors for the farmer's milk than available supply and no possibility of an expansion of production to meet that demand because, since 1984, production has been reduced by 17 per cent. as a result of the EC production quotas. Those quotas are likely to tighten still further rather than relax before the end of the decade.

In those circumstances, where farmers are guaranteed a market for their milk, the creation of a monopoly broker is both unnecessary and undesirable, particularly when more than half the output goes into the fresh liquid milk market, which is essentially a domestic market. It is not subject to foreign competition because of the cost and logistics of transporting fresh milk.

I should very much like doorstep deliveries to continue. They will continue if we use them and the more people who use them, the better the prospect for their future. Ultimately, if doorstep deliveries disappear, it will be the elderly, sick and disabled and those with small children without the capacity to go to supermarkets who will suffer. That is not a new campaign of mine—I have long campaigned for doorstep deliveries to continue. That system is often envied; some of the eastern bloc countries are looking at our scheme to see whether they can introduce similar ones.

I accept that producers need to organise themselves properly to negotiate effectively with processors. Four or five regionally based organisations would achieve that end and would, above all, safeguard the consumer against any part of the supply chain having too much power—an issue which we must all consider carefully. The establishment of a single milk brokerage more than twice the size of the second-largest buyer of milk in Europe is not imperative.

The dangers are all too obvious. Against a background of cutting costs in his organisation, the chief executive of the milk marketing board has already signalled his intention to use his monopoly power to force up milk prices by 20 per cent. when Milk Marque starts trading next year. Consumers will not thank us if that happens. What assurances are we giving consumers that that will not be allowed to happen? We are saying that, once the scheme ends, normal EC and United Kingdom competition laws will apply, leaving the competition authorities the job of sorting out a potentially unhealthy and chaotic process of our making. That is an abdication of our responsibilities. We have the power to establish a proper free market in bulk milk and now is the time to do it.

It is bizarre when it is left to the Opposition to table a new clause to ensure such a free market by limiting the size of any successor organisation. That should be a central plank of our reform as we are the party which is supposed to be committed to the principle of competition. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will have some reassuring comments to make when he replies. I think that new clause 8 is well worth supporting.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The Opposition agree with much of the speech of the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock). She has exposed what was exposed in detail in Committee—that the Bill will not create conditions of competition in the market place. As the hon. Lady said, her party has historically been wedded to principles of competition. We are being asked to accept that, having set itself the objective of securing 80 per cent. of the market of Britain's farmers and milk producers, the Milk Marque will act in the public interest. It cannot possibly act in the public interest if it has that share of the market.

I ask my hon. Friends and Conservative Members to give an example of an organisation which has 80 per cent. of the market but which does not abuse its position. I shall give way to any Minister who can give an example where there has not been an abuse of monopoly power. The general view throughout the industry, among the Dairy Trade Federation members and all those with whom I have discussed the subject, is that there will be an abuse of

*[Mr. Campbell-Savours]*

market power. The Government repeatedly told the Committee that the competition authorities which exist within the European Community, the Office of Fair Trading or the Monopolies and Mergers Commission could deal with the matter rapidly, but that is a myth. The process will not work in that way. That is why we have tabled the new clauses today.

Concern is being widely expressed about whether Milk Marque can abuse its market position. The Opposition's approach to the debate is two-pronged. We have tabled new clauses 9, 10 and 11 and amendment No. 3 to provide for a strong regulatory regime. That was a fierce approach to a potential problem, but it has not been possible to debate those issues today.

Secondly, we tabled a series of amendments to provide a weaker approach, giving Ministers the right to introduce regulations and powers to assist in establishing an orderly market. New clause 1 would introduce those powers into the Bill. They would apply in two different circumstances. The first arises where Milk Marque owns or partly owns processing facilities. The second arises where milk is supplied to processing facilities that are owned by farmers who, as producers, are nationally or regionally contracted to Milk Marque. There is concern that, in the second set of circumstances, farmers who are so contracted and are conscious of operating margins will use their milk supply power to require Milk Marque to supply processor operations in which the farmers have a shareholding. In the case of the former, would Milk Marque want to own processing facilities? Such an intention is set out in the document entitled "Rules of Milk Marque." I dealt with this point in detail in Committee. However, I believe that it will be of benefit if I draw the attention of the House once more to those rules. We believe that it is distinctly probable that, long after Mr. Andrew Dare and his formidable colleagues have retired, a future management of Milk Marque might set out to enter the processing business.

6 pm

To prove my point, the rules that will govern Milk Marque's operation once it is set up state that it wants to

"carry on directly or indirectly for the benefit of its Members . . . including the business of producing milk cream, butter, buttermilk, cultured milk, evaporated and semi-evaporated buttermilk or cultured milk, milk-sugar . . . cheese, whey preparations, milk powder, condensed whole or separated milk . . . ice-cream, margarine and any other commodity of which milk is a substantial ingredient."

It also wants to

"carry out such operations and to manufacture or deal with such goods . . . as may seem to the Board of Directors directly or indirectly to advance the interests of the Society . . . to carry on any other trade or business whatever which, in the opinion of the Board of Directors, can be advantageously carried out on, in connection with or ancillary to any of the above mentioned businesses or is calculated directly or indirectly to enhance the value of or render profitable any of the property, undertaking, rights or privileges of the Society."

I wanted to place those rules once more on the record. They prove that one day Milk Marque will own its own processing arms. We can therefore envisage that, if Milk Marque has 80 per cent. of the market and its own processing arms, it may well show preferential treatment to those processing arms.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** What is the difference between the situation of which the hon. Gentleman complains and the Co-operative Wholesale Society which is the country's largest retailer and farmer and one of this country's largest dairy producers and processors? What is the inherent difference in that situation and the situation of which the hon. Gentleman complains?

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The answer is very simple: it does not have 80 per cent. of the market and it did not set out to secure 80 per cent. of the market in any area in which it operates.

If Milk Marque succeeds, it will inevitably develop into an integrated broker and processor of milk. I am not sure whether the competition authorities in the form of the Office of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will necessarily have the power to stop that happening. I believe that Parliament may well have to exercise some influence in these matters. If the OFT and the MMC can deal with the difficulties, fair enough. However, if they cannot, powers must be available to Ministers.

New clause 1 includes the phrase:

"may by regulation introduce measures".

That does not place any compulsion. The real dangers will arise when there is a milk shortage or a developing milk shortage. Professor David Harvey of Newcastle university has predicted that, by the end of the century, there may be a further cut of 20 per cent. in quota. If there is to be that level of reduction in quota in the Community—that applies equally in the United Kingdom—and milk is in short supply, it will be fought over fairly aggressively.

Over the past 10 years, there has been a 16·5 per cent. cut in quota. I understand that we may be due for a further 2 per cent. cut in quota next year. Irrespective of the predictions, we are en route for a major milk shortage. With cuts in export subsidies on processed milk and commodity products, no one will volunteer to close plants.

The marketplace will become increasingly aggressive. In those conditions, an aggressive Milk Marque will want to look after its own processor interests. The farmers who supply Milk Marque and have interests in processing plants will also want to ensure that Milk Marque provides milk to those plants.

In the new world, there will be no EC rough equivalent available, if only because the Community, during the same period, will want to cut expenditure. We cannot expect there to be a barrel of brass available to buy out processing plants in future.

I am also concerned about the investment decisions that will take place in the new world market place. Mr. Haskins of Northern Foods has said that, because of the changes that might take place in the marketplace, investment decisions that he might be considering may be deferred if not changed. Mr. Haskins said:

"One thing is for sure: if farmers were to club together, with 80 per cent. to 90 per cent. of the milk, you won't find Northern Foods investing in such a climate."

One of the largest milk processors in the United Kingdom is already talking in terms of not investing——

**Mr. Jack:** Why did Northern Foods buy Northern Dairies?

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The Minister should ask Mr. Haskins that question. Mr. Haskins' reply would not be the one that the Minister expects.

Mr. Haskins continued:

"We would invest elsewhere. We'd go to Ireland or France. Once you make an investment (we've got a £20 million UHT investment to make, for example) you are dependent on your raw material supplies.

If you are not happy about the manner in which that raw material is going to be supplied, then you'll hardly invest in the business. Why should I have to buy from a monopoly when I've only got 24 per cent. of the market?"

Of course, he was being very facetious.

People in the industry in this country are already pointing with concern to the conditions that will exist in the new marketplace. The Opposition new clauses to some extent set out to redress problems which we believe Ministers have failed to address.

**Mr. Jack:** We have been treated to an interesting insight into Opposition competition policy. I would like to deal with some of the points raised by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang). However, before I do that, I thank the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) and my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) for their kind words of welcome.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East opened the argument by referring to the threat to the consumer and to questions about milk price rises.

I once earned my living buying for a supermarket. If somebody came to me and said, "The organisation of the business that we are involved in has changed and I would like to charge you 20 per cent. more for our product," I would have shown him the door. The short answer is that the people who are presently engaged in buying milk products will ensure that they can remain competitive in the marketplace. In respect of many products in which ingredients other than liquid milk products are used, consumers can make alternative purchases. That demonstrates the dynamics of the marketplace which will be opened up by this measure.

For example, yoghurt is a dessert. Many forms of dessert could be used. One could substitute a dessert for a piece of fresh fruit. That is the competitive nature of the fruit business.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours** *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Jack:** It is no use the hon. Member for Workington running away from the way in which marketplaces work and shaking his head. If he has ever pushed a supermarket trolley, he will know that such decisions must be made by the consumer. I do not believe that there will be an overnight price rise.

A large number of outcomes may befall a Milk Marque that abuses its dominant position in the marketplace. Several hon. Members mentioned the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, the Office of Fair Trading, the Director General of Fair Trading and the European Community in respect of articles 85 and 86 of the treaty. All those wait to entrap a Milk Marque which abuses its so-called dominant market position.

**Dr. Strang:** Is the Minister suggesting that the chief executive of the milk marketing board was not serious when he said that Milk Marque will pay 20 per cent. more for milk?

**Mr. Jack:** It is not my task to comment on the pricing policy that those who run Milk Marque or any other organisation care to make in bidding up those who might seek to do business with it. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) commented on Northern Foods. It is interesting to note that, on "Farming Today", when I last listened to it, Mr. Haskins said, "Come with us and you will get a better price." Clearly, people are setting out their stall to ensure that the deal that they are offering will attract supplies. In so doing, perhaps they are taking into account the fact that there will be a different marketplace for milk.

I now refer to the nature of the competitive process. If we follow the logic of what the Opposition are putting forward, we at least are removing the present totally dominant situation. The Bill would remove the existing milk marketing board, which has an absolute monopoly except in one or two cases of those who bottle, produce and sell from their own farms or those who make certain dairy products. We are introducing competition and choice. More important, we are safeguarding those who struggle to get milk supplies, for example, for those who are specialist cheese or other dairy product producers. In so doing, we are helping to enhance enterprise and opportunity.

**Mr. Tyler:** On the point about the regulatory and competitive framework within which Milk Marque will have to proceed, in Committee we were given an explicit assurance that the European Commission could intervene, if asked to do so, within the first two years. I want to make that point absolutely clear because it is very important to those of us who are concerned about the framework.

6.15 pm

**Mr. Jack:** I have studied the matter with care and I have read the letter which Sir Leon Brittan has written on the subject. As the hon. Gentleman knows, that letter was sent to my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), the previous Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Sir Leon Brittan says, "I have looked at the proposals and I am prepared to stay my hand subject to certain factors, for example the determination of the terms upon which people may leave Milk Marque as suppliers." However, he also says, "I will be keeping a close eye on what is going on, and if people complain to me that there is abuse of a dominant market position, I do not fetter my hand to act if necessary." That must equally be the situation that the Director General of Fair Trading will face. A lot of people will be watching.

The hon. Member for Workington told us of the hidden agenda. With his forensic approach to politics, he dearly loves to find so-called hidden agendas and new truths. The hon. Gentleman has been a company director; he understands such matters. From the articles of association of the business that he was involved in, he will know that a business lays out the full scope of what it might like to do in future. Therefore, Milk Marque would not wish to fetter its position if, to come back to the dynamics of the competitive market, things begin to change.

I am sure that, initially in year one, Milk Marque will attract a large number of milk suppliers, but they, being canny farmers, will be looking over the proverbial hedge to see how their mates are doing. If they are doing rather well because they have signed up with a local co-operative supplying a local dairy or any other organisation that cares to bid for their milk, they might exercise their rights to move. Milk Marque might find that the situation changes and that the nature of the business needs to adapt.

The Opposition's dinosaur approach to politics would not allow Milk Marque the ability to change. Goodness

*[Mr. Jack]*

knows what the consequences might be. That shows that the Opposition do not understand the dynamics of the marketplace and how they can work to safeguard the interests of small producers, for example, and how the marketplace will deal with price.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** May I ask the Minister a very simple question? We can accept his allegation that we do not know how the marketplace works, but do members of the Dairy Trade Federation—the people who do the processing in the industry, who have briefed us in detail and indeed written several of the amendments that were moved in Committee—also know nothing about the business, or is it just the Minister who understands those matters?

**Mr. Jack:** When people have enjoyed a relatively cosy and intimate relationship, as the DTF and the milk marketing board have done for many years, would not one expect them to try to argue for the status quo? Life is so much easier. We are opening up the industry and addressing the central point of the Opposition's argument. If the Opposition are concerned about the dominant market position, why did they vote against breaking up the body which has the dominant market position—the milk marketing board?

**Dr. Strang:** There is all the difference in the world between a regulated monopoly in which there is a law that lays down the conditions and a price is agreed between the Dairy Trade Federation and the board, and the voluntary free market that we are moving into. There are no restraints at all on the companies and co-operatives in the new market situation. It is like going back to publicly owned utilities, with a monopoly, public ownership, tight control, and then moving to private ownership. There is absolutely no comparison. The Minister cannot say that there is a contradiction. The Bill is bound to wind up the boards, so we should look at the new circumstances.

**Mr. Jack:** I am glad that the Opposition are looking at the new system. The Opposition's amendments—some of them were not selected—provided a window to the new Opposition thinking. Whenever there appears to be domination of one group as against another in the marketplace, they want a directorate-general and they want to start setting prices for products. They are missing the dynamics of the competitive process. If, in years two, three, four or five, other organisations which are presently bidding for supplies of milk do better than Milk Marque, who knows what will happen? Those processes are the best safeguard against the abuse of a dominant position, backed by clear law in respect of the way in which the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and indeed the European Community can act. I can think of no greater sword of Damocles hanging over the new organisation than those very powerful pieces of law. The central issue is that the Conservative party introduced competition to break down the dominant market.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East asked about doorstep deliveries. When I go home, I relish the visits of Mr. Morris, our local milkman. He would be deeply distressed if I said something that put his livelihood at risk. Mr. Morris will be delighted that the abolition of the milk marketing boards means that the dreaded 2p levy that he has to pay will disappear. That will improve the competitiveness of his business. I have noticed that Mr. Morris's business has expanded over the years, as have those of many others who make doorstep deliveries. All kinds of goods are available for the convenience of the consumer, because those who make doorstep deliveries realise that they are in a highly competitive market. The argument has been that, as supermarkets have entered the milk business, those who make doorstep deliveries have had to adapt, and they have adapted. Some have said that they wished to retain the convenience of doorstep deliveries—others have found it better to buy milk from a supermarket. Conservative Members believe in choice. Equally, I am glad that those who make doorstep deliveries have reacted.

**Mr. Andrew Welsh** (Angus, East): Will the Minister confirm a Government commitment to a Scottish milk development council if the industry wished to set one up?

**Mr. Jack:** We shall look at all the proposals when we have a clear sight of what is to succeed the present system. I am aware of the interest in development councils and will examine the proposition.

I was about to comment on a point about the dynamics of competition. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East asks whether there is a possibility of milk coming from abroad. A French producer, for example, may decide, as a result of the lower labour costs and competitive manufacturing environment that we have created on this side of the channel, to establish a factory here. That factory might produce high value-added dairy products and the producer might think that the transport cost of approximately 5p to move milk from mainland Europe to within 100 miles of Calais may be worth doing. Who knows? There is always that possibility.

Equally, I can reassure the hon. Member for North Cornwall, who made an important point about milk quotas. My right hon. Friend the Minister and I commit ourselves firmly to continuing to campaign for what is good for Britain and the dairy industry in terms of the future of quotas. The hon. Gentleman raised an important point and we are very much wedded to that. We understand some of the imbalances in the Community and there are longer-term agreements. We shall want to campaign for what is best for Britain.

**Mr. William Cash** (Stafford): Will the Minister be good enough to confirm that the increase in quotas for Greece and Italy which has not been properly supervised militates against the interests of British milk producers, particularly the large number in my constituency? We cannot allow the situation to be perpetuated. I accept that the Government want to campaign for Britain, but will they do something about it?

**Mr. Jack:** I am disappointed that as assiduous a European student as my hon. Friend has not reflected on the facts. The uncovering of the activities in Italy has meant, first, that £70 million has been returned to the Commission and, secondly, a reduction in the Italian total production of milk products. They have had an increase in their formal quota, but as a result 1·76 million tonnes of milk will be taken out of production. As a further bonus to farmers in his constituency, the 1 per cent. reduction in milk quotas did not occur. I call that a tour de force for

those of us who are trying to stop abuse in the Community. I am glad that my hon. Friend raised the question and I hope that he will accept the answer.

My hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen at heart has some sympathy with new clause 8. The idea of an automatic referral if Milk Marque got 50 per cent. of the milk supply before the process of vesting was continued would cause tremendous disruption in the industry. I do not think that that would be widely welcomed. It also gives rise to an interesting point: what happens if other organisations are as successful as she expects Milk Marque will be? Would she want those to be referred?

**Mrs. Peacock:** Certainly.

**Mr. Jack:** My hon. Friend says that she would, but I think that people want a speedy resolution of the matters. Bearing in mind what I have said to my hon. Friend about competition law, I hope that she will accept that we shall be looking carefully at the interests of all concerned. Much of what has been said by my hon. Friend and others will be in the minds of Ministers when they look at the schemes. The fact that the company that she refers to is now in the business of bidding for its supplies of milk shows us clearly that we have entered a competitive situation. The company could not previously have secured its own supplies of milk. I believe that it welcomes that. It would not have made an investment such as the purchase of Express Dairies if it had not seen a long-term future in the dairy industry.

The hon. Member for Workington mentioned a number of the new clauses. He and the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South both referred to new clause 7. I thought that they might be campaigning for new jobs as representatives on the board from north and south of the border respectively. Theirs is not a terribly sensible idea. The amendments that they have tabled do not take forward the role of the so-called place person on the new board in any meaningful sense. I do not think that the proposals would add in any way to safeguarding the interests of the people in whom they claim to be interested. The points that I have made on competition law would do far more to discipline the minds of Milk Marque in the future than the ideas that those hon. Gentleman have put before the House this evening.

For all those reasons, I believe that we have put an unassailable case before the House this evening. The dynamics of the marketplace will safeguard against the fears that Opposition Members have put forward. The law on competition and the threat of investigation from the EC are powerful safeguards against abuse. Opposition Members have not looked far enough forward to see what would happen in the development of the milk business. Their amendments would fetter that development; ours would encourage it.

*Question put and negatived.*

## New clause 6

### DISPUTES PROCEDURE

.—(1) The appropriate authority shall not approve a scheme of reorganisation unless the terms of purchase and supply of each successor body proposed to be engaged in milk trading make provision for the resolution of disputes between such a successor body, these purchasing milk from it and those supplying milk to it.

(2) For the purposes of this section reference to a "successor body" shall mean any body proposed by a board in a scheme of re-organisation to be engaged in milk trading and in respect of which a statement of the nature required by section (2)(c) has been submitted.'.—*[Mr. Campbell-Savours.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a second time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to discuss also amendment No. 83, in clause 3, page 3, line 27, at end insert

'(aa) Whether the scheme makes sound provision for the settlement of diputes between the successor body and its customers;'.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** In winding up a few moments ago, the Minister used an interesting phrase. He said, "I think what people want is a speedy resolution of these matters." That is precisely what the new clauses are about. New clause 6 is particularly important to the processors as they move into a free market. The Government keep on saying, and said again today, that if the membership of the DTF—the processors and dairies—is concerned about what happens in the market, it can use the courts, the Office of Fair Trading, or the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, or it can go to the EC's regulatory authority. Of course, we all know that that is a long-drawn-out process and that much damage can be done in the interim period unless a proper disputes procedure is set up. The new clauses deal specifically with that disputes procedure.

Hon. Members may need to be reminded of what the previous Secretary of State said on those matters when we debated the Bill on 23 March this year. I asked whether Ministers had ruled out arbitration for the disputes procedures. The former Secretary of State replied:

"In advance of the board's proposals I would not like to say that I have ruled out anything of that nature but I see no role at the moment for further statutory interference in the way in which the market will operate. I shall certainly not be dogmatic as I am not a dogmatic person."—[*Official Report*, 23 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 793.]

Those are the words of the former Minister, to whom I refer as a Secretary of State. That is what he was and what the right hon. Lady now is. So much for dogmatism. In Committee, we saw no movement at all on the question of disputes procedure.

We have no fast-track approach to sort out problems such as unreasonable refusal to supply, disputes about the use of assets as marketing tools—we debated that issue at length in Committee—the poaching of contracts, the selective predatory pricing to producers and perhaps even unreasonable collection and delivery conditions. To some extent, collection problems can be dealt with in Milk Marque's own rules. Curiously enough, Milk Marque's rules provide for a disputes procedure, but, in the main, deal only with internal matters.

Section 19 of the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958 provides for consumer and investigation committees, to which reference has already been made. However, they are to be wound up under this non-statutory arrangement. The scheme proposed by the milk marketing board provides for a joint committee and an arbitration procedure. The problem with that scheme is that a draft scheme of reorganisation, which is not statutory, does not provide for a joint committee or arbitration. Therefore, there is no machinery in place to deal with the issue of disputes.

6.30 pm

What can we do if Milk Marque gets too big for its boots and finds itself embroiled in disputes? The answer is to insist on a procedure for the resolution of disputes to be clearly defined at the time that a scheme is approved. The Minister will have to do that because, effectively, he will approve the schemes. He can say to those who submit schemes, "I require that a disputes procedure in which I have confidence be inserted in the scheme before I approve it." The matter is in his hands.

The Dairy Trade Federation supports new clause 6. I quote:

"The DTFs concerns about dispute resolution under new milk marketing arrangements stems from the anticipation, on the Board's own reckoning, that their successor is likely to command a high percentage of the market in the supply of raw milk . . . Sub-clause 1 would require each successor body of a Milk Marketing Board to make provision for the settlement of disputes and for the appropriate authority not to approve a scheme of re-organisation without such provision. The arrangement for dispute resolution would cover not only those purchasing milk from a successor body, but also those supplying milk to it. At the heart of the proposal lie concerns that disputes relating to volume and supply can be speedily dealt with, rather than requiring the parties concerned to engage in lengthy court proceedings, possibly after the supply has been cut off."

Amendment No. 83 would further extend the principles that I am arguing in this debate and contains another disputes procedure. That disputes procedure is from the Unigate stable. When Ministers determine whether schemes should be approved, Unigate wants them to have regard to whether the scheme makes sound provision for the settlement of disputes, as is the case of the more widely represented Dairy Trade Federation.

On the referee issue, the Dairy Trade Federation proposes that the milk marketing boards' sale and conditions arbitration procedure set out in rule No. 30, effective from 1 May 1991, should be applied in the case of schemes approved by the Minister and suggests that a requirement to use that procedure must be built into the approval that Ministers might give. I do not know if the Minister is aware of that procedure—I understand that he has had to do a lot of reading since his new appointment. If he is not aware of it, I shall quote precisely what Unigate says:

"Unigate believe that a referee is necessary to safeguard the interests of producers of milk . . . Various suggestions have been made re a 'Referee' ranging from an 'OFMILK', to a supervisory body, to retaining the type of arbitration arrangements that exist between the MMB and milk buyers collectively . . . While Unigate recognises that there are wider issues involved and that there are advantages and disadvantages to all of these options, Unigate believes that there is a simpler approach which would satisfy those concerns, i.e.; Compulsory arbitration between individual purchasers, buyers of milk and Milk Marque, if a dispute were to arise which could not be resolved in any other way. The MMB current sale conditions currently provide for this type of arbitration between an individual buyer and the MMB (with the parties deciding on their own arbitrators)."

Is it possible for such an arrangement to be built into whatever approvals are decided by Ministers, or are they prepared to go further in the way that I have suggested in new clause 6 with perhaps a more substantial power?

**Mr. Jack:** I have listened to the impassioned pleadings of the hon. Member for Workington for a variety of approaches to the question of the resolution of disputes. On the basis of what he said, I am not persuaded that there is a need for us to go beyond the normal way of dealing with disputes in situations of competition which will be created by the removal of milk marketing boards.

The flaw in the forensically based argument of the hon. Gentleman is that he seeks to impose a raft of new ideas on Milk Marque but does not reflect on the fact that there will be others in the business. Other people who are competing for supplies of milk will have to lay out to their prospective suppliers the terms on which they will do business. If I were one of them, a question that I, as a farmer who is used to buying a whole range of supplies for my enterprise, would ask is: what happens if I fall out with a supplier? I would want to investigate that.

I would want to examine the terms of trade—this shows the lack of understanding of Opposition Members of the way in which markets work. I am sure that one of the factors that may affect farmers in deciding their point of supply is the basis of the contract and what it says on these matters. I would want to make an informed judgment. For example, I might want to get my adviser to say, "Which of these processes will be the fairest to you?"

As a knowing and commercial man and one who has been in business for some time, I would know what to look out for in terms of a dispute and the resolution of such difficulties. The hon. Gentleman knows that arbitration in normal commercial terms is one route. Another route is legal action. His point was that those processes could take some time and that continuing practical day-to-day difficulties may result. He will know that the Department of Trade and Industry made an announcement on 14 April which pointed the way forward for a more developed and selective way in which competition policy might address some of those internal difficulties. As a humble Agriculture Minister, it is not for me to trespass into those areas, but it shows the Government's thinking to ensure that competition policy can deal with those matters.

My predecessor also mentioned the possible extension of the Competition Act 1980 into those areas. He rightly did not fetter his hand on that until he saw precisely the final scheme put forward by the milk marketing boards. If we look into the near distance, we can see some hopeful possibilities for dealing with some of those issues. But it is not our view—this is the central issue—that there is a requirement for new mechanisms to deal with such disputes. Farmers are business people. They understand what they are letting themselves in for and will read the fine print.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Does the Minister accept that it is more likely that there will be a dispute when one is dealing with the operations of a voluntary monopoly, which might control 80 per cent. of the market, than in other conditions, in which the supplying organisation has a far smaller share of the market? Does he accept that the scale of share would aggravate the condition that could lead to a dispute?

**Mr. Jack:** The short answer is that the scale of share would aggravate the position only if the person who had the dominant position abused that position by unfair actions. That brings us precisely back to the arguments about the operation of competition policy. Such unfair actions would be an abuse of the privileges of having a dominant position.

The hon. Gentleman should examine any personal circumstances in which he has been in dispute with people

in trade matters. He will find that disputes occur in the normal day-to-day business dealings of small or large companies. It is interesting to note that many large companies are trying hard to improve their customer relations because they wish to minimise the besmirchment of their otherwise excellent record in matters of dispute. Urged on by the Government's excellent initiative on the citizens charter, many people are opening up the ways in which they deal with complaints. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman does not give weight to that point.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** It is a good example.

**Mr. Jack:** I am glad that the hon. Member says that it is a good example because the example is percolating its way into the private sector, into which we hope that supplies of milk will go.

**Mr. Tyler:** The Minister cast the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) in the role of a latter-day Sherlock Holmes with forensic skills. I see him more in the role of an old testament prophet producing 10 commandments in the land flowing with milk and honey. The new clause is over-reaction and over-regulation.

There is a serious point here. I listened carefully to the Minister's response. His predecessor admitted on several occasions in Committee that we were in a sensitive transition from a robustly managed market into what we hoped would be a more competitive market. As both Opposition and Conservative Members acknowledge, that transition inherently contains stresses and strains.

The Minister's predecessor said in Committee that he would examine the scheme that was suggested. He said that he would not prejudge it because, as he rightly said, that would impede his judicial role when the scheme came before him in due course. However, he said that it was important to consider ways in which disputes could be avoided, not merely resolved, under the terms of the scheme.

I took the point made by the Minister today about the proposals that have been made by the Department of Trade and Industry. I hope that those proposals will be helpful in this and other matters. The central point is surely this. We do not seek to over-regulate. We are trying to reduce regulation and free up a market. It must be done in a way that does not damage any parties that we can help. But to include in the Bill some provision which would impede the progress towards a freer market would be a retrograde step.

*Question put and negatived.*

## New clause 8

### FUTURE REGULATION (NO. 2)

.—(1) In the case of a scheme of re-organisation submitted by the Milk Marketing Board of England and Wales it shall be a requirement of any approval of such a scheme that on vesting day or, if the target figure specified in subsection (2) below is attained before that date then on the day it is attained, the appropriate authority shall be advised by any successor body to the said board of the names of the producers contracting to supply milk to it and by the said board of the volume of milk which those producers had sold to it in the year 1st April 1992 to 31st March 1993 ("the period") and the total volume of milk sold to it during the period.

(2) Where the milk sold to the said board during the period by the producers contracting to supply a successor body represents 50 per cent. or more of the total volume of milk sold to the said board during the period ("the target figure"), the appropriate authority shall refer the trading practices and operations whether actual or intended of any such successor body to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for investigation.

(3) For the purposes of this section reference to a "successor body" shall mean any body proposed by a board in a scheme of re-organisation to be engaged in milk trading and in respect of which a statement of the nature required by section (2)(c) has been submitted.'.—*[Dr. Strang.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

*Motion made—[Dr. Strang]—and Question put,* That the clause be read a Second time:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 150, Noes 269.

**Division No. 305]** **[6.43 pm**

**AYES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Adams, Mrs Irene | Hinchliffe, David |
| Ainger, Nick | Hoey, Kate |
| Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)* | Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)* |
| Armstrong, Hilary | Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)* |
| Ashton, Joe | Hoyle, Doug |
| Austin-Walker, John | Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)* |
| Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)* | Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)* |
| Barron, Kevin | Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)* |
| Battle, John | Hutton, John |
| Bayley, Hugh | Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)* |
| Benn, Rt Hon Tony | Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)* |
| Bennett, Andrew F. | Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)* |
| Benton, Joe | Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)* |
| Bermingham, Gerald | Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)* |
| Bray, Dr Jeremy | Jowell, Tessa |
| Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)* | Keen, Alan |
| Burden, Richard | Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)* |
| Byers, Stephen | Khabra, Piara S. |
| Caborn, Richard | Kilfoyle, Peter |
| Callaghan, Jim | Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)* |
| Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)* | Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)* |
| Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)* | Lewis, Terry |
| Campbell-Savours, D. N. | Livingstone, Ken |
| Cann, Jamie | Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)* |
| Clapham, Michael | Loyden, Eddie |
| Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)* | McAllion, John |
| Clelland, David | McAvoy, Thomas |
| Clwyd, Mrs Ann | McCartney, Ian |
| Connarty, Michael | McFall, John |
| Corbyn, Jeremy | McKelvey, William |
| Cousins, Jim | Mackinlay, Andrew |
| Cryer, Bob | McLeish, Henry |
| Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)* | Mahon, Alice |
| Dalyell, Tam | Mandelson, Peter |
| Davidson, Ian | Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)* |
| Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)* | Maxton, John |
| Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)* | Meale, Alan |
| Dewar, Donald | Michael, Alun |
| Dixon, Don | Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)* |
| Dobson, Frank | Milburn, Alan |
| Dowd, Jim | Morgan, Rhodri |
| Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth | Morley, Elliot |
| Eagle, Ms Angela | Mudie, George |
| Enright, Derek | Mullin, Chris |
| Etherington, Bill | Murphy, Paul |
| Evans, John *(St Helens N)* | O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)* |
| Fatchett, Derek | O'Brien, William *(Normanton)* |
| Flynn, Paul | O'Hara, Edward |
| Foster, Rt Hon Derek | Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth |
| Foulkes, George | Pike, Peter L. |
| Fyfe, Maria | Pope, Greg |
| Galloway, George | Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)* |
| Gerrard, Neil | Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)* |
| Golding, Mrs Llin | Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)* |
| Gordon, Mildred | Prescott, John |
| Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)* | Primarolo, Dawn |
| Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)* | Purchase, Ken |
| Grocott, Bruce | Quin, Ms Joyce |
| Hain, Peter | Raynsford, Nick |
| Hardy, Peter | Robertson, George *(Hamilton)* |
| Hill, Keith *(Streatham)* | Roche, Mrs. Barbara |

Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Eric Illsley and**
**Mr. Gordon McMaster.**

**NOES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman and**
**Mr. Andrew MacKay.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

## Clause 3

### DETERMINATION OF APPLICATIONS

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 3, line 15, after 'principles', insert 'and details'.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 6, in clause 4, page 4, line 20, after 'above', insert

'following consultation with parties likely to be affected directly or indirectly by the proposed modifications'.

No. 7, in page 4, line 26, at end insert

', and it shall also give then a statement as to what consultation has taken place with producers, consumers, retailers and purchasers as to the proposed modifications.'.

No. 8, in page 4, line 36, at end insert—

'(d) provided the authority with a statement as to the nature of any consultations which have taken place with those producers, retailers, consumers and purchasers of milk as it thinks appropriate on the proposed modifications.'.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** This set of four amendments is about the issue of consultation. It follows a long series of debates in Committee where we repeatedly raised the question of consultation. We raised the profile of the issue because throughout our own consultation with the industry and our discussions with people in the industry, in particular the processors, we repeatedly heard comment on the lack of consultation. In Committee the Minister told us that a particular organisation had been consulted but the two representatives of that organisation, sitting at the back of the Committee Room, shook their heads. So great has been the misunderstanding of Ministers about their responsibilities to outside organisations.

The Government have dragged their feet on consultation since the beginning with the result that at one stage or another in the process the dairy trade, food manufacturers, retailers and producers have all expressed opposition to aspects of the Bill. We are entitled to know why the Government have been so tardy. Why have we had to drag Ministers, struggling, protesting and bickering, through the hoop of consultation? Even today the Bill says far too little about consultation.

7 pm

Furthermore, it makes totally inadequate provision for approved applications to be endorsed by the House of Commons. I accept that paragraphs (a) and (b) of clause 3(2) refer to the principle of consultation, saying that the authority must be satisfied

"that the board has taken reasonable steps to bring the principles of the schemes to persons who are registered producers"

and referring to the fact that the authority must consult purchasers, producers, retailers and consumers about the principles of the scheme. However, the provision is far too limited. The prospect of an unregulated monopoly fiercely requires the placing on the Government of an obligation to consult. And the consultation must be on principles, and not just about the details of the scheme.

Details of the scheme could arguably include the machinery for fixing prices; the arrangements for dealing with shortages in the market place; the standards of quality of milk sold by Milk Marque; the provision, or otherwise, of an independent arbitration or disputes procedure, as referred to in another amendment; the availability to producers outside the scheme of any assets that might be retained by Milk Marque, such as National Milk Records, Genus and Central Testing, which, as I said to Ministers at the Committee stage, would amount to a questionable placing of those assets; the arrangements in an over-supplied market where supplies might be rationed, as referred to in the intention to purchase document that the milk marketing board sent out to prospective buyers in March; the approach to be adopted by the milk marketing board and the residuary body to outstanding claims; the question of the incurring of expenditure by the Milk Marketing Board on the promotion of Milk Marque, which I understand to be causing quite some comment in the farming press of the United Kingdom; the attitude to be taken by Milk Marque to the supply of milk in conditions of vertical integration with processor plants in the future, in the way that I was suggesting in the debate on earlier amendments; the provision that is being made for the pensioners of the board's existing operation, which is to be dealt with in an amendment to be moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping); and the treatment of direct sellers, some of whom remain uneasy about certain aspects of the Bill, despite the fairly substantial concessions that the Government have been prepared to make.

There are several areas in which future arguments should be avoided at all costs. To avoid those arguments, if we are not to have the disputes procedure for which we have argued today, we must have a proper process of consultation. Why should the industry have to worry about this potential lack of consultation in the future? I do not know whether the Minister has read the comments that Lord Howe made in another place. The noble Lord said that the principles of the scheme are its main elements —those elements that are enough to give a sufficient picture of the scheme as a whole so that consultees can reasonably be expected to form the view without needing the full details before them. The noble Lord said that excluded would be, for example, details such as the schedule of properties or the commercially sensitive and confidential elements of the scheme.

I remind the Government that this is enabling legislation and that Parliament is having its last say. In the wider sense of the approval of schemes, these matters will not come before us again. If only for that reason, there is a real need for the most sophisticated type of consultation procedure to be put in place. We need the fullest possible transparency, not only with regard to the scheme originally submitted but with regard to variations and modifications.

If the Government are minded to turn down these amendments, they would do well to recall the bitter experience of the milk marketing board in respect of its consultation on the milk requirements of the processors. The consultation did not work. It was wrong. It did not operate correctly—a fact that the Minister should bear in mind when responding. On that occasion the voice of the industry was unanimous in crying, "Stop the bullying." That was the industry's response to the way in which the milk marketing board conducted its affairs. The then Secretary of State had to intervene and almost instruct the board to withdraw the document that it had sent out, which had clearly upset so many of the processors. Of course, the milk marketing board responded.

Many of these matters could be dealt with if the proper consultation procedures were put in place. We have the support of the Dairy Trade Federation and the Food and Drink Federation for the amendments. Those organisations feel strongly about these matters, and the Government should respond sympathetically.

**Mr. Jack:** The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is right to raise the very important subject of consultation. In the short time that I have been in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food it must be one of the most-consulted Government Departments. Hardly a day goes by without someone writing to us about something. It is not as if we live in a secret world in which things happen and decisions are taken without probing. The very fact that we are debating these matters today is a further example of the type of probing that can take place in respect of an exercise like this. If, at the end of the day, people are concerned about what the board proposes, the House can always be used as a forum for such discussion. The potential role of Parliament should not be ignored.

The amendments seek to define in clear terms various ways in which the consultation process might be carried out. I am concerned about that. I can see no circumstances in which, once the board produces its suggestions, people—whether suppliers or processors—will not come forward and give us their views in no uncertain terms.

With regard to the obligations of the authority and Ministers in respect of these matters, clause 3(2)(b) makes it abundantly clear that the authority to which the application is made shall not grant it except in stated circumstances. The provision goes on to talk about consultation, and makes it very clear indeed that the process must be carried out thoroughly. It also makes clear that, in determining our role in this matter, we have to take into account the interests of consumers and producers of milk. Our obligations could not be clearer.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Why does the provision preclude detail?

**Mr. Jack:** I imagine that the hon. Gentleman, because of his political persuasion, has never made an application —perhaps I do him a disservice, so I shall speak very quietly—for shares in a company. *[Interruption.]* We have discovered a new truth about the hon. Gentleman. I do not want to cast aspersions. Opposition Members have cast enough of them in the past 24 hours. I say to the hon. Gentleman as an honourable man, that if his eye had lighted on the prospectuses for the sale of shares in many companies that have sought to raise extra capital in the market, or have made a new issue, he would have seen the amount of detail that is necessary to satisfy even the most sophisticated of investors. Every single detail would not be provided, despite what the amendment proposed. If the amendment were accepted every lease, terms of property and every other single fact would have to be accumulated in some vast volume. A pantechnicon with that volume would arrive at the home of every consultee and a forklift truck would be needed to carry it in.

I do not believe that that is what the hon. Member for Workington had in mind. I believe that he wants sufficient detail and information to be given so that people can make informed choices. We shall look carefully at the propositions that are presented to us for the means to provide such information.

I do not want the hon. Gentleman to think, however, that our decision-making process will be clothed in total secrecy. Once we have looked at the boards' proposals, we will produce our description of them. We will include such detail as we consider necessary to enable consultees to comment on the matters that will affect them. We will exclude, quite properly, commercially sensitive information and details that are irrelevant to the judgment of the proposals on, for example, lists of property.

The hon. Gentleman, with his commercial experience, will appreciate the type of questions that people who are interested in the proposals will want to raise. If I were a supplier of milk, I would want to know the terms upon which my business would be conducted. I should like to know what I was expected to do. I should also like to know what Milk Marque was expected to do and when I would be paid. I should like to know how my milk would be paid for, when it would be collected and under what terms of the contract. Those are the things that matter to farmers. I do not believe that they would be wildly concerned as to whether the office typewriter is leased, bought or whatever.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** What about the boards' other assets?

**Mr. Jack:** I shall come to them in a moment, but they will want to know about the terms under which their members may acquire their milk.

I appreciate that the document that was sent out by the Milk Marque did not get a warm and friendly press. I can understand why. The hon. Member for Workington is assiduous in his preparation, however, and if he delves into that document he will find that it contains some warm and friendly phrases. It talks about wanting to develop partnerships and offer service. That is the language that producers understand. The document also provides a variety of specimen types of contract. Those are the details for which those who are seeking supplies of milk will look. I feel certain the propositions from the boards will reflect on those issues.

The central issue is found in clause 3, which puts a clear responsibility on Ministers to ensure that the right detail is considered. We want to be able to paint our pictures. I am sure that the hon. Member for Workington will want to put his own questions and we may want to ask some in our consultation document. That important safeguard will ensure that people can give us their views.

7.15 pm

Someone may say that he would have liked to have seen more detail on a certain point. Such a sensible question is what proper consultation is all about. As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, all the various interested bodies will certainly not be backward in coming forward with their propositions concerning the proposed major change.

I have considered the Opposition amendments and I cannot recommend my right hon. and hon. Friends to support them.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** How sad.

**Mr. Jack:** It is a great sadness because some of them are drafted in such a way that they would not work.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Perhaps that was the reason for them.

**Mr. Jack:** The hon. Gentleman has admitted that he has drafted amendments that do not work, but he invites

the House to support them. They are the product of the "Don't work" party. For that reason, I need not detain the House with a detailed examination of them.

*Amendment negatived.*

**Mr. Jack:** I beg to move amendment No. 10, in page 3, line 44, leave out 'milk production' and insert 'the occurrence'.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to discuss also Government amendments Nos. 11 and 12.

**Mr. Jack:** The amendments, unlike those tabled by the Opposition, work and make a small technical correction to clause 3(5), which deals with the possible basis for the distribution of board assets to producers. The present reference to milk production is fine in so far as it could refer to a person who is registered as a producer on a specified day or within a specified period.

If a board wanted to base its distribution of assets on a producer's litreage of milk or the value of it, it would refer to milk produced and marketed. Some milk is produced and not marketed, however; for example, if it is fed to calves on farms. The new wording makes the necessary distinction.

*Amendment agreed to.*

*Amendments made:* No. 11, in page 3, line 45, after 'year)', insert 'of any relevant matter'.

No. 12, in page 3, line 48, at end insert—

'(6) For the purposes of subsection (5) above, the following are relevant matters—

(a) the production of milk, and

(b) the sale of milk by the person responsible for producing it.

(7) For the purposes of subsection (6)(b) above, milk shall be treated as sold if it is sold in the form of milk or in the form of a product which is wholly or partly derived from milk or which includes milk as an ingredient.'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

## Schedule 1

### QUALIFYING SCHEME OF REORGANISATION

**Mr. Jack:** I beg to move amendment No. 13, in page 33, line 19, at end insert—

'(3) Where information specified under sub-paragraph (1) above identifies a person as a purchaser of milk from the board, the scheme must provide for the information to be disclosed only with his written consent.'.

**Mr. Jack:** The Bill covers the possibility that a reorganisation scheme might contain provision for a board to pass information to a successor organisation. I do not envisage that Ministers would approve the passing of commercially sensitive information to a trading successor body. I am, however, aware of the concern of the dairy trade that the safeguards in this respect should be as watertight as possible. The amendment responds to its concern by making it necessary for a board to obtain a purchaser's written consent in the relevant circumstances.

*Amendment agreed to.*

## Clause 7

### INFORMATION

**Mr. Jack:** I beg to move amendment No. 14, in page 6, line 41, leave out '21' and insert '14'.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 15.

**Mr. Jack:** The Government were subjected to strong words—perhaps "attack" is too forceful a word—in Committee about their failure to listen and to take into account some of the interesting ideas that the Opposition put forward. We did listen, however, because the amendments respond to an interesting, sensible proposition from the Opposition.

Clause 7 would enable Ministers to require any person to supply them with the information that they need to decide whether to approve a milk marketing board reorganisation scheme or any application from a board for a variation or withdrawal of its scheme. It provides that if Ministers require information from the milk marketing board to which the reorganisation scheme relates and the board fails to provide that information, its application is treated as having been withdrawn.

The Bill currently gives a board 21 days to show that any failure to supply information was accidental. In Committee the Government agreed to consider a reduction in that limit to 14 days. We accepted that suggestion, hence the amendment. Amendment No. 15 introduces a parallel change for the potato marketing board.

I thank Opposition Members for their suggestion and I am delighted that I have been able to move the amendment.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I dreamt that one up in the bath.

*Amendment agreed to.*

## Schedule 2

### PROVISIONS RELATING TO CARRYING OUT OF APPROVED SCHEME OF REORGANISATION

**Mr. Jack:** I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 35, line 13, leave out 'for no' and insert 'without any'.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to discuss also Government amendments Nos. 17, 28 to 41, 18, 19, 42, and 20 to 27.

**Mr. Jack:** The amendments make technical, drafting adjustments to the provision specifying the treatment for tax purposes of transfers made under an approved reorganisation scheme.

*Amendment agreed to.*

*Amendments made:* No. 17, in page 35, line 13, after 'consideration', insert

'being provided by the persons acquiring them'.

No 28, in page 35, line 18, at end insert—

'3A.—(1) Where—

(a) in accordance with an approved scheme, shares in a subsidiary of the relevant board ("the transferred company") are transferred otherwise than under section 10 above to a qualifying body ("the successor"),

(b) immediately after the transfer, the successor is a member of a group of which the relevant board is a member, and

(c) the scheme provides as mentioned in paragraph 3(1)(b) above,

sections 178 and 179 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 shall not apply on the transferred company ceasing to be

*[Mr. Jack]*

a member of a group of which the relevant board is a member if, immediately after doing so, it is a member of a group of which the successor is a member.

(2) Where by virtue of sub-paragraph (1) above sections 178 and 179 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 do not apply, then, on the transferred company ceasing to be a member of a group of which the successor is a member, those sections shall apply—

(a) as if any assets acquired by the transferred company, at any time when it was a member of a group of which the relevant board was a member, from any member of that group had been acquired by it at that time from the successor, and

(b) as if the transferred company and the successor had at all material times been associated companies for the purposes of those sections.

(3) In this paragraph—

"group" has the meaning given by section 170 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992; and

"relevant board" means the board to which the scheme relates.'.

No. 29, in page 42, line 39, at end insert—

'( )where the trustees acquire the shares or securities on a disposal, the person making the disposal shall be treated as if the consideration for the disposal were of such amount as would secure that on the disposal neither a gain nor a loss accrues to him,'.

No. 30, in page 43, line 34, leave out 'share is' and insert 'shares are'.

No. 31, in page 43, line 37, after 'him,' insert—

'(aa) to trustees on terms which provide for the transfer of the shares to persons by virtue of their being, or having been, registered producers,'.

No. 32, in page 43, line 46, leave out 'share' and insert 'shares'.

No. 33, in page 43, line 47, leave out 'it' and insert 'they'.

No. 34, in page 43, line 49, leave out 'share' and insert 'shares'.

No. 35, in page 44, line 1, leave out 'share' and insert 'shares'.

No. 36, in page 44, line 2, leave out 'it' and insert 'they'.

No. 37, in page 44, line 7, leave out 'a share' and insert 'any shares'.

No. 38, in page 44, line 8, leave out 'share is' and insert 'shares are'.

No. 39, in page 44, line 18, leave out 'debenture' and insert '(a)'.

No. 40, in page 44, line 19, after 'board,', insert

'and

(b) is either—

(i) issued'.

No. 41, in page 44, line 21, at end insert

', or

(ii) included in an issue of debentures to trustees on terms which provide for the debentures to be transferred to persons by virtue of their being, or having been, registered producers.'.

No. 18, in page 45, line 2, leave out 'for no' and insert 'without any'.

No. 19, in page 45, line 2, after 'consideration', insert 'being provided by the person acquiring them'.

No. 42, in page 45, line 32, at end insert—

'(3A) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (3)(b) above, a person to whom property is leased shall be treated as a person to whom property is transferred if the scheme could, without breaching the requirement in paragraph 7(2) of Schedule 1 to this Act, have provided for the property concerned to be transferred to him.'.

No. 20, in page 46, line 33, leave out from 'company' to 'to'.

No. 21, in page 46, line 34, after 'class' insert 'without any consideration, or with only a nominal consideration, being provided by the members acquiring them'.

No. 22, in page 47, line 2, leave out 'for no' and insert 'without any'.

No. 23, in page 47, line 2, after 'or', insert 'with only'.

No. 24, in page 47, line 2, at end insert 'being provided by the members acquiring them,'.

No. 25, in page 47, line 36, leave out 'for no' and insert 'without any'.

No. 26, in page 47, line 36, after second 'or', insert 'with only'.

No. 27, in page 47, line 37, after 'consideration,', insert 'being provided by the persons acquiring them,'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

**Mr. Paddy Tipping** (Sherwood): I beg to move amendment No. 85, in page 49, line 19, at end insert—

'(4) If as a result of a deficit in the funding of the pension scheme, the scheme is unable to meet its obligations to any or all of its members, the substitute principal employer or its successor shall have the power and be under a duty to require eligible milk producers to make contributions for the purpose of making good the deficit.

(5) The appropriate authority shall create a residuary body to the milk marketing board which shall exercise the power and be subject to the duty mentioned in subsection (4) above, if—

(a) the substitute principal employer or its successor at any time ceases business without there being a further successor, or

(b) the appropriate authority considers it otherwise desirable to create such a body.'.

The purpose of the amendment is straightforward. It seeks to protect the interests of present and future pensioners of the milk marketing scheme, who represent quite a large group—8,600 contributors and 5,500 pensioners, of whom, I understand, 1,000 are widows. I understand that the fund has assets of £300 million.

Pensioners of the fund are rightly concerned about its future. Quite simply, it is their future that we are debating. They have contributed to the fund and they want to be consulted on the way forward. They feel that there has been a lack of consultation and that so far their views have been rebutted. With the high profile of pension issues in the news, they are concerned. It is clear that, in any scheme of reorganisation, real changes must be made. Change is often worrying and past and present pensioners are clearly anxious about the future.

A number of issues can be identified. What is the present position of the pension fund? Can it meet its liabilities? Is it in surplus or in deficit? Should there be a surplus—I understand that there is supposed to be one—how will it be dealt with? There is a strong case to be made that any surplus should be applied only to the beneficiaries of the scheme, since they have contributed to the scheme and built the foundations of the company. They believe that any surpluses should be applied to them rather than to funding reorganisation. They want the milk marketing scheme and successor bodies to give commitments in line with those that currently exist—such as a commitment that index-linked pensions will be continued.

The amendment addresses the issue of a possible deficit. The successor bodies must take responsibility for any deficits. The key issue is how pensioners will be split

among the successor pension schemes. The existing pension scheme may be split two ways—into a new Milk Marque scheme and a new Dairy Crest scheme.

Views differ quite markedly among pensioners about which might be the most profitable successor company. Both companies face major challenges. It is unclear how pensioners will be allocated to successor pension schemes. Will they have a choice, or will they, for example, simply be allocated to one scheme or another?

Pension matters are a live issue for the Government at the moment. I understand that the Department of Social Security promised to offer advice on how such pensioners might be dealt with. Its advice has been long promised, but slow in coming. I know that this is not a responsibility of Agriculture Ministers, but I look for a commitment from them that they will pursue this matter and try to facilitate the provision of advice that is needed to take the discussion forward.

Amendment No. 85 seeks to provide a safety net. It allocates responsibility for underwriting pension schemes. Pensioners want Dairy Crest and Milk Marque to do well. They have worked hard to build the foundations of the milk marketing board and want the successor companies to succeed. Having built the foundations, they do not want the roof—their pensions—to collapse over their head. The amendment would effectively secure their future.

**Mr. Tyler:** I simply want to endorse the general comments of the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping). The hon. Gentleman and I and others on both sides of the Committee wanted to ensure that the interests of pensioners were not adversely affected by these changes.

In Committee, the point was made many times—it would be wrong not to repeat it tonight—that the milk marketing board has given good service to this country, to producers and to everybody else in the industry. It would clearly be unacceptable for servants of the milk marketing board not to be treated so well in the future as a result of changes to the viability of the pension scheme.

The hon. Member for Sherwood made some general points, but his specific point about the way in which the successor pension schemes will operate is one on which, I hope, the Minister will be able to give us further reassurances, following those given by his predecessor in Committee.

It was clear, I think to all members of the Committee, that this important issue was causing much concern and anxiety among many people. I hope that the Minister will reiterate the assurance that was given in Committee that pensioners will not be forgotten.

**Dr. Strang:** I am glad to have the opportunity to support my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping). I am sure that the whole House will recognise that we have a responsibility to ensure that the interests of pensioners and future pensioners are properly safeguarded.

The changes are being initiated by the Government. They have decided that the boards should not continue and that, as a result, Milk Marque and Dairy Crest will operate independently. The Government have a responsibility to be rather more forthcoming than they have been to date about their determination to ensure that staff are not disadvantaged as a result of the Bill. That is the least to which the staff are entitled. My hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood put the case admirably. I hope the Minister will now take the opportunity to respond positively.

**Mr. Jack:** I am most grateful for the considered and careful way in which Opposition Members have introduced this subject. I can well understand its sensitivity. At a time of any change, those who are nearing retirement want to know that their future sources of income have a degree of security.

The problem with amendment No. 85 is that it casts the role of the Government as one of last resort in creating a mechanism by which deficits of the successor pension operations could be made good. If the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) studies what is about to happen, he will understand that the Government are not unwilling to acknowledge the importance of the issue to current and future pensioners. However, it is not proper for the Government to accept the responsibility that he offers us.

The Government accept a responsibility to pensioners under the operation of pension law. He will be aware that the Goode committee is looking into the matter. His remarks alluded to just that. There is already a complex and well-tried set of laws dealing with the responsibility of pension trustees to safeguard the interests of pensioners.

**Mrs. Peacock:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Jack:** I shall conclude this point first.

I acknowledge that there have been cases in the past where the conditions of trust have not always been fulfilled, but by and large those who have operated the pension funds for large and small companies in Britain have carried out their duties with absolute probity and correctness, recognising their liabilities in law if they so fail. Those people will be responsible for the transference and the future of the pension funds, and I shall turn to that matter when I have given way to my hon. Friend.

7.30 pm

**Mrs. Peacock:** My hon. Friend is quite right to say that the majority of pension funds carry out their duty very well indeed. However, there are pensioners of the milk marketing board who, having listened to what has happened to pension funds recently, are worried that they may be in a difficult position. They will be listening carefully for my hon. Friend's reassurance. Although this is not a matter for his Department, it is considered very much part of the Bill.

**Mr. Jack:** Let us explore this matter with care; it needs to be handled sympathetically and carefully. I shall do my best to paint a picture that will be at least of some satisfaction to hon. Members. My first task in addressing the problem was to find out whether any assurances had already been given to pensioners.

I have in front of me a copy of a letter dated April from Mr. R. S. Steven, chairman of the milk marketing board, to pensioners saying that he wrote on 29 January "on the subject of your pension".

As it is a short letter, perhaps it is worth looking at the text. It is the first important strand of the views of those who will be responsible for taking decisions. The letter says:

"As work on the reform has progressed, we have had a pensions working group consisting of senior Milk Marketing Board and Dairy Crest management, a pensioner who is also a trustee and our actuaries and legal advisers actively considering this matter with the following objectives: meeting current members' reasonable expectations and allaying

*[Mr. Jack]*

pensioners' concerns; ensuring reasonable security measured by strength of funding, providing for similar contribution rates between Milk Marque and Dairy Crest at least in the short term; enabling the trustees of all funds to follow a flexible, balanced investment strategy and avoiding the need as far as practical for the proliferation of pension arrangements".

The letter continues:

"We intend to make progress in time for the next trustees' meeting on 18 May".

I find that helpful as a statement of intent to address those issues.

What does the board promise for the future? The letter might be deemed to be a statement of good intent, but is it backed by anything else? The milk marketing board and the Dairy Crest board have agreed to proposals for changes in the arrangements to be put to a meeting of the pension scheme trustees on 1 July. My hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) will be pleased to know that the trustees will then give scheme members an opportunity to comment before they take a final decision, probably at the end of August. That is important because it means that members will have an opportunity to comment on what is proposed.

The hon. Member for Sherwood rightly asked about the state of the fund. At the back of his mind is the thought that perhaps those with an acute financial approach might see the pension fund as an opportunity for rich pickings. An actuarial valuation of the English and Wales MMB group fund at 31 March 1993 is being finalised and I understand that it is likely to show a small surplus of about 5 per cent. on an ongoing basis and no surplus, using assumptions prescribed by the Government Actuary for the purposes required by the Inland Revenue for checking surpluses in the scheme. The most recent actuarial valuation on the so-called "Board C" scheme has received a small surplus on a winding-up basis and a small deficit on an ongoing basic.

I am informed by those who understand the technicalities that there is also a small surplus in the part-timers' fund. The Scottish boards have advised us that it is almost certain that there will be no surplus in their pension plan. That shows that the principal schemes have been looked at and are in appropriate and satisfactory order. If we couple that with the fact that proposals will be put to pensioners and the letter that Mr. Steven sent out, it is clear that there is great concern about this matter.

It is also important to consider the wider perspective. As I have mentioned, pension schemes and their trustees are subject to the principles of trust law. To pick up on the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen, that is most important because the trustees have a duty to safeguard the interests of all scheme members. That position of trust will clearly determine future propositions.

The Occupational Pensions Board also has a role to play, so we have another monitoring body. The OPB has an ongoing role to ensure that the schemes continue to have sufficient funds to meet their liability to pay guaranteed minimum pensions broadly equivalent to the state earnings-related pension scheme; in other words, no one can enter opted-out funds unless those funds can do the job that they are supposed to do. The Occupational Pensions Board is asking whether the funds can. Clearly, that will be a function of the successor pension organisations. In other words, they will have to be properly funded in the first place to enable those jobs to be done. I find that reassuring.

The OPB will continue to have a supervisory role in future. It will require a certificate from the schemes' actuary every three years and an annual statement from the schemes' administration. If documentation is not up to scratch, there can be problems in terms of cancelling the schemes' contracting-out certificates. Therefore, we have continuing monitoring to ensure that the schemes will have sufficient funding to do the job that the hon. Member for Sherwood wanted them to do.

Under present law, no pension scheme member may be transferred to another scheme without his consent unless an actuary certifies that the value of his rights and benefits will be maintained. In other words, there will be a further check, and no shanghaiing. There will be no transfer there unless the actuary says that the new scheme will do the same job.

The operation of pension law, the position of the trustees, the open and full disclosure of plans and the letter that Mr. Steven wrote show that the people who decide who will be on the MMB and how the Milk Marque and Dairy Crest pension run will take all that into account. Bearing in mind, too, that the existing members of the board will be involved in Milk Marque, I do not think that there will be any intention to put forward a scheme that will significantly disadvantage, upset or worry people.

Everything I have said paints a picture of reassurance in ensuring that the position of pensioners will be maintained as they would want: their pensions will be paid in accordance with expectations, particularly those that Mr. Steven outlined in his letter.

**Mr. Tipping:** I thank the Minister for the way in which he has pursued the matter. I know that he will look at it again when the scheme of reorganisation comes before him and his colleagues. With permission, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

**Mr. Jack:** I beg to move amendment No. 69, in page 50, line 34, leave out from 'which' to first 'of' in line 35 and insert:

'imposes a prohibition (whether absolute or qualified) on the transfer'.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to discuss also Government amendments Nos. 62, 70, 71, 56, 57, 63, 72, 73, 58, 64, 74 to 76, 59, 65, 54, 51, 55, 52, 53, 77, 66, 78, 79, 60, 67, 80 to 82, 61 and 68.

**Mr. Jack:** The amendments are intended to complete and, in some cases, correct the provisions of schedules 2 and 4 that deal with the transfer of the property of the milk and potato marketing boards. The broad purpose is to ensure that third-party rights cannot be exercised in such a way as to disrupt or hold up the implementation of a reorganisation scheme—for example, where a lease gives a lessor the right to repossess a property. When a lessee wishes to assign a lease, the Bill will prevent that right from being exercised in the case of a board transferring a lease to its successor. The right would be exercisable only when the successor body wished to assign the lease. Where third-party rights are overridden by provision of that sort, resulting in a material reduction of the third party's interest in the property, the board of the successor body

will be liable to pay compensation. That is only an example, but it illustrates the principle that underlies all the property provisions.

Amendment No. 55 does not fall into that category, and it would be discourteous of me not to draw attention to it. It is intended to ensure that, if a flotation is proposed as part of a reorganisation scheme, it will not be jeopardised by a potential claim by former producers to the title of shares in the company. Leaving open even the possibility of such a claim, which would have to be publicly disclosed, could be more than enough to stop the flotation from going ahead.

The amendment removes a potentially serious source of delay from the reorganisation timetable. The Government consider that the sort of claim with which the amendment is intended to deal would have no more than a remote chance of succeeding; action is no less necessary for that, however. The amendment deals with the matter in a manner that does not prejudice the right of potential claimants to challenge approval of a reorganisation scheme, or their right to compensation if their arguments are eventually upheld. If a court found that, for example, a former producer who had not received shares in a company had a valid claim, that producer would be entitled to financial compensation and his claim would be directed against the residuary body.

*Amendment agreed to.*

*Amendments made:* No. 62, in page 50, line 42, leave out 'penalises' and insert 'has the effect of penalising'.

No. 70, in page 50, line 43, leave out

', or a transfer without consent,'.

No. 71, in page 50, line 44, leave out from 'which' to first 'of' in line 45 and insert 'imposes a prohibition (whether absolute or qualified) on the transfer'.

No. 56, in page 50, line 46, leave out 'if' and insert 'unless'.

No. 57, in page 50, line 46, leave out 'private' and insert 'public'.

No. 63, in page 51, line 5, leave out 'penalises' and insert 'has the effect of penalising'.

No. 72, in page 51, line 6, leave out

', or a transfer without consent,'.

No. 73, in page 51, line 7, leave out 'prohibits the effecting without consent' and insert

'imposes a qualified prohibition on the effecting'.

No. 58, in page 51, line 12, leave out 'private' and insert 'purposes other than public'.

No. 64, in page 51, line 19, leave out 'penalises' and insert 'has the effect of penalising'.

No. 74, in page 51, line 20, leave out 'without consent'.

No. 75, in page 51, line 40, leave out 'prohibits' and insert 'imposes an absolute prohibition on'.

No. 76, in page 51, line 43, leave out paragraph (b).

No. 59, in page 51, line 44, leave out 'private' and insert 'purposes other than public'.

No. 65, in page 52, line 29, leave out 'penalises' and insert 'has the effect of penalising'.

No. 54, in page 52, line 47, at end insert—

*'Restrictions on change of location*

43A.—(1) For the purposes of this paragraph, a provision is a qualifying provision if—

(a) it is contained in a qualifying agreement,

(b) it imposes an absolute or qualified prohibition on the movement outside a specified area of property to which the agreement relates, and

(c) the prohibition which it imposes is imposed for purposes other than public purposes.

(2) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) above, an agreement is a qualifying agreement if—

(a) it is an agreement under which moveable property is leased to a milk marketing board or to a subsidiary of such a board, and

(b) an approved scheme makes provision for the transfer of rights and liabilities of the lessee under the agreement.

(3) Where an approved scheme—

(a) identifies a qualifying provision as one to which this paragraph applies,

(b) specifies a relevant modification in relation to that provision,

(c) specifies a commencement date in relation to the modification, and

(d) specifies one of the relevant bodies as the body against which any claim under paragraph 43B below, in relation to that provision, is to be made,

then, subject to any provision of regulations under sub-paragraph (4)(c) below, that provision shall have effect subject to the specified modification on and after the commencement date specified in relation to it.

(4) The appropriate authority may make regulations—

(a) with respect to the giving of notice of a provision of an approved scheme which does any of the things mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c) of sub-paragraph (3) above,

(b) with respect to the giving by the authority of a certificate of compliance in relation to the giving of notice under paragraph (a) above, and

(c) excluding sub-paragraph (3) above where no certificate of compliance under paragraph (b) above has been given before such date as may be specified in the regulations.

(5) Where by virtue of sub-paragraph (3) above a qualifying provision is modified in its application to any property, the fact that, at any time in the week beginning with the date on which the modification first has effect, that property is outside the permitted area shall not be treated as constituting a breach of the provision if the property—

(a) is in the area which was the permitted area before the modification had effect, or

(b) is in transit from that area to the permitted area.

(6) In sub-paragraph (3)(b) above, "relevant modification", in relation to a qualifying provision, means a change, in relation to any of the property to which the provision applies, in the area by reference to which the qualifying provision has effect.

(7) In sub-paragraph (3)(d) above, the reference to the relevant bodies is to—

(a) the milk marketing board to which the scheme relates, and

(b) the body or bodies to which property, rights or liabilities of that board are, under the scheme, to be transferred under section 10 above.

(8) In sub-paragraph (4) above, "appropriate authority" means—

(a) in the case of an approved scheme relating to the England and Wales Milk Marketing Board, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State acting jointly, and

(b) in any other case, the Secretary of State.

(9) For the purposes of this paragraph, any provision which has the effect of penalising the movement of property outside a specified area shall be treated as prohibiting it.

43B. Paragraph 43 above shall apply in relation to a person who suffers a diminution in the value of any property or interest in consequence of the operation of paragraph 43A above as it applies in relation to a person who suffers a diminution in the value of any property or interest in consequence of the operation of paragraph 42 above.'.

No. 51, in page 52, line 47, at end insert—

*[Mr. Jack]*

*'Transfers relevant to flotation*

43C.—(1) Where an approved scheme provides for rights and liabilities of a lessee under a qualifying agreement to be transferred to a company on a day earlier than the vesting day under the scheme, the provision shall have effect by virtue of this paragraph if, immediately before the day of the transfer, the company is a qualifying transferee.

(2) In sub-paragraph (1) above, "qualifying agreement" means an agreement under which moveable property is leased to the board to which the scheme relates or to a subsidiary of that board.

(3) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) above, a company is a qualifying transferee if it is—

(a) a company in relation to which the scheme provides for the taking of steps with a view to securing its quotation on the Stock Exchange,

(b) a subsidiary of a company falling within paragraph (a) above, or

(c) a company which, if the scheme is carried out, will become a subsidiary of a company falling within paragraph (a) above before that company is quoted on the Stock Exchange.'.

No. 55, in page 52, line 47, at end insert—

'43D.—(1) Where—

(a) an approved scheme provides for the taking of steps with a view to securing the quotation of a company on the Stock Exchange, and

(b) the board to which the scheme relates makes under the scheme a qualifying transfer of shares in a subsidiary of its,

then, if the shares transferred were subject in the hands of that board to a resulting or constructive trust, they shall by virtue of the transfer cease to be subject to that trust.

(2) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) above, a transfer is a qualifying transfer if—

(a) it takes place in connection with the carrying out of the provision mentioned in paragraph (a) of that sub-paragraph, or

(b) the transferee is a qualifying person and the shares transferred are of the same class as other shares in the subsidiary which fall to be transferred as mentioned in that paragraph.

(3) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2) above, the transferee is a qualifying person if the shares are transferred to him—

(a) by virtue of his being, or having been, a registered producer, or

(b) as trustee for persons who are entitled to participate in the trust by virtue of their being, or having been, registered producers.

(4) For the purposes of this paragraph, shares of a company shall not be treated as of the same class unless they are so treated by the practice of the Stock Exchange or would be so treated if dealt with on the Stock Exchange.'.

No. 52, in page 56, line 9, after 'above', insert 'or paragraph 43C above'.

No. 53, in page 56, line 11, leave out 'vesting day' and insert 'day of the transfer'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

**New clause 17**

PUBLICITY FOR DETERMINATIONS (NO. 1)

'. As soon as reasonably practicable after granting an application under section 25 or 28 above, the Ministers shall make public in such manner as they think fit—

(a) the fact that they have granted the application, and

(b) the principles of the approved scheme or, as the case may be, of the approved variation.'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

*Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.*

**New clause 14**

FUNCTIONS UNDER SECTION 19 OF THE AGRICULTURAL MARKETING ACT 1958

'. The functions of a committee appointed under section 19 of the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958 (consumers' committees and committees of investigation) shall not include the consideration of anything done by the Board in connection with an application under this Part of this Act or the carrying out of an approved scheme.'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

*Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.*

**New clause 2**

RESTRICTION ON REVOCATION OF SCHEME (NO. 1)

'.—(1) This section applies until a decision has been made by the Council of the European Communities to introduce a regulation on the establishment of a common organisation of the market in potatoes.

(2) The Minister shall not lay before Parliament a draft of an order under section 22 of this Act or paragraph 5 of Schedule 1 to the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958 unless—

(a) a poll of persons who are registered producers has been carried out for the purpose of ascertaining the level of support among them for the making of that order, and

(b) a majority of the votes cast in that poll has been cast in favour of the making of the order.

(3) —(a) The Minister may direct the Board to carry out such a poll as is mentioned in subsection (2) of this section and the Board shall comply with the direction within such time (if any) as may reasonably be specified in the direction.

(b) Such a poll shall be carried out as if it were a poll under section 36(1) of this Act.'.—*[Mr. Campbell-Savours.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following: new clause 3—*Restriction on revocation of scheme (No. 2):*

'.—(1) This section applies until a decision has been made by the Council of the European Communities to introduce a regulation on the establishment of a common organisation of the market in potatoes.

(2) The Ministers shall not make either such an order as is specified in section 22(i) of this Act or an order to revoke the Potato Marketing Scheme in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958 until—

(a) a poll of persons who are registered producers has been carried out for the purpose of ascertaining the level of support among them for the making of either kind of order mentioned above, and

(b) a majority of the votes cast in such a poll has been cast in favour of the making of such an order.

(3) The Ministers may direct the Board to carry out such a poll as is mentioned in subsection (2) of this section and the Board will comply with such a direction within such time (if any) as may reasonably be specified in such direction.

(4) Such a poll as is mentioned in this, section shall be carried out as if it were a poll under section 36(i) of this Act.'.

New clause 4—*Restriction on revocation of scheme (No. 3):*

'.—(1) This section applies until a decision has been made by the Council of the European Communities to introduce a regulation on the establishment of a common organisation of the market in potatoes.

(2) Before determining that it appears to them that it is necessary or in the public interest that the Potato Marketing Scheme should be brought to an end or that the Scheme should be revoked in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 1 of the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958, the Ministers shall first cause a poll of registered producers under that Scheme to be carried out for the purpose of ascertaining the level of support among them for bringing the Scheme to an end or revoking it, and shall not make such a determination unless a majority of the votes cast in such a poll is in favour of so doing.

(3) A poll under this section shall be carried out as if it were a poll under section 36(1) of this Act with the substitution in that subsection for "The Board" of "The Ministers".'.

Amendment No. 49, in clause 23, page 13, line 27, at end insert

'(2A) Where subsection (2) above applies, no order shall be made under subsection (1) above unless the Ministers have consulted on a proposal to bring the Potato Marketing Scheme to an end with such persons appearing to them to be representative of the interests of producers, purchasers, retailers and consumers of potatoes as they consider appropriate.'.

Amendment No. 50, in page 13, line 33, at end insert

'(3A) Where subsection (3) above applies, then to the extent that the regulation of the Council of the European Communities permits member states to make their own arrangements within a common organisation of the market in potatoes, the Ministers shall consult on those matters with such persons appearing to them to be representative of the interests of producers, purchasers, retailers and consumers of potatoes as they consider appropriate.'.

7.45 pm

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I apologise to the hon. Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell): he wanted to move the new clause, but I told him that he could not. As he will find out, I had a reason.

I am nonplussed: I do not know what is happening to the future of the potato marketing scheme. However, I am not alone; the industry—both producers and processors—is in the same position. The policy formation of recent weeks appears to have been based on a nod and a wink to journalists, producers and the potato marketing board. Meanwhile, the industry is in turmoil, at a time when large potato surpluses have driven producers all over Europe into bankruptcy, and the board is again under severe pressure as it fulfils its obligations under the scheme.

We have all seen a number of reports suggesting a ministerial shift of position. On 4 June, *Farmers Weekly* reported:

"Gillian Shephard, the first woman to head Britain's Ministry of Agriculture, is considering a stay of execution of the Potato Marketing Scheme and a blitz on red tape . . . Mrs. Shephard said reviewing the potato scheme was one of her first priorities."

What is the reality? I must confess that I suspected that these statements were being orchestrated by the Whips as part of an exercise in disinformation to head off a Tory revolt. There is no doubt that there is a potential for such a revolt over this part of the Bill; perhaps Ministers have realised that only recently. Yesterday's events in my office, while not confirming my suspicions, should worry not only me but the industry.

The hon. Member for East Lindsey has tabled two amendments, and I can almost guarantee that the Government will accept them. Why? Because, sadly, the amendments do almost nothing. They merely ensure that no order can be made to wind up the potato marketing scheme unless Ministers have consulted those involved in the industry. The two amendments do not restrict the Government's actions in any way; they do not tie the Government's hands.

I suspect that the hon. Member for East Lindsey does not know that the amendments that he tabled were a compromise, and that the amendment that really mattered was never tabled. I know that, because I tabled it yesterday, when I received it in my office. It features on the amendment paper as a starred amendment: that means that we cannot debate it, but we should be debating it. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman even saw it, but it would have tied the Government's hands on the future of the potato marketing scheme. It would have done the trick. It states:

"The Ministers shall not lay before Parliament a draft of an order under section 22 of this Act or under paragraph 5 of Schedule 1 to the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958 unless they certify that they are satisfied that no grants, subsidies or measures for stabilisation of the market are available for the benefit of potato producers in other Member States of the European Community which are not equally available for the benefit of potato producers in Great Britain."

What a wonderful amendment. I always believed that the Tories would table it. I waited and waited: every day I went to the Vote Office to look at the latest amendments. I was convinced that it would be tabled yesterday morning, but it never arrived. When I finally saw it, it was exactly the amendment that should have been tabled.

What I find remarkable about the new Minister of Agriculture's attitude is that, when her Department was consulted about the amendment the Government were not prepared to accept it. I say that having unearthed a very interesting speech made in the House on 27 February 1989. It reads:

"It is in this atmosphere of change that I would like to plead for the retention of two areas of stability so that we might . . . ease the process of change for farmers. The two crops involved are sugar and potatoes."

The speaker went on to say:

"potatoes . . . are the second highest value crop in the country, after cereals. They . . . are of great importance in underpinning agricultural incomes for both large and small farms . . . There can be no doubt that the future of the potato crop is looming large in producers' minds. As my right hon. Friend knows, that is because the future of the Potato Marketing Board is under discussion. As hon. Members will understand, that board is always criticised when it refuses quotas, but I think that its response to the consultative document issued by the Government has been thorough and serious.

I also believe that the consumers in the United Kingdom enjoy a far wider variety of quality potatoes than that enjoyed by their European counterparts. That variety and quality, coupled with good marketing methods, has increased our national consumption of potatoes . . . In my constituency potatoes are extremely important and growers there—and, I believe, throughout the country—are unanimous in their support for option 3 in the consultative document"—

I do not need to remind the House what option 3 was—

"which will retain area and quality control in a self-financing way. I hope that, during the consultation, my right hon. Friend will consider that unanimous response carefully."—[*Official Report*, 27 February 1989; Vol. 148, c. 99-100.]

Who said that? Was it my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger)? Was it my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang), or my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley)? No, it was the new Secretary of State. We therefore know that potato producers in the United Kingdom have a supporter in the Cabinet who will fight for them and not compromise. I am sure that the right hon. Lady will want to make that clear tonight. If she was

*[Mr. Campbell-Savours]*

prepared to make that speech before the general election, why was she not prepared to accept today's starred amendment which was put informally to people in her Department? That is the heart of our case.

New clause 2 seeks to delay the introduction of an order winding up the potato marketing scheme until the European Commission has taken a decision. The starred amendment would have dovetailed with the new clause and greatly strengthened the Government's negotiating position at the Council. Their position would have been strengthened had the right hon. Lady been prepared to accept it.

The new clause would allow an earlier wind-up only if a poll of producers cast their votes by a majority in favour of the termination of the scheme. Why do we want to delay the wind-up? The answer is that the Labour party is not convinced that the Europeans will take a real decision, establishing either a light or heavyweight regime. There is no evidence to suggest that they will. A promised agreement on the back of the annual price fix has collapsed in tatters. We thought that Ministers would come home the other week with a potato agreement. The Council of Ministers itself appears to be riddled with differences of opinion about what is needed.

The history of the proposed Council regulation COM(92)185 has been done to death by a thousand objections. It started in November 1982, when it first went to the Commission, and it is due to return to the Council of Ministers some time in September. It has been rejected by the potato marketing board, the European Parliament, the Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations, COGECA and the Economic and Social Council.

The only person who appears passionately to support this nonsense is the former Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—unless the Minister of State wishes to say that he has some residual sympathy for it. Perhaps he will argue for it, or perhaps the right hon. Lady will argue for it if she replies to the debate.

While the Commission promotes the debate, the political realities in nation states are proving major obstacles. Commission officials may try to enforce a level playing field, but the reality is that farmers and politicians are resisting. Why? The argument is not uniquely about level playing fields; it is about the survival of producers in generally depressed economic conditions.

There is a general recognition that subsidies to potato producers throughout the Community have become entrenched. In Committee, my hon. Friends and I spoke at great length about EC subsidy regimes. Indeed, it is fair to say that our debate in Committee had some influence on more recent debates in another place where many speakers dwelt on whether it was possible to create a level playing field when the House of Lords European Communities Select Committee debated the issue some weeks ago.

In Committee, we were able to identify subsidies in Denmark to promote sales, research, quality control and disease protection, which would have amounted to the equivalent of £6 million in the United Kingdom, taking into account the comparative size of the two industries.

We also identified four schemes in Italy funded by an organisation called AIMA. One scheme paid £74 a tonne to growers, a further £50 to producers of alcohol, subsidies of £9 a tonne to producer organisations, £6 a tonne to co-ops, subsidies for new potato production and the private storage of potatoes. We are told that, in January last year, the Italians paid £26 million in aid to their producers.

France has its own intervention schemes, paying millions to main crop growers—last year, the sum involved was £13 million, although I have been told that I have grossly underestimated it. The French Government are right now paying their early potato growers almost £1,300 a hectare to destroy 1,000 hectares of potatoes in Brittany. French growers receive low-interest priority loans which would survive any new EC regime, which is not supposed to be based on such subsidies. Of course, the French will still receive their cheap loans, because they have already negotiated them. The French even subsidise regular growers to remain in business.

Spain spends millions on loans for storage at preferential interest rates. It even introduced its own import deposit scheme with delayed payments. The Portuguese provide concessional loans for storage, a £32 a tonne export subsidy, special subsidies for co-operatives and intervention buying. They have set a minimum import price of £75 a tonne. What a wonderful Common Market it is where one can set a minimum import price of £75 a tonne and get away with it. Even so, we still think that such schemes will somehow be abolished when the marvellous level playing field is established. It will not happen.

Holland, the much-cited paragon of potato producing virtue, offers starch subsidies, rent subsidies, loan guarantee funds, concessional export guarantees and a carefully tailored small business welfare payments system. Ireland is this year subsidising its production, as even Luxembourg does too.

The subsidies that we have identified are but the tip of an iceberg. Whatever assurances are given by EC Governments, the subsidies will remain in one form or another. Political realities are such that politicians and local institutions in rural parts of the Community will not allow a volatile European potato industry to collapse in ruins. Only in Britain have politicians been prepared even to consider the prospect of such a disaster.

I have a question for the new Secretary of State. I shall read out an answer given to a friend of hers only this morning in the European Parliament. A copy has just been faxed to my office. The copy reads:

"As Commissioner Christophersen said in his reply to Written Question No. 3435/92 by the Honourable Member"—

Mr. Peter Crampton—

"the inventory of state aid"—

which I understand is the document that lists all the subsidies which have been paid in Europe over the years—

"was designed to provide information on state aid to the whole agricultural sector. This being the case, where a Member State has granted aid in the potato sector, data relating to such aid is included by the Member State in its contribution to the inventory for the year or years in question. As was also indicated in the reply, Member States do not provide such data with a view to its publication."

Oh yes, the information is not for publication.

"However, a copy of the updated information provided for the inventory by each Member State is supplied by the Commission, on a confidential basis, to the other Member States and to the Chairman of the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture."

So, although we have been told that Ministers do not have the information, they do have it. We should do well to recall what was said in Committee on the subject, yet

here is the Commissioner responsible telling us that Ministers have that confidential information, which I know Members on both sides of the House want to see, because it is the only means of establishing whether a true level playing field exists within the EC.

8 pm

The realities cry out. The scheme cannot work until there is not only a level playing field in Europe, but an agreed system of market support. We cannot leave potato producers naked in a market in which bankruptcy follows high yields. That does not mean public money. The potato marketing scheme has cost very little taxpayers' money over the years. In the context of the wider Community, the level of subsidy paid to potato producers in the United Kingdom is the lowest by far. We run a cheap system in this country. The taxpayers' contribution is low because of the nature of that scheme.

Indeed, it is such a good scheme that I have a letter from the Irish equivalent of the National Farmers Union telling me that there are Ministers in the Irish Government who would like to have a potato marketing scheme, but they are not convinced that they would have the support of their English counterparts. Perhaps if Conservative Members are prepared to jump in to the debate—I shall leave them lots of time—they may influence Ministers. Then Ministers may get some spine and some fire into them to go out and defend our scheme, which has worked so well.

People in Ireland realise that an increasingly heavyweight regime—that is what will develop as countries bottle out on removing subsidies—can be no substitute for a managed market that costs the taxpayer almost nothing. They realise that the only way to avoid spurious national schemes being set up is to set up efficient methods of matching production with expected demand. Why do the Government not commit themselves to retaining the existing scheme, or to introducing a revised scheme, which would be my preferred option?

In Committee, we did not argue for a pure scheme such as the existing arrangement. We accepted the principle of revision, because the processors have a real argument—so strong an argument, indeed, that I spent the first few months of my present brief trying to devise another scheme to replace the potato marketing scheme, which would take into account the interests of both processors and producers.

I have to tell the Minister that we nearly did it—*[Interruption.]* Oh yes, I am sure the Minister has been fully briefed about that. We nearly got there, but in the end there were a few minor obstacles.

The problem was that we did not have the weight of the officials behind us to bang heads together and make people sort the problems out and devise a new scheme. It was just my researcher and I, and a few colleagues, and it is difficult to operate in such a climate when one is trying to sort out the problems of an industry worth several hundred million pounds, involving 14,000 producers, many of whom—including Mr. Robertson—have some rather curious views.

No one wants a half-baked, unworkable level playing field dreamed up by the Commission. If the Government insist on going down their route, they must tell us what public moneys are available to deal with volatile market surpluses and gluts. Do they have a secret cash store to fund a glut, in these times of stringent control of public expenditure?

No doubt Ministers will argue that the United Kingdom market enjoys no more stability than those of our European partners. We have heard that argument before, and I am sure we shall hear it again tonight, unless the Secretary of State intends to change tack. However, I remind her that that argument has been convincingly rubbished by the Nottingham report.

In case some of my hon. Friends are not aware of it, I shall tell the House that that report, produced by a noble Lord and a professor at Nottingham university, and called, I believe, "Potatoes—an uncommon regime", challenged the case for closing down the operations of the potato marketing scheme. With the use of tables examining coefficients of yield variability and price variability across the Community, the report proved—conclusively, in my view—that the United Kingdom has high yield variability and low price variability. That was an important finding. The report showed that the scheme was working.

**Mr. Jack:** Who paid for it?

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Yes, the report was paid for by the potato marketing board. But all the research done for the Minister is carried out by agriculture officials. Why should we treat that as any more objective than the research done at Nottingham university?

When the Secretary of State winds up tonight, she will say, "Treat me as an honest broker. You know my sympathies. Campbell-Savours rattled out that speech at the Dispatch Box three years ago, so you know where I stand." She may have strong views on those matters which she may want to signal to other members of the Cabinet at some future stage, if there is to be a policy reversal.

But one thing worries me about the right hon. Lady: I do not know whether she is unassailable. I do not know how long she will last. She may be the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a few months' time; Chancellors do not seem to last long these days. Is it not possible that the present Minister of State, Department of Employment, or the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, or possibly the Chief Secretary to the Treasury or the Secretary of State for Social Security, or some other prominent member of the No Turning Back group will take on responsibility for agriculture? Perhaps the present Minister of State will be moved to another Department and we shall get one of those mad right wingers at the Ministry.

**Mr. Julian Brazier** (Canterbury): Order.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The trouble is that, if the Bill reaches the statute book in its present form——

**Mr. Brazier:** Order.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. there is only one occupant of the Chair.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I am glad that you admonished him, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I admonished hon. Members.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** We want an assurance that is sought by the potato marketing board and the United

*[Mr. Campbell-Savours]*

Kingdom potato producers. I am conscious that the Secretary of State has constituents, and that there are 300 producers in her constituency. This is a difficult matter for her to handle. I understand that.

However, we want an assurance that if the Government are given the enabling powers in the Bill they will not use them before the next general election—*[Interruption.]* Let me explain why. A rebellion is being bought off with two compromise amendments on consultation. Judging by correspondence and conversations that I had with hon. Members when the former Secretary of State was in office, I have no doubt that there was to be a rebellion on the potato marketing board.

Conservative Members were prepared to vote with my hon. Friends, and if a rebellion had been on the cards, we would have put on a three-line Whip to defeat the Government. Conservative Members believed that, as the former Secretary of State intended to motor on with the changes and trigger the enabling legislation by introducing regulations, the only way to stop him was to support the Labour rebellion. However, that Conservative rebellion has been bought off.

If it was bought off on the basis of consultation, we want an assurance tonight that, if the Secretary of State is given those powers, the legislation will not trigger the regulations. If the right hon. Lady is no longer in her post tomorrow or the day after—I say this with gentle and deferential respect—her role will be filled by someone else. In those circumstances, hon. Members might well say that we should have blocked the possibility of triggering the regulations when we had the opportunity. If we receive the necessary assurances from the Secretary of State tonight, or even an indication from her, I am sure that my hon. Friends will not force the new clause to a Division.

**Sir Peter Tapsell** (East Lindsey): I shall relate my remarks specifically to amendments Nos. 49 and 50, in my name, which were somewhat contemptuously described by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member in a debate, as he manages to invest every subject with a marvellous frisson of cloak and dagger excitement which might otherwise be lacking. I should perhaps start by assuring him that I did not receive any approach from Saudi Arabia over the tabling of my amendments.

I have to declare an interest in that a considerable number of my constituents grow potatoes and work in the potato industry, and almost all my constituents eat fresh potatoes.

I greatly welcome my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to her new post. Although we traditionally discuss such amendments in the House in an informal and light-hearted way, my right hon. Friend, who has a long farming background, knows of the importance of the subject under discussion and the deep feelings on it held by potato growers throughout the country. They are fiercely wedded to the potato marketing schemes, the quota and the intervention fund. Unlike anywhere else in Europe, Britain's staple diet has traditionally been potatoes, which have always aroused strong feelings in this country, and even stronger ones in John Bull's other island.

I have known only one other female Minister of Agriculture—the delectable Madame Edith Cresson. When feelings among French farmers were running rather high, Madame Cresson had to be rescued in a smart white helicopter from a group of angry farmers. I am certain that my right hon. Friend, who will be a listening Minister in a listening Government, will not find herself in a similar position in relation to the farmers of England, who practically vote Tory to a man—at least, they have until now and will, I hope, at the end of the debate gain renewed faith in and enthusiasm for Toryism. I hope that my right hon. Friend will not be tempted to follow the example of Madame Cresson, notwithstanding the fact that she went on to be, not just Chancellor of the Exchequer, but Prime Minister of France.

There has been some form of potato marketing board in this country since the 1930s, and there have been many changes at various stages over the years in the way that it has been organised. The name "potato marketing board" is misleading to the layman who does not study such matters because the potato marketing board does not sell any potatoes. It would be more appropriate if it were called the potato growers association. If it were, it might attract less criticism from what I might describe as free marketeers—something that I have never been.

8.15 pm

I want to reassure those of my hon. Friends with a passion for completely unlicensed markets that there is a totally free market in potatoes beyond the farm gate, which is not always appreciated. I say that for the particular benefit of my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), whose potato farmers constitute a distinguished group in Sussex. The wide support for the present arrangements among potato growers derives from the fact that the arrangements provide a certain stability of price without involving the taxpayer in the cost of intervention buying. Due to our island climate, yields in Britain are more variable than those on the continent, and it is extremely important for our potato growers to be certain about price.

The phrase "the heart of Europe" is often bandied about. Like many such platitudes, it is meaningless as Europe has no heart and never will have. If one were to ask where the allegorical heart might be, one could say that it was the common agricultural policy. One of the ironies of our affairs in the House is that, at a time when many of my right hon. and hon. Friends are keen on closer European union, they are often critical of the common agricultural policy. However, when one goes to continental Europe one finds that the cement that holds the European concept together is the CAP, which is liked by the French and the Germans.

Every country in the world, including the United States and Japan, supports agriculture—Britain has done so since the beginning of the 1939 war. It is right that we should do so for an enormous range of reasons. Agriculture is not like industry; it needs support. However, the problem of the CAP has been its excesses. I fully accept that urban taxpayers cannot be expected to sign huge cheques every year to support commodities which nobody wants to buy. But the great merit of the potato marketing scheme is that, unlike the CAP, its mechanism keeps supply and demand in balance to a considerable extent.

Far from abolishing the potato marketing scheme, we should hold it up to the Community as an example of the sort of device that it should consider using for a variety of other commodities. It avoids the excesses of the CAP

financial arrangements, with large imposts falling on the taxpayer. The MacSharry plan was devised to overcome the excesses of the CAP, which cannot be blamed on the potato marketing scheme.

When something works, why fix it? The view of every potato grower in my constituency is that the potato marketing scheme works. They will be very upset if it is abolished.

In the European context, potatoes have been the only major arable crop not to be covered by a CAP regime. Although potatoes have often enjoyed governmental support and grants on the continent, as the hon. Member for Workington said, we are now told that there is to be a CAP regime for potatoes. I do not necessarily agree with the hon. Member for Workington that that is another conspiracy, or that it will never come about.

In preparation for this debate, I read the Commission's report of December 1992 and I even read the Rapporteur's report on the subject to the European Parliament. The Council is considering the scheme and I imagine that it will eventually come to fruition. As the House will know, I am not an enormous enthusiast for European arrangements, but if we are to have a regime for potatoes, I hope that it will be sensible and not too light weight.

The declared aim of the Commission's regulation in Brussels in December 1992 was:

"To ensure stability of the market in potatoes and a fair income to the producers."

That is perfectly acceptable and that is the aim of the potato marketing scheme. However, as so often with the Brussels Commission, its good intentions may produce quite opposite practical results. As the hon. Member for Workington and many others have suggested, the Commission may propose such a light weight Community regime in potatoes that, far from ensuring

"stability of the market . . . and a fair income to the producers",

it may produce the exact opposite.

However, there is nothing in the British arrangements at present which appears to be contrary to the Commission's proposals, the Rapporteur's report and the European Parliament's response. As subsidiarity is stressed increasingly in European affairs, if the EC produces a potato regime, it would be a very good test of whether subsidiarity has any real meaning if we were allowed to retain the potato marketing scheme that we already have.

Under the British scheme, stability arises from the constancy of acreage planted and the certainty of future acreage which is encouraged by the quota system. In practice, the potato marketing board's buying-in programme is less important than the quota system. However, it also helps to maintain confidence and at no cost to the taxpayer.

We can contrast that with the situation in Brittany today, to which the hon. Member for Workington referred. Very considerable sums of French taxpayers' money—not CAP money—are being spent to help the Brittany potato growers precisely because they do not have a scheme like ours.

Turning from the European context, I want now to consider the British critics of the scheme. It is fair to say that three main criticisms are most usually advanced within the United Kingdom against the case for the retention of the potato marketing scheme.

The first criticism is that the Tory party is supposed to believe in free markets and the potato marketing scheme restricts that. Secondly, it is said that the housewife is forced to pay a higher price for her potatoes than would otherwise be the case if there was no such scheme. Thirdly, it is said that the processing companies are concentrating their capital investment in continental Europe to the disadvantage of British employment and our balance of payments because of the scheme.

I hope to demolish those three propositions. First, with regard to free markets, I have already said that there is a totally free market in potatoes outside the farm gate. In that regard, I want to refer to the Nottingham report. Nottingham university is in the first constituency that I was elected to represent in 1959. I have a very high regard for Nottingham university, and I was a member of the university council for many years.

The Nottingham report is a distinguished document, which I have read with the greatest care. I believe that it demolishes most of the criticisms against the potato marketing scheme. The report states:

"The current system of market intervention is one that works with the market rather than against it."

The abolition of the potato marketing scheme, far from producing a free market in the technical and economic sense of the phrase, might have precisely the opposite effect.

The processors are potentially a monopolistic group of mainly international companies. They take 33 per cent. of the total market in potatoes in this country and 25 per cent. of the home-grown crop. The market in frozen chips is dominated by one processing firm—three firms take 90 per cent. between them and one takes 60 per cent. The market in crisps is dominated by three firms.

If the Government decided to abolish the potato marketing scheme, my farmers assure me that they would be handing over a large and diversified agricultural industry to a small group of international companies which would be able to determine the acreage of potatoes planted and their price. Many farmers have put it to me that there is a much stronger case for referring the processing companies to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission than there is for abolishing the potato marketing scheme.

We do not have as strong a co-operative movement among potato growers in this country as there is on continental Europe. That is another reason for not allowing the oligopolistic tendencies of the processors unfettered expression.

I want now to consider the argument about forcing up the prices to housewives. Fresh potatoes still form three quarters of the market and are, in economic jargon, a price inelastic commodity. The consumption of fresh potatoes in Britain does not change much with price changes at the farm gate, although fresh potato consumption has been steadily rising in the United Kingdom for years unlike the trend in any other European country.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, we are a potato eating people. The potato is our staple diet. We are the only European country of which that is true. The competitors of the potato are pasta and rice, both of which are imported products. In any event, it is the retail chain, not the producer, that mainly determines the price to the housewife.

In the earlier part of this year, farmers in my constituency received about 3p a lb for their potatoes

loose. The housewife pays about 20p a lb for loose potatoes in the shops and about 30p to 40p a lb for packaged potatoes depending on their quality and variety. That shows what a small part the price paid to farmers plays in relation to the price that the housewife pays.

I am assured that farmers receive only about 30 per cent. of the retail price of pre-packaged potatoes, only 10 per cent. of the retail price of frozen chips and only 3 per cent. of the retail price of potato crisps. It is therefore absurd for processors to argue that the British potato grower is in danger of pricing the processor out of the retail market. As I have said, potato consumption does not change much with a change of price at the farm gate, but what do change are the profit margins of the big international processors. That is no doubt the reason why the chairman of the processors wrote to me and a great many other hon. Members a letter that I received this morning in which he strongly urged me to vote for legislation which would abolish the potato marketing scheme.

8.30 pm

Another criticism is that processing is being forced overseas by the potato marketing scheme. That criticism was completely shot down by the Nottingham report. If anybody cares to read the section on processing, he or she will see that one sentence reads:

"British potato processors are not adversely affected by the potato marketing scheme."

At great length the report explains the justification for that remark. I will not delay the House by giving all the detail, but I do not see how anybody could read that section of the Nottingham report without being convinced by it.

The continental producer, of course, usually has a much smaller production unit. He uses less expensive capital equipment and, in general, produces potatoes of a lower quality and at a lower price than our potato producers. My farmers feel that the producers want to be able to get their higher quality British potato at a depressed price and to acquire total dominance of the British potato market, although they buy only a quarter of the home-grown crop.

We were told much by the previous Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food about how well the processing investment was going overseas. When one studies the matter overseas, one is immediately informed that the market has approached satiation point in Holland —some companies there are going bankrupt or have already gone bankrupt.

The reason for the adverse trade balance in processed potatoes is that the international processors, having sunk so much capital into continental Europe, are bringing processed potatoes into Britain. Having made that big investment overseas, it is extremely unlikely in the present circumstances that, if we abolish the potato marketing scheme, they will suddenly start to invest more capital in new equipment in this country when there is already overcapacity in Europe.

The import-export argument is often used. Potatoes are a bulk commodity and are too expensive to move in most cases, so the scope for large-scale exports of British fresh potatoes is unlikely to be great. The balance of payments argument, which is the third argument against the potato marketing scheme, does not stand up to analysis.

The employment point is also often advanced against the scheme. Again the arguments point in exactly the opposite way. There are about 16,000 registered potato farmers, but there are 14,500 active growers at the moment, employing about 60,000 workers. In rural areas, that is extremely important, particularly in Lincolnshire. Despite the large capital investment of big growers in equipment, by modern agricultural standards potato growing is still a relatively labour-intensive industry.

A farmer on a typical 1,300-acre farm in my constituency, with 150 acres of potatoes under the quota, told me last week that he now employs eight full-time workers and that five of those eight would be made redundant if he switched out of potatoes because of the uncertainty which could flow from a destabilised free-for-all regime. That is undoubtedly the case. It is virtually certain that the abolition of the potato marketing scheme would force many small potato growers in particular out of business. The Nottingham report, which was published as recently as April, estimated that 7,000 potato growers—40 per cent. of all potato growers—might go out of business without the potato marketing scheme, at a loss of half a million tonnes of potato production, which would presumably then have to be imported.

With her recent ministerial experience at the Department of Employment, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will understand the serious social and employment implications of those statistics, particularly in areas such as my constituency where we have about 14 per cent. unemployment on the coast and where potato growing provides much valuable employment. I suspect that the same is true in many other parts of the country. Whatever Ministers might say to the contrary, every potato grower in my constituency would be most alarmed if the scheme was abolished. They are all convinced that that would lead to much greater price fluctuations and much uncertainty. At a time when CAP regimes are being introduced for sheep, beef and set-aside, it makes no sense at all for the traditional British potato to be the only arable crop enjoying no form of agricultural protection.

I very much hope that my right hon. Friend will feel able to accept the two amendments that I have tabled. *[Interruption.]* Despite what the hon. Member for Workington says, amendment No. 49 would ensure that she would not use her powers under the legislation to close the schemes without the fullest consultation with everybody connected with the industry. Amendment No. 50 would build into the legislation the fact that, if the Community produced such a light weight potato marketing scheme that it would be virtually useless in stabilising the market, she would again have to consult all interests before using the European initiative as an excuse to abolish the potato marketing scheme. I hope that, as a listening Minister, she will seriously consider accepting my two amendments.

**Mr. Tyler:** I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) and I echo many of his points, but I hope to do so very briefly rather than repeat them. The hon. Gentleman led neatly to my first question. Given the evidence that he has put before us and the evidence that we have had from many other sources, exactly who is in favour of abolishing the marketing scheme? The answer is the Potato Processors Association —that is all; it is just one potato. When I met a group of Cornish and other south-western potato farmers in Central Lobby just a few hours ago, they said, "There must be some reason for the extraordinary influence of

that comparatively small number of people." The only way in which they could interpret it—I do not cast any aspersions—is chequebook diplomacy, which has been rather notorious in recent days. I suggested that it might be a case of crisp bank notes rather than cheques.

On Second Reading, Conservative Members were critical of plans to abolish the board and the scheme. The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), himself a former Minister, said:

"The potato scheme has worked extremely well over the years . . . I am much disappointed that there is a danger of the potato marketing scheme disappearing."—[*Official Report*, 23 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 814.]

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) said:

"many people, including my potato growers and farmers, may question whether it is worth having any EC regime at all, since it will do so little."—[*Official Report*, 23 March 1993; Vol. 221 c. 820.]

There is widespread concern right through the industry—not just among processors—and the hon. Member for East Lindsey has rightly reflected that concern this evening.

I stand slightly uncomfortably between the hon. Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for East Lindsey. The new clauses tabled by the hon. Member for Workington and the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for East Lindsey are both of value. They fit together—indeed, it is critical that they should fit together. My hon. Friends and I endorsed the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for East Lindsey precisely because we hoped that they would be placed before the House—and, if necessary, put to the vote.

There is widespread concern among all producers, be they seed producers, early producers, such as the famous early producers from Cornwall, or main crop producers. Demand is growing. The reason for that, even in the comparatively short period since the completion of the Committee's consideration of the Bill, there has been a major development—the failure of the Council of Agriculture Ministers to make any progress whatever in the development of a regime.

There has been another, perhaps more encouraging, development—the arrival at the Dispatch Box of the new Minister. I draw attention to the second section of the report in *Farmers Weekly* to which the hon. Member for Workington somewhat peculiarly did not refer:

"Mrs. Shephard said reviewing the potato scheme was one of her first priorities"—

we shall have the benefit of her advice on that tonight.

"She would approach the subject with an open mind she promised. She wanted to see the 'lightest possible regime' but intended examining MAFF's plans for the scheme as well as the EC's suggestions for potatoes. As an MP for the mainly arable constituency of Norfolk South West she is well aware of potato producers' objections to the plans to scrap the scheme and the Potato Marketing Board. 'I have heard strong expressions of feelings about it,' she admitted."

That is significant. I hope that her arrival will prove to be the positive development that can be set against the negative developments in Brussels.

Why did the Agriculture Ministers fail to agree? They failed because all the other producer states are enjoying the greatest degree of subsidiarity that they can exploit in the interests of their own producers. We are the only country that seems not to be prepared to do its best by its own producers. Those of the other 11 member states that produce potatoes—I do not know whether Luxembourg, for example, does—are desperately trying to keep in place the most advantageous schemes that they possibly can to help in what has become an extremely competitive situation. As the hon. Member for East Lindsey rightly said, we should be doing the same. In the absence of an effective regime to help the whole industry throughout the Community we have an obligation to try to make that happen. At present, the imbalance is increasing because the Governments of other member states are doing their best to make sure that it does.

We have heard a number of references to the university of Nottingham report, the title of which has been misquoted. The proper title is "An (Un)Common Potato Regime: the EC and the PMB". I want to read two or three extracts in which the argument not only for the retention of our scheme but for its use as a model for others is put succinctly. The report says:

"The record of several European countries in the potato sector demonstrates that potato producers require some form of collaboration or cooperative in order to achieve stable and reasonable incomes through time. The yields and returns from the crop are inherently unstable—much more so than for other arable crops. Certain vegetable crops may have similar problems, but there the Community has adopted intervention and withdrawal as measures to aid producers' incomes in such sectors. For those crops, at least, the Commission has recognised that yield instability, perishability, and difficulties with storage require an element of supply management; albeit after the crop is grown. For potatoes the problem is greater because of the relatively larger area grown and consumed. It is the single largest vegetable item produced and eaten in the Community. Hence, stable supplies and prices are more relevant than ever."

The report continues:

"The PMS represents a model for farm policy-makers that deserves consideration and repetition in other sectors."

As the hon. Member for East Lindsey said, rather than disposing of the PMS, we should be replicating it in other parts of the market.

Finally, the report states:

"Oligopolistic processing and retailing sectors will tend to exploit growers unless there is some countervailing power available to the production sector. The Potato Marketing Board surely has some role to play in this."

Thus, the conclusion of that excellent report was not just that the potato marketing scheme and the board represent something of which we should be loth to dispose, but that it is peculiarly important to retain them at this juncture.

8.45 pm

At the moment, potato growers are facing the worst of all worlds. One of the Cornish farmers who came to see me this afternoon showed me the figures for his potato crop for 1992-93. The total cost, excluding management time and professional fees, came to £80,000 for about 60 acres. That yield is not remarkable or incredible, but it is not bad either. The income from that crop was £43,200. Such huge losses cannot be repeated year after year without more and more growers being driven out of business. That farmer said that, if the growers have another similar year or if the scheme goes and therefore the fluidity of the prices becomes even more alarming, he will have to make half his staff redundant. It should be remembered that my area is also an area of very high unemployment.

In those circumstances, we shall find that the other member states, which have in place the best support systems that they can devise for this sector of the industry, will carve up the market and we shall be at their mercy. To coin yet another new phrase, it will be the most uneven ploughing field yet.

The Minister is still in her honeymoon period. She has three great advantages. I am sure that other hon. Members from both sides of the House who have farming communities in their constituencies will agree that the right hon. Lady's arrival in Whitehall place has been warmly welcomed for three reasons. First, she has a farming background and it is to be hoped that that will help her to understand the problems of the industry. The speech that was referred to earlier will perhaps give added encouragement to that view. Secondly, the right hon. Lady is known to be a good listener—although whether the hon. Member for East Lindsey is right in thinking that the whole Government are good at listening is perhaps a matter for dispute. Certainly, the right hon. Lady's predecessor did not go round the farming community and achieve such a reputation. Thirdly, and perhaps most important for the farming community, the right hon. Lady is not her predecessor. That is why I hope that she will not automatically adopt her predecessor's views this evening.

Amendments Nos. 49 and 50 are welcome and useful. I hope that the right hon. Lady will think so, too. I hope that the House will either accept them without a Division or, if a Division is called, will vote to add them to the Bill. The Minister must answer the very real concern about the circumstances that have arisen following the failure of the Council of Ministers to develop even a light weight regime —let alone a more effective regime. I hope that, in the hiatus that has followed that meeting, she will be able to reassure the potato producers of this country that they will not be given a potato in a poke—an intolerable state of affairs in which all the producers of all the member states receive better treatment than they do.

**Mr. John Greenway** (Ryedale): I welcome my right hon. and hon. Friends to their ministerial appointments. Having entered the House with them in the 1987 intake, I am not surprised at the progress of their careers. They will bring a great deal of common sense to the agricultural industry and do a lot of good work for it. While it is a great joy to have a lady Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, I remind the House that we had a lady Minister of State not long ago—Baroness Trumpington. She took a leading role in the reform of the potato marketing scheme when we previously examined it. I well remember her visiting my constituency and confronting many of my farmers with the bad news that the potato marketing board would disappear. She listened to their arguments and said, "Perhaps we can have another think about it."

I sense that we are in the same situation now because there has been much debate about the future of the potato industry and the scheme. If one thing is clear, it is that no clear consensus has emerged. Despite the welcome fact that the Government have accepted the amendments carried in another place that there should be parliamentary control over the enabling power to revoke the potato marketing scheme, it is right that there should be some greater certainty about the need for more consultation before the scheme is revoked.

The House must be concerned about the wide discrepancy in the view of the growers and processors. As we know, growers see the scheme as providing both stability and the prospect of a reasonable return on their potatoes. If there is no scheme, there will be a potato glut and a fall in incomes, and growers would be forced out of business. Indeed, the threat of the abolition of the scheme has created the current uncertainty among growers, coupled with the failure of the Commission to make any real progress in the creation of a Community-wide potato regime.

At the other extreme, potato processors such as McCains in Scarborough on the edge of my constituency, which buys from many potato growers in north Yorkshire, say with some force that they want to buy more locally grown potatoes. We must face the fact that, in their view, the scheme prevents them from doing so and does not give the growers enough encouragement to grow the right variety and quality of potatoes for their factories.

**Mr. Nick Ainger** (Pembroke): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Greenway:** I will not take any interventions because we want to wrap up the debate quickly.

The last thing that the House should want is a solution imposed by Ministers. I want the growers and processors to find a common solution. We largely achieved that with regard to the future of the milk industry. Where we are now with the potato industry is where we were two or three years ago with the milk industry. There was a lot of resistance to change and the two sides of the industry failed to reach a common position. As we found that common solution with milk, I believe that we can achieve the same in the potato industry.

I want north Yorkshire and the United Kingdom as a whole to have an expanding potato industry with more United Kingdom-grown potatoes processed in United Kingdom factories with that product sold at home and overseas. The proposed Community-wide scheme is some way off and may not happen, so there is time for the matter to be debated further, although I suspect that we do not have unlimited time.

The present scheme does not protect United Kingdom growers from low-priced imported products and that has undermined the market, certainly in Yorkshire. But there is an opportunity for more discussion and consultation to find a solution. The potato industry needs an agreed solution—that is the best way forward. The industry does not need a political solution or an imposed one. Amendments Nos. 49 and 50, to which I have added my name, provide the mechanism by which we can not only have that further consultation and discussion but provide some greater assurance about the future of potato growers.

Farmers and potato growers in Ryedale and north Yorkshire, and workers in McCains modern processing plant at Cayton, Scarborough, should be on the same side of this matter, not at loggerheads. That is what happened in sugar and it should happen in potatoes. A partnership solution between growers and processors is what the potato industry in the United Kingdom badly needs.

**Mr. Ainger:** I tried to intervene on the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) because I wanted to make the point that there is a forum where producers and processors can get together and discuss acreage and types of potatoes to be grown—the Joint Consultative Committee. When one looks at the minutes of the JCC and talks to its members, it is interesting to see that the processors have never demanded a higher acreage or different varieties to be grown. When one reads the minutes of those meetings, it is stretching the imagination to believe what the processors say because they have a forum and an opportunity to address their concerns. It leaves hon.

Members with the belief that the processors are concerned not about growth or the type of potatoes grown but the price of them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) took us on a nice trip around Europe. At last, we discovered—I hope that it is good news for Ministers—what has been going on in other member states with regard to support and intervention. It is worth while comparing what is currently happening in our potato industry with that of Brittany.

In Central Lobby today, I met local producers from the constituency of the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler). I was told—I shall use acreage terms—that if an early potato producer in Pembrokeshire could get an income of £1,000 per acre, he would get a reasonable living. We are looking at £800 to cover his costs. In fact, producers now get between £400 and £500, so obviously there is a massive loss.

The potato marketing scheme has been implemented. Total assets of about £2 million—25 per cent.—have been allocated to early growers. However, that will leave them with a significant loss this year, which unfortunately follows a significant loss last year. This year, about 15 per cent. less acreage has been planted and it has been estimated that there will be a further cut of about 30 per cent. as a result of the poor season this year. That is important because the early potato sector has an excellent record of import substitution. In 1987, 385,000 tonnes of new potatoes were imported. That has fallen to approximately 260,000 or 270,000 tonnes now. When we have a balance of payments problem, it seems crazy to allow production of a basic staple food such as potatoes to fall and to encourage imports in.

I return to the comparison that I was making between Pembrokeshire and Brittany. We have a looming crisis. The levy-payers—the producers—will benefit to the massive tune of £500,000. As my hon. Friend the Member for Workington told us, the French Government are intervening directly using French taxpayers' money, not producers' money. The Government have already contributed, according to my figures, more than £1·3 million to their early potato growers. That is the equivalent of about £530 to £560 to each one.

Government intervention is not the only factor in France. The French potato industry has developed powerful co-operatives which in effect set quotas and market the produce directly from the producer. They also supply the seed. They control the acreage in the same way, to a certain extent, as the JCC does.

9 pm

If the Bill is not amended we shall face the prospect in the near future of only British producers being left unprotected in the face of Government intervention and powerful co-operatives establishing quota and acreage, marketing and so on in continental Europe. It is bizarre that the first part of the Bill abolishes the milk marketing boards and encourages the establishment of a powerful co-operative to replace them, yet it sweeps away the potato marketing board and puts nothing in its place.

This is my first opportunity to welcome the Secretary of State to her new post. I urge her to listen to what the producers are saying and what people in rural communities are saying. As the hon. Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) said, the potato industry makes a vital contribution to rural areas in terms of employment and income. The Secretary of State represents a rural area so she knows that well. It seems ludicrous to leave the Bill unamended. We have heard that it is highly unlikely that we shall get an EC regime. We shall leave our British producers unprotected in a market in which their EC competitors are determined to export to Britain maincrop and early potatoes. I trust that the Secretary of State will have something positive to say in her reply.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** You allowed me to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the basis that I spoke briefly, which I intend to do. First, I welcome my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend to their posts. They bring a new look to the industry which I am sure will be welcomed.

I listened to the debate for many weeks in Committee. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) went on at some length. I thought that I had heard it all. When he announced this evening that he had come up with a better scheme than all the experts had done since the potato marketing board was set up in 1958, and that it almost worked, I nearly fell off my seat. I am sure that the PMB will rush to employ his services as a consultant. But, under the Labour party's new probity, I am sure that he will refuse any consultant's fee.

I declare my interest as a potato grower. Let me bring a little sanity to the debate. In the past 10 years the amount of processed potatoes that we import has doubled from about a quarter of a million tonnes per year to a little more than half a million tonnes a year. On a yield of 20 tonnes per acre that works out to some 30,000 acres. That is 30,000 acres of potatoes that we could be growing in Britain. It amounts to a loss to our balance of trade of £125 million. That is a large sum of money. So there is a good case for looking carefully at our potato market.

It is plain that the potato marketing board has been an outstanding success. The hon. Member for Workington quoted many figures from the Nottingham report which was commissioned by the PMB, so although it may be independent, we cannot expect it to come out glowingly against the PMB.

It is a fact that in the last three of the past 12 years price fluctuations were higher in the United Kingdom than elsewhere and that in any four years price fluctuations were lower here than elsewhere. Therefore, the comment that we have heard so often this evening that the PMB has brought stability into our potato market is simply not borne out. Indeed, in the past season large tonnages of potatoes were changing hands at well below the cost of production, at £30 a tonne or less. The hon. Member for Pembroke, North (Mr. Ainger) has told us that this year many of his early growers are losing money. Last week I heard that an ex-farm price in Pembroke was £41 a tonne whereas at this time of year one would expect the price of potatoes to be £100 a tonne.

The kernel of my remarks is that we are now in a changing market. It will become increasingly easy with technology and better chilling methods to import not only fresh potatoes but every sort of processed potato, so we must consider our potato market.

I recognise from letters and representations from my constituents that they welcome the PMB/PMS overview of our policy. I have made representations to my right hon. Friend and, indeed, her predecessor to the effect that we should go slowly on abolishing the PMS. It would be folly to abolish the PMS the moment that the Bill is enacted and, as the hon. Member for Workington has rightly

*[Mr. Clifton-Brown]*

pointed out at length, to suffer the subsidies that would follow. It would be folly to lose the stability that the board brings until we have a regime, however lightweight, across Europe, to which we can oblige our Community partners to adhere under Maastricht.

I welcome the thrust of the Bill, but I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to think carefully and not to throw the baby out with the bath water. I urge them to go slowly. In that respect I welcome amendment No. 49, which calls for consultations with the industry, but I do not welcome amendment No. 50 because a poll of the industry would produce a difficult result. *[Laughter.]* Hon. Members who laugh must know that 60 per cent. of the market is produced by just 2,000 of the 16,000 growers. Why, then, should a poll on a per member basis produce the ultimate answer about what should happen to the market?

One needs to consult widely to see the best way forward for potato growers and, above all, for consumers and processors, so that we start to repatriate some of the half a million tonnes produced abroad which should be produced here. I look forward with eagerness to what my right hon. Friend has to say.

**Mr. Welsh:** I think that the massive impor of frozen chips has more to do with a lack of processing capacity than with the workings of the potato marketing board. Nevertheless, I share the wish of the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) to see increased home production. He again proves that absolutely nobody supports the abolition of the PMB. I have not even heard the Government defend such a policy. Perhaps they will do so before the evening is through.

Although I, too, welcome the new faces in the ministerial team, I hope that they will bring new thinking and a fresh approach. In particular I hope that they will listen to the industry and those involved in production.

I support maximum consultation with the industry. I remind the Government of the massive and strongly felt opposition in Scotland to any abolition of the PMB. Although it is not a perfect institution, it has by and large served the interests of producers and consumers over the long term. If the Government had listened to Scottish farming views, the PMB would be in no danger of abolition. The scheme would certainly be modernised and improved, but there would not be the threat of abolition. I wonder whether the Scottish Office shares completely the views about abolition which have been expressed elsewhere. It seems that there are two voices. I hope that what I interpret as the Scottish Office voice will prevail. Perhaps it will and the Minister will surprise us all before the evening is through.

I remind the Government about the importance of the potato industry to Scotland. It is a major employer and a major source of employment in other, related industries. These decisions are of major importance to us. Scotland's ware industry and its crucial seed industry require both stability and direction if they are to plan ahead properly. I remind the Minister of the capital-intensive nature of the seed potato industry. I am told that the investment requirment is about £3,500 per hectare. Thus, any delay or doubt in decision-making simply destabilises the industry and, with uncertainty, investment simply stops. These amendments would eliminate at least some of the uncertainty and allow the industry to participate in decisions about its own future.

There is a need for proper planning horizons. There is too much short-termism in the approach to agriculture. In the case of the potato industry, producers require firmer guidance as to the Government's intentions so that the industry may plan ahead properly. Producers have to look to markets and contracts. The sooner the Government clarify their decisions, the better. I am told that the actual production of potatoes takes a year and a half of forward planning. This extends to four years or more when capital investment, banking decisions, machinery, and so on, are taken into consideration.

That brings me to the argument about a level playing field. This is not just the use of a cliché; it really is an attempt to ensure that the industry will not face massive disadvantages. Our industry has the quality and the expertise to beat any of its competitors if it is allowed a level playing field. The United Kingdom's potato industry is no burden on British taxpayers, yet it has to compete against its European Community counterparts whose Governments positively finance their potato sectors. I am told that £7 million in loans was given to Spanish producers last year, that Italy supplied £50 million to its producers, that France has put £13 million, if not more, into its industry, and that Portugal gives growers an export subsidy. The British Government will put our industry at a great disadvantage if they abolish the potato marketing scheme while these competitors enjoy exactly such advantages.

The French Government are acting very quickly to help their industry. Currently they give Brittany's early potato growers assistance to the tune of millions of pounds to prevent market collapse in an area that provides about 80 per cent. of French early potatoes. The British Government must understand that it is little wonder that our industry is concerned about the abolition of market stabilisation measures here while direct competitors have such advantages given to them by their Governments. Does the Minister accept the concern of potato growers about the need for a level playing field? Can she give a guarantee that the potato marketing scheme will not be abolished while other European countries implement market stabilisation measures that are not available here? Can the Government guarantee that they will not revoke the scheme before the European Commission requires that to be done? Otherwise our industry will face massive disadvantages.

The industry requires consultation, stability and a level playing field so that it may plan for the future. Potato production is massively important to Angus—indeed, to Scotland—and the Government's overall strategic decisions will affect, in turn, a mass of associated industries and services. I am thinking of transportation, the supply of machinery and the very important processing sector.

In summing up, I put to the Government a plea for clarity of action so that producers and processors may begin to plan ahead. Confidence—or, more important, the lack of it—is a major factor affecting this sector of the industry.

A change of Ministers should provide an opportunity for second and cooler thoughts on the subject and allow those affected to have a real say in deciding their future. I

do not expect, however, that the Government will allow that freedom and that sort of decision-making power to our agriculture industry, more is the pity.

**Mr. Cash:** I agree absolutely with my hon. Friend the member for Lindsey, East (Sir P. Tapsell). *[Interruption.]* We have corresponded on this matter. I want to get it on the record—because I have a direct constituency interest in this matter—that I endorse what he has said and many of the other remarks made during the debate.

9.15 pm

**The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Gillian Shephard):** This has been an extremely interesting debate. Not the least interesting feature has been the light in which we have now all been led to regard the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). He has revealed himself as a capitalist, an entrepreneur, a faulty drafter of clauses, but an excellent drafter of potato marketing schemes. We have been treated to a vision of the hon. Gentleman in his bath and, finally, when he read the extract of what I said in 1989, he showed himself to be a wonderful female impersonator.

What is clear about the hon. Gentleman's performance is that his customary paranoia has not deserted him. He accused the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of rejecting his starred amendment, but he must know that that is a matter for Madam Speaker. I reject his accusation.

I noted that my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell), in moving his amendment, attempted to compare me to the unfortunate Madame Cresson. I will pass over that comparison, the white helicopter and everything else. He spoke about processed potatoes, and I wonder whether he has noted the massive changes in the pattern of potato consumption in this country since 1975. In 1975, we consumed 143 lb of potatoes per head per year; in 1992, we consumed 110 lb per head per year—a considerable reduction. In the same period, the consumption of crisps has increased. In 1975, we consumed a mere 7 lb per head per year; in 1992 it increased to a staggering 17 lb per head per year. I am amazed by those figures. All I can say is that it is obvious the hon. Member for Workington has not been indulging, but I might have been. As to frozen chips, in 1975 we consumed 4·7 lb per head per year; in 1992 consumption rose to 18 lb.

Those figures should be noted because they indicate a great change in the demands on our potato processors. I would remind hon. Members, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), that processing also provides employment.

The hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) should note that 30 per cent. of potato producers were in favour of abolition of the potato marketing scheme.

**Mr. Tyler:** I think that I am right in saying that that poll was taken some years ago and that a different situation has now arisen—particularly with the failure of the Council of Agricultural Ministers to arrive at a satisfactory alternative.

**Mrs. Shephard:** The EC position must be taken into account when we look at the issue, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree that many producers see the downside of what is, in many respects, an excellent scheme.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale made a very balanced contribution and reminded us of the need to look at change in the consumption of potatoes and the demands on potato producers. The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) referred to the JCC and Government intervention. The Government are intervening in the market this year to the extent of £1·5 million, which is not an inconsiderable sum.

We heard the usual sensible, balanced comment from my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown). I considered the Nottingham university report, which was commissioned by the potato marketing board. The university did not consult processors and its report contains some arithmetical errors. Nevertheless, it made interesting reading and I have studied it carefully.

The hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) reminded us of the need to consider the lack of processing capacity in Britain and to consider the reason for that.

Speeches have been balanced, but hon. Members have hinted heavily that we need to remember the changes that have occurred in the potato market.

I know that the Bill's provisions have caused a lot of anxiety among farmers, despite the fact that they are only enabling provisions. Representing the constituency that I do, and in the light of my words on 27 January 1989, I obviously understand the concerns of growers——

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** No one would have known that the hon. Lady made that speech if I had not found it.

**Mrs. Shephard:** I could have referred the hon. Gentleman to it with no trouble at all. He should ask in future.

I understand that growers are concerned that the scheme that they know well and on which they have come to rely over the years might disappear.

Since taking up my post, I have considered the recent poll taken by the potato marketing board, but the view of the majority is not universally held. We must remember that retailers and processors as well as consumers—interestingly, nobody has mentioned consumers during the debate—have an input. Potatoes are an important crop in Britain. It has become a high-tech and successful industry. Producers set great store by it, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury pointed out, a third of potatoes eaten in 1992 were in processed form and only 23 per cent. of those came from a United Kingdom provenance. We must consider the trend in the market if we are to retain a healthy potato industry.

**Mr. George Kynoch** (Kincardine and Deeside): Does my right hon. Friend accept that we must not consider only the healthy trend in the market but ensure good production planning? Many of my constituents, to whom I referred in a recent letter to her, recognise that the acreage control is necessary for good management planning in potato production. Will she go further and say that she will press this point with our colleagues in Europe, rather than accept a rather loose European regime being imposed on us?

**Mrs. Shepherd:** I have received a representation from my hon. Friend and I shall bear his remarks in mind when we are working in Europe on this matter.

The Bill provides for two possibilities, depending on the existence or otherwise of an EC regime for potatoes. Let

*[Mrs. Shepherd]*

me deal first with the situation should there be a regime. As hon. Members will know, the proposal that the Commission made last November is very lightweight. It does not provide any market support measures and if it is adopted in its present form it will mean the end of national arrangements here and elsewhere. We made it clear that, in the context of that proposal, we would not press for retention of quota and support buying arrangements because no other member states wished to adopt quotas. It clearly would not be in the interests of our growers, even if we were allowed to do so, to adopt quotas while others could grow as many potatoes as they liked.

**Mr. Ainger:** Does the right hon. Lady accept that in France the powerful co-operatives that supply seed and eventually market the produced potatoes operate, in effect, a quota system? Although the French Government do not set quotas, those powerful co-operatives are effectively operating a quota system.

**Mrs. Shephard:** I am not sure whether that is the case, although I would probably bow to the experience of the hon. Gentleman. If we limit our acreage, we could put our growers at a disadvantage without knowing the outcome of the EC scheme.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): Is the Minister aware of the concern expressed by potato farmers in my constituency that the large seed developers and the seed merchants are taking more control over exactly what farmers can do, including for species of potato that have been established for 20 or 30 years? Is that not a restriction on the market that should be investigated? Farmers are telling me that the Plant Varieties and Seeds Act 1964 says that monopolistic practices by seed merchants and developers cannot be investigated because of a ruling of the House. Is that sensible, and should not it be changed?

**Mrs. Shephard:** I accept, of course, that all growers wish to grow for a particular market. If there are matters which the hon. Gentleman wishes to draw to my attention I shall be happy to look at them. However, most growers are anxious to work with the market that they have.

**Mr. Welsh:** Can the Minister guarantee that she will not abolish the potato marketing scheme or give up the advantages of the potato marketing board before any European scheme is adopted?

**Mrs. Shephard:** I am coming to what I am prepared to do. The Bill prepares us to respond to any Community regime and to retain the constructive and desirable activities of the board, such as research and development and market promotion, if that is what growers want.

The Bill allows for establishement of a successor body for that purpose. Without the Bill, we would have no alternative but to revoke the scheme and wind up the board without the possibility of a successor and the protection of its important functions.

I should mention briefly what is happening in Brussels. The proposal was considered by the May Council together with presidency proposals incorporating marketing standards. There was no agreement on that and the Special Committee for Agriculture has been asked to do further work. The proposal was not discussed at the June Council and it remains to be seen when it will be brought forward again.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Will the Minister clarify something? If there is no European regime, is the Minister sure that she will then not revoke the scheme, or does she think she may have to revoke it even if there is an agreement?

**Mrs. Shephard:** Funnily enough, I was about to deal with that. In addition to all the other things we have described him as, the hon. Gentleman is perhaps a little impatient, but also has some foresight. I was about to say what might happen in the continued absence of an EC regime.

The Government have not made any decision to revoke the scheme. My hon. Friend and I want to acquaint ourselves first-hand with all the arguments, and we have set in motion meetings with the industry bodies concerned. We shall then be in a position to discuss the matter in an informed way with the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales, who are also involved in making any decision.

I have made it clear that I want to spend a considerable amount of time and effort listening to growers, processors, retailers, packers and consumers before reaching any conclusions about the future of the scheme.

I am also aware that statutory decisions need to be taken shortly with regard to the 1994 crop year. The potato marketing board has to announce its quota arrangements by the end of August so that growers can plan their 1994 plantings. I am prepared to allow the present arrangements to apply to the 1994 season in order to give myself time.

The Government have retained the full spirit of the amendments made in another place. We have tidied up the amendments which their Lordships accepted would be necessary, but the thrust of the amendments is unaffected. They have as their most important effect the requirement to bring any decision to revoke the scheme, apart from one made in the context of an EC regime, back to Parliament for approval. That is sufficient safeguard for growers' interests in that it will ensure that a case for or against revocation would be heard in full and that informed debate would be guaranteed, should the Government consider that revocation is appropriate.

That brings me to new clauses 2, 3 and 4. The effect of the clauses would be that, in the absence of an EC potato regime, Ministers could not begin to take action to revoke the scheme even if it were patently obvious that it were necessary to do so, unless a poll of producers had shown a majority to be in favour of revocation. The informed debate in Parliament to which I have referred could not begin unless a certain group of potato producers gave Parliament the go-ahead.

I am more than willing to listen to the views of growers and other interested parties, and to take them into account. However, I do not think it is on to subordinate proper parliamentary consideration of any issue to the views of a particular interest group. I do not think that Parliament's hands should be tied in that way; moreover, such action would remove the essential safeguard contained in the 1958 Act to prevent the potato marketing

board from damaging the interests of consumers. I hope that, in the light of the assurances that I have given, the House will reject the new clauses.

9.30 pm

Amendment No. 49 appears to me to reflect the procedure that I would propose to adopt before making any decision on the future of the scheme. I am sorry that it was rubbished by the hon. Member for Workington and by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) into the bargain. I am happy to accept it. Amendment No. 50 is a little more problematic, because the wording is odd. It suggests that we should consult on the possibility of national measures after certifying that it was necessary to bring the potato marketing scheme to an end because its continued existence was inconsistent with an EC regulation. I do not think I could accept that the Government should be committed in those circumstances. I think the spirit of the amendment is that I should consult, and take account of the industry's views. As I am already committed to such action, I hope that the House will not accept the amendment.

I want a flourishing potato industry. I want our processors—who also provide a good many jobs—to be easily able to obtain the supplies that they want to process, so that we can discourage costly imports rather than using our own excellent potatoes. I want our producers, processors, retailers, packers and consumers to be delighted with this country's arrangements for the potato market, and I am prepared to take time to engage in discussions with interested bodies to ensure that that is what we achieve.

**Dr. Strang:** I think the House will agree that we have had an excellent debate, which has reflected the industry's views. The Minister's reply did more than justice to the discussions in which we have engaged.

The Minister referred to the position that would accompany an EC regime. Given our experience, that is the last thing that we want. The danger is that even a regime that started off relatively lightweight would end up like all the others, involving a huge cost to the taxpayer. That is an unsatisfactory way in which to support the market. I very much hope that there will be no question of the Government's allowing the EC to operate a fully fledged common potato regime: such a regime would probably create more of the problems experienced by other sectors of agriculture in this country, such as beef, milk and cereals, and bring about huge, costly surpluses.

The important part of the Minister's speech, however, related to the position without an EC regime. As she and other hon. Members have pointed out, the Council of Ministers has not made the progress towards a common regime that was expected. No one can be sure of the outcome, but it seems reasonable to assume that it will be some time before such a regime is agreed.

The Minister's response was very helpful. She said that, as things stood, the Government did not intend to wind up the potato marketing board; she said that no decision had been made and that she wanted to spend a long time consulting the industry about the future. She stated that the potato marketing board and the joint committee could go ahead and fix the target acreage and that the quotas could be in place for next year. They are positive advances and fully reflect the consensus in our debate, which did justice to the industry.

When the Minister examines the matter further, I believe that she will recognise the strength of the case for the potato marketing board. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) made a valuable contribution to the debate in destroying the argument initially put forward by Ministers that there were no other support arrangements within the EEC and that there was something peculiar about Britain's special domestic arrangements for supporting our potato market. That is not the case. Many other Community countries have elaborate arrangements for supporting their potato industries.

We have had a most valuable debate. Anyone who is in any doubt about the change in the Government's position should have a casual look at some of the statements made by the Minister's predecessor, on Second Reading and especially in Committee. It is clear that the Government were intent then on unilaterally winding up the potato marketing board, but the Minister has now made it clear that the Government are not going ahead. For that reason, we shall not press the new clause.

*Question put and negatived.*

**Clause 23**

ACTIVATION OF PART II

*Amendment made:* No. 49, in page 13, line 27, at end insert

'(2A) Where subsection (2) above applies, no order shall be made under subsection (1) above unless the Ministers have consulted on a proposal to bring the Potato Marketing Scheme to an end with such persons appearing to them to be representative of the interests of producers, purchasers, retailers and consumers of potatoes as they consider appropriate.'.—*[Sir P. Tapsell.]*

**Clause 29**

INFORMATION

*Amendment made:* No. 15, in page 17, line 28, leave out '21' and insert '14'.—*[Mrs. Gillian Shephard.]*

**Schedule 4**

PROVISIONS RELATING TO CARRYING OUT OF APPROVED TRANSFER SCHEME

*Amendments made:* No. 77, in page 60, line 46, leave out from 'which' to first 'of' in line 47 and insert 'imposes a prohibition (whether absolute or qualified) on the transfer'.

No. 66, in page 61, line 1, leave out 'penalises' and insert 'has the effect of penalising'.

No. 78, in page 61, line 2, leave out ', or a transfer without consent,'.

No. 79, in page 61, line 3, leave out 'prohibits the effecting without consent' and insert 'imposes a qualified prohibition on the effecting'.

No. 60, in page 61, line 7, leave out 'private' and insert 'purposes other than public'.

No. 67, in page 61, line 14, leave out 'penalises' and insert 'has the effect of penalising'.

No. 80, in page 61, line 15, leave out 'without consent".

No. 81, in page 61, line 29, leave out 'prohibits' and insert 'imposes an absolute prohibition on'.

No. 82, in page 61, line 31, leave out paragraph (b).

No. 61, in page 61, line 32, leave out 'private' and insert 'purposes other than public'.

No. 68, in page 62, line 5, leave out 'penalises' and insert 'has the effect of penalising'.—*[Mrs. Gillian Shephard.]*

## Clause 47

FALSE STATEMENTS TO OBTAIN PAYMENTS

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** I beg to move amendment No. 43, in page 24, leave out lines 39 to 42 and insert 'knowing or recklessly makes a statement which is false or misleading in a material respect'.

I shall be brief. This is a technical amendment which does not affect the substance of part III. The creation of a single offence of knowing or recklessly making a false or misleading statement brings the offence into line with similar provisions in the Bill and in other statutes.

*Amendment agreed to.*

## Clause 48

TIME LIMIT FOR PROSECUTIONS

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** I beg to move amendment No. 44, in page 25, line 3, leave out 'brought' and insert 'commenced'.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to discuss also Government amendment No. 45.

**Mrs. Shephard:** I shall be equally brief. These are technical amendments. They do not alter the substance of part III. The purpose of substituting the word "commenced" for the word "brought" is to make the provisions compatible with Scottish criminal law.

*Amendment agreed to.*

## New clause 15

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES OF MILK MARKETING BOARDS: DISTRIBUTION OF PROFITS

'.—(1) It shall be deemed to be an overriding requirement of a milk marketing scheme that any distribution in respect of profits attributable to any relevant commercial activities shall be made so as not to discriminate, as between persons who are registered as producers under the scheme—

(a) by reference to the identity of the person to whom milk is sold, or

(b) by reference to whether milk is sold in the form of milk or in the form of a product which is wholly or partly derived from milk or which includes milk as an ingredient.

(2) The powers conferred by a milk marketing scheme on the board administering the scheme shall be deemed to include whatever powers are necessary for the purpose of giving effect to the requirement under subsection (1) above.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (1) above, the following are relevant commercial activities, namely—

(a) the separation of milk,

(b) the heat treatment of milk,

(c) the retail packaging of milk,

(d) the manufacture of milk products, and

(e) the provision of services for reward, otherwise than under the arrangements for the sale of milk to the board.

(4) In that subsection, the reference to a milk marketing scheme is to a scheme having effect under—

(a) the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958, or

(b) the Agricultural Marketing (Northern Ireland) Order 1982,

for the marketing of milk.

(5) This section shall apply in relation to any distribution the amount of which is declared on or after the passing of this Act, irrespective of when the profits concerned were made.'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Jack:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 46.

**Mr. Jack:** In the interests of brevity and taking into account Community law, may I say that the new clause will ensure that all registered producers are treated equally after the passing of the Bill in terms of the distribution of profits that the milk marketing boards make from their commercial activities.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The new clause is of particular importance to Northern Ireland. If accepted, it would mean that all producers who were part of the milk marketing scheme in Northern Ireland would be eligible for a share in the profits of the processing arm, Dromona Foods. It would mean that the 400 producers who currently sell to Strathroy Milk Marketing, and not to the Northern Ireland milk marketing board, will receive a share of Dromona's profits. Some challenge that, arguing that that will happen after none of their milk has passed through a Dromona plant; that they have chosen to go the Strathroy route, their milk is exported to Ireland and they are paid a premium for this; and that they have not received a share of Dromona's profits in the past.

The Northern Ireland milk marketing board has told us that it wants to use Dromona's profits to help to offset the extraordinary costs of reorganisation, but if that were done under new clause 15, it could be charged with not distributing the profits fairly. Some people feel that it is odd that Strathroy producers should benefit from a share in Dromona's profits yet should not have to pay the costs of reorganising the Northern Ireland milk marketing board, which they will be free to join in the future.

Will the Minister explain the position? What is her interpretation of the impact of new clause 15 on that group of people?

**Mr. James Molyneaux** (Lagan Valley): The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has rightly said that the new clause is of great importance and interest to Northern Ireland, and it will be very much in the minds of all 17 Northern Ireland Members of Parliament regardless of their party affiliation.

As the hon. Gentleman said, the new clause amends not only the schemes in Great Britain but the scheme in Northern Ireland, although, as you will have noticed, Madam Speaker, the Bill does not apply to Northern Ireland except with regard to taxation matters. It should also be recognised that the current scheme in Northern Ireland differs from the schemes in Scotland and in England and Wales. As I understand it, the purpose of the new clause is to make it an overriding requirement that any distribution of profits attributable to commercial activities will be made in a manner that does not discriminate between registered producers under the scheme.

That requirement is based on the false premise that all registered producers operate similarly under the scheme.

After all, the concept of discrimination implies that like situations are treated differently. However, under the scheme, registered producers are permitted to operate differently. For example, they may sell their milk to the board or they may withhold it, if they choose to process their own milk or to export it. Those processors and exporters of milk are known as withholding producers, whereas those who sell their milk to the board are known as supplying producers. Both withholding and supplying producers are registered producers under the scheme, but it is clear that they operate differently. The new clause requires that they be treated identically with respect to sharing the profits of the scheme's commercial activities.

It must be recognised that about 400 producers, who produce approximately 10 per cent. of the milk in Northern Ireland, export that milk to the Republic of Ireland. They are registered under the scheme, but they supply no milk to the board and make no contribution whatever to the costs of operating the scheme. The new clause makes it an overriding requirement that such withholding producers share the profits of the commercial activities conducted under the scheme in exactly the same manner as producers who supply their milk to the board.

Those profits are made from the commercial business of converting the milk supplied into products and marketing them. The new clause requires that withholding producers share the profits made from the milk supplied to the board by supplying producers. The Bill, and subsequently an Order in Council for Northern Ireland, will wind up those schemes, and the board will then reorganise into organisations that all producers, both supplying and withholding, will be entitled to join. Clearly, that reorganisation will involve substantial costs and extraordinary charges—for example, accounting adjustments to cover write-offs, deferred taxation and costs such as redundancy.

If the profits of the commercial activities are used to meet those charges in whole or in part, that could be interpreted as distribution of profits. If the new clause is accepted, it must be made clear that the Government do not intend the use of commercial profits to cover what I have called extraordinary charges and that those costs arising from reorganisation should be interpreted as a distribution of profits. If that is not the Government's intention, the Government are saying that those withholding producers are entitled to share in the profits of the board's commercial activities, but are not required to share the costs and the extraordinary charges associated with reorganisation.

Can the Minister assure me that the new clause will ensure equality of treatment for all registered producers in respect of the costs of reorganisation and any associated accountancy adjustments, as well as ensuring equality of treatment for all producers in respect of any distribution of the profits of commercial activities? Knowing the reasonable way in which the right hon. Lady and the Minister of State have reacted to all the sensible proposals made this evening and in Committee, I am confident that my proposals will meet with a favourable response.

9.45 pm

**Mr. Jack:** I thank the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) for his courtesy in giving me notice of the general subject that he wanted to probe. I hope that I can deal with his specific points as well as the more general issues raised by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). The hon. Member for Workington chose to describe a specific point of concern, but it must be seen in terms of the wider context and the policy that applies to that subject.

I shall first deal with the general issues relating to the basis for the distribution of profits from commercial activities. All registered producers have to operate within the terms set by the relevant milk marketing scheme, even where they are not bound to sell their milk to the board. The pricing structure of the entire market is dictated by the agreements reached between the board and the Dairy Trade Federation and the relevant joint committee. The Agricultural Marketing Act 1958 requires all registered producers to contribute to the debt of a board on a winding up, not just to those producers who sell to the board.

Therefore, to discriminate between producers who sell to the board and those who do not for the purpose of distributing commercial profits is not, in the Government's view, justifiable. It is certainly not acceptable to the European Commission, which believes that it would be contrary to the provisions of the European Community's regulations authorising the board's activities and to the principles of the Common Market. The Government have taken account of the Commission's views and the likelihood of action against us under article 169 of the treaty if we fail to act. Those are the clear benchmarks against which the distribution of profits is to take place. I hope that hon. Members who have raised issues on the subject will be able to draw the appropriate conclusions.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley raised separate issues about some of the expenses involved—for example, in connection with reorganisation. I think that he will immediately understand that my point about the distribution of profits from commercial activities is a separate issue. It deals specifically with how that particular gain is to be apportioned among members. It is possible for all registered producers to take a share of the costs involved with reorganisation, and that must be a decision for the appropriate board. The key factor is that costs and some of the other issues related to the distribution of profits mentioned by the right hon. Gentleman are separate.

Where Northern Ireland matters affect the legislation, the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office—my near-neighbour, the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins)—asked me to ensure that he was kept informed of those issues. In light of what the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley has said, I shall undertake to do that. I shall give careful and detailed study to some of the other issues to see if there is anything about which it would be appropriate for me to write to him.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

**New clause 16**

BRITISH WOOL MARKETING BOARD:

POWER TO GRANT RELIEF

'. For the purposes of section 727 of the Companies Act 1985 and Article 675 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (power of court to grant relief in certain cases), the

British Wool Marketing Board shall be treated as a company and its members shall be treated as officers of it.'.—*[Mrs. Gillian Shephard.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Madam Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 47.

**Mrs. Shephard:** My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) tabled a new clause in Committee seeking to address a point of concern to the British wool marketing board. That arose from the fact that, in terms of legal liability, members and officers of the board did not currently enjoy a degree of protection equivalent to that ordinarily available to directors of limited companies.

The new clause tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham proposed to apply section 727 of the Companies Act 1985 to the board and the Government undertook to consider that point sympathetically. We have now done that. We understand the board's desire, given the ending of the guarantee, to take steps to address the usual risks associated with operating within a more commercial business environment.

New clause 16 therefore places the board members and executives on an equal footing with company directors with regard to scope for release from liability. Amendment No. 47, which amends clause 59, is linked to that and confirms the application of the new clause to Northern Ireland. I hope that it will be accepted by the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

## Schedule 5

REPEALS AND REVOCATION

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** I beg to move amendment No. 48, in page 66, leave out line 31 and insert—

'1. The repeals in the Agriculture Act 1957 are without prejudice to sections 50(2) and 51(2) above.'.

This is a purely technical amendment. It deletes the current reference in schedule 5 to termination of the wool guarantee having effect from 1 May 1993. It follows from a Government amendment adopted in Committee to alter the date of the coming into effect of clause 50—then clause 48—from 1 May 1993 to the date of the enactment of the Bill. It also confirms that repeal of schedule 1 to the Agriculture Act 1957 does not affect the saving clauses in relation to the wool and potato guarantees. I hope that the House will accept the amendment.

*Amendment agreed to.*

## Clause 59

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

*Amendments made:* No. 46, in page 30, line 6 at end insert

'section *[Commercial activities of milk marketing boards: distribution of profits]*,'.

No. 47 in page 30, line 6 at end insert

'section *[British Wool Marketing Board: power to grant relief]*,'.—*[Mrs. Gillian Shephard.]*

*Order for Third Reading read.*

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That the Bill be now read the Third time.

9.52 pm

**Mr. Paul Marland** (Gloucestershire, West): It is a tremendous disappointment to me that my carefully prepared and statesmanlike speech cannot now be delivered in full because of the pressure of time. However, I take this opportunity to welcome my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food and my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the Front Bench.

Hon. Members and members of the trade outside——

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman** (Lancaster): The profession.

**Mr. Marland:** I beg my hon. Friend's pardon. Members of the profession and hon. Members will be very reassured by the way in which my right hon. Friend the Minister and my hon. Friend the Minister of State have offered so kindly to be part of a listening Ministry and to leave the door open to people who want to see them at any time. There is a great deal of informed opinion on the Conservative Benches which would very much like to take advantage of that opportunity. I congratulate my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend on the trenchant way in which they have gripped their brief.

I believe that three issues are of the utmost importance. First, there is the disputes procedure. I hope that my right hon. Friend will carefully study the proposals that were put forward by the milk marketing boards for a successor body. Secondly, with regard to Milk Marque's plans for the future, I have some sympathy with the view of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). Milk Marque is asking for a very wide brief. I urge my right hon. Friend to look carefully at that matter. Part of Sir Leon Brittan's brief in allowing a single voluntary co-operative to be established in this country is that it should not have such a wide brief as it is looking for.

Thirdly, we should keep an eye on the exploitation of the present milk shortage by producers and manufacturers, in the interests of our producers and manufacturers, especially our producers. We do not want to turn off the users of milk. If the price is too high, they will surely look elsewhere to source their manufacturing. Housewives and other milk drinkers will give up drinking milk or look elsewhere for milk substitutes. We do not want that to happen.

In the fullness of time, the tight quota regime might be relaxed. Furthermore, under the auspices of GATT, we might find that Commonwealth countries that had to give up their markets in this country when we joined the EC will look hungrily at our market to sell their surplus milk. Even our nearest neighbours, the Irish, are beginning to buy dairy companies in this country to take advantage of our larger market and their 200 per cent. excessive self-sufficiency.

The Bill must lead to a regime which will ensure long-term success and short-term prosperity for the milk producer. In that spirit, I really wish Milk Marque well. We need a viable dairy industry providing jobs for rural communities. We need satisfied customers who continue to drink United Kingdom milk and consume United Kingdom dairy products, rather than becoming dependent on imports and milk substitutes.

I assure my right hon. Friend the Minister that many Conservative Members are anxious to see Milk Marque succeed and the United Kingdom dairy industry survive.

When the time comes for her to give her seal of approval to any scheme which is put forward by the milk marketing boards for a successor body, I should like her to remember that many Conservative Members are willing and anxious to give advice if my right hon. Friend considers that she needs it.

9.56 pm

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** I shall respond briefly to my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland). I thank him for his kind remarks. I assure him that we shall look most carefully at all the points that he raised in this excellent debate. I thank him also for wishing the Bill well.

9.57 pm

**Dr. Strang:** The Bill has three important objectives: first, the winding up of the milk marketing boards; secondly, the enabling power to wind up the potato marketing board of Great Britain; and, thirdly, the ending of the wool guarantee. The Labour party opposes all three objectives. We believe that there was an opportunity in the 1980s to adapt the milk marketing boards. That was the view not only of the milk marketing boards but of producers and the Dairy Trade Federation. That opportunity was missed and we are concerned about the arrangements which will follow.

As for the potato marketing board, it would be churlish not to welcome the Minister's statement this afternoon. It was a viable statement, but of course the Bill contains the enabling power to wind up the potato marketing board on a future occasion. However, from what the right hon. Lady said, I trust that we have a good chance of ensuring that the board continues as long as there is not an EC regime.

We believe that the decision to end the guaranteed wool price was wrong. This is the worst of all possible times to do it. As hon. Members will be aware, wool prices are utterly depressed. All three changes were not sought by the industry. We have a very successful industry and milk of the highest quality in Europe. We have a very successful potato industry. The wool marketing board has served the industry well. For all those reasons, there is no case for this measure. It is based on Tory dogma and we will vote against the Bill.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** I regret that the Opposition's contribution has ended on that note because I believe that we achieved a degree of consensus during the debate. The Government feel that the changes for milk and for wool represent new challenges for agriculture and that our magnificent industry will rise to those challenges. We will take a careful look at the potato industry.

I would particularly commend to the House the Government's marketing initiatives, which will be greatly strengthened by the Bill. I believe that the future looks good for one of our foremost industries and I am delighted to commend the Bill to the House.

*Question put,* That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 264, Noes 137.

**Division No. 306]** **[9.59 pm**

**AYES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick

Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. David Lightbown and**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman.**

**NOES**

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Clapham, Michael
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Gerrard, Neil
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hardy, Peter
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and**
**Mr. Eric Illsley.**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*
*Bill read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.*

# Council Tax (Wales)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,*

That the draft Council Tax Limitation (Wales) (Maximum Amount) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 21st June, be approved.—*[Mr. Redwood.]*

10.13 pm

**Mr. Paul Murphy** (Torfaen): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for moving the motion formally. I know that he intends to make a longer speech later perhaps to explain why he decided this week not to cap Aberconwy borough council in north Wales. Of course we welcome the decision ostensibly to let that council off the hook. However short the debate might be, it will give the House the opportunity to examine the Welsh Office system of controlling our local authority expenditure in Wales, in particular as it affects Aberconwy borough council. I know that it will be of considerable interest to the Minister of State, Welsh Office, because he represents a great part of that borough.

We are all completely united in the sympathy we express to the people of Aberconwy over the tragic flooding in that area some weeks ago. It is that, above all else, which has caused the Secretary of State to change his mind over the capping decision for Aberconwy. We should not have the impression that, because the capping has been lifted, all is well with Aberconwy. I understand that the burdens on that local authority as a direct result of the flooding tragedy extend to well over 1,000 homes that have been affected in some way or another. At least half those homes are in the ownership of the local authority. That means that an enormous bill, affecting both capital and revenue, will fall on that relatively small council in north Wales. Some estimate that the floods will cost £3·5 million on local authority housing repairs alone. In addition, damage was done to the roads and other infrastructure.

I note that when, in this Chamber, the Secretary of State referred to those floods, and when his Minister of State referred to them outside the House, both praised the work of the local authorities. The Secretary of State also told us that the so-called Bellwin formula would apply to the council. That formula is supposed to top up the finances of the local authority where it meets an unforeseen circumstance or tragedy, such as occurred there.

We have to tell the Secretary of State, however, that there is much wrong with the way in which the Bellwin formula operates. It is over-complex. Only what are termed "relevant costs" are considered. I can only begin to imagine the disputes that could well occur between local authorities, Government Departments and others about what "relevant costs" will be. Under the formula, any works connected with the alleviation of the problems caused by the flooding must be dealt with within two months. Any engineer would tell us that that would be almost impossible to achieve.

The financial basis of the Bellwin formula has yet to be updated from last year. Perhaps most tellingly of all, my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) will tell us that the formula did not successfully apply in his borough of Taff Ely, because it did not meet the rather stringent conditions laid down in the Bellwin formula. Obviously, I hope that that is not the case in north Wales, and that the Bellwin formula will give as much financial aid as possible to that stricken area.

This week, in reply to a parliamentary question that I tabled, the Secretary of State said that, although he is not capping Aberconwy as he intended, reserves will have to be used, and that cuts may have to be made in other services that Aberconwy borough council provides to avoid capping above the figure that we are agreeing today.

**Mr. Allan Rogers** (Rhondda): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Secretary of State's announcement not to cap Aberconwy is in a sense hypocritical, because the original budget was based on the Government's perception of the needs of the community? All the Secretary of State is saying is, "You can keep that money, but the cost of this disaster is over and above that." If the alleviation of the capping is intended to help with the cost of the flooding, it does not help in any way in relation to other needs. People's primary needs will be neglected to fulfil the needs caused by the flooding.

**Mr. Murphy**: The amount that we are talking about is £168,000. That is the difference between the capped budget, as it was before the Secretary of State changed his mind, and what the borough council decided was necessary to provide the various services that it is called upon by the House of Commons to provide. My hon. Friend is quite right: this will merely get us back to square one. The council will have to provide out of its own budget much more than the £168,000 of difference between the two figures. That can mean only that its services—housing, environmental health, and so on—will suffer as a result of the tragedy in the borough. It is eminently unfair that such a tragedy must be accompanied by curtailment of basic services.

I fancy that Aberconwy must be way down the list of local authorities that anyone might have thought likely to be capped. Why should it be capped? The town is relatively innocent and has a recently besieged council. With a population of 55,000, it is quite small, even by Welsh standards. As I have said, it is represented in this House by the Minister of State. Its council is probably the nearest thing to a coalition local authority that Wales has. Last year, when the budget was set, three councillors were Liberal, three were Labour, one was Conservative, and the mayor was independent. A Conservative on the Council of Welsh Districts was the representative of Aberconwy borough council.

Most significantly, the decision to appeal against capping was reached unanimously by parties all of which are represented in the House of Commons. In 1988 the council commissioned a survey. Even then it felt that it was getting rough justice from the Welsh Office. The Chartered Institute of Finance and Accountancy said:

> "Aberconwy borough council is a relatively low-spending, highly rated authority, with expenditure on tourism accounting for up to one fifth of its budget. The block grant has failed adequately to reflect these three factors."

The local authority has received only one letter of complaint since it set the budget that was to be capped by the Welsh Office. Even the chairman of Llandudno's hoteliers and restaurateurs—not a very revolutionary body of people, I imagine—has written to the Welsh Office praising the council for what it has done over the past few years to achieve service records.

Let us look at the spending figures. Only 12 Welsh local authorities had a smaller year-on-year increase than Aberconwy borough council. Other councils had bigger

*[Mr. Murphy]*

increases. South Pembrokeshire, which has an independent council, had a budget increase of 23·5 per cent., and in Dinefwr the increase was 22 per cent. Such figures are replicated throughout Wales. But, because of the standard spending assessment system, Aberconwy has been trapped as an unwilling victim of the capping system. This is ludicrous.

Above all, the inability of standard spending assessments to deal properly with the fact that, in effect, Aberconwy is the tourist capital of Wales means that, in reality, it has been capped.

**Mr. Jonathan Evans** (Brecon and Radnor): The tourist capital?

**Mr. Murphy:** Many hon. Members will realise that tourist areas do not attract from such bodies as the Welsh Development Agency, the local authorities and the European Community the investment that industrialised areas attract.

It is important to remember also that they have to spend money not only on their own residents but also on holidaymakers. They must spend money on promenades, swimming pools, theatres, cinemas, parks and so on. That expenditure is not taken into proper account by the SSA system and the grants available through the Welsh Office.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) may deride my opinion about Aberconwy being one of the tourist centres of Wales, but he should appreciate that, of all serviced hotel beds in the Principality, almost 20 per cent. are within the boundaries of Aberconwy.

What makes the SSA system even dafter is that the reason south Pembroke is not affected by the capping order, unlike Aberconwy, is that that system takes into account the provision of caravans as well as hotels. If there are more caravans in a particular borough, it is counted as having more beds, so it gets more money. If there are more hotels in a borough, it gets less money. That quirk and the ludicrous notion has meant that Aberconwy has been caught in the trap of the insane SSA system.

Hon. Members should also note that the Audit Commission recently published a report on SSAs in which it concluded that they are, effectively, instruments for dealing with capping rather than the distribution of grant. It also drew attention to the fact that they are oversimplified and based on out-of-date information contained in the 1981 census. I hope that our new Secretary of State for Wales will do what his English counterpart has done and review the whole system of SSAs to ensure that, in future, authorities such as Aberconwy, which is not by any stretch of the imagination profligate, are not caught by that ludicrous system.

If there were no SSAs, I am sure that the Government would argue that the power to cap remains an important means of controlling local authority spending. In a recent answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), however, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said that the Treasury had not worked out the effects of local government spending on the economy and on macro-economic indicators such as jobs, services and interest rates.

No one can tell me that, because little Aberconwy council will spend a few hundred thousand pounds more than the Secretary of State believes it should, that will have a detrimental effect upon our economy.

The practice of capping was born out of a distinct hatred of Labour local government. The Secretary of State has gone wrong, however, because he could not find any Labour local authorities to cap. He has had to pick on Aberconwy as a last resort. Under the regime, budgets are not set by locally elected politicians, as they should be. Councils are now effectively capping themselves. What is worse, the system of SSAs is condemned by councils of every political persuasion, and of none, in Wales and beyond.

In July 1991, *The Times* stated that capping

"is an offence against local democracy far more outrageous than anything Mr. Delors is proposing for monetary and political union."

Most hon. Members and those of all parties serving in local government would agree with that analysis.

The decision to cap in Wales is particularly pernicious because, until now, we have never had to operate under such a system. The Minister of State and the Under-Secretary could tell the House that, year after year, there has been no need for capping in Wales. Under the old system, councils and districts worked with the Welsh Office to avoid that. It is a pity that that did not happen this time, because we would then not have to deal with this daft nonsense.

Worse than that, however, what is now occurring is completely against the grain of local democracy, which is so important to the Welsh culture. That culture is deeply offended by the bypassing of local democracy and the growth of quangos. I fear that it means that the Welsh Office is simply following what is laid down in Whitehall. That is not good for anyone in Wales who is involved with local government, education or any other service.

Unlike some of the English local authorities, of all parties, Welsh local authorities have never been profligate. They are now faced with savage cuts as a result of the worst rate support grant settlement in living memory. Wales is heavily dependent on public services, however, and our local authorities are in the front line of their delivery. It is an affront not simply to local democracy but to people who have to rely on those important services that capping must be considered in the first place.

We must work towards achieving a fairer system of local government finance and grant distribution. We must abandon capping and replace it with proper accountability through the ballot box, as in most other European countries. Who do these Ministers think they are to tell local authorities in Wales what should occur? What if Aberconwy or any other authority in Wales decides that it wants to offer better services than it can provide with the money that it receives from the Welsh Office? Why cannot it do that? It will be held accountable when local elections are held.

More often than not, such authorities know more than Welsh Office Ministers about the realities and priorities in their areas. Instead of bullying small local authorities like Aberconwy, the Conservative party would do better to put its own financial house in order.

10.30 pm

**Mr. Elfyn Llwyd** (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I have the honour of representing part of the borough of Aberconwy; it is not simply the Minister of State's patch.

Aberconwy commissioned a report on its grant-related expenditure assessment in 1988. It advanced a strong case to the Secretary of State, highlighting many of the points to which the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) referred. Those special points are relevant perhaps more to Aberconwy than any other borough or district in Wales.

The main industry in Aberconwy is tourism, a by-product of which is the need to provide promenade cleaning, extra street cleansing, public toilets, refuse collection and so on. Aberconwy has 18 per cent. of total Welsh serviced accommodation. That gives some idea of the scale of the tourist operation in the area.

Aberconwy has been making its voice heard in the Welsh Office, apparently to little effect, because it has been less than happy about the way in which SAAs have operated. It proposed a sensible and well-argued case and commissioned an expensive but well-documented report. It has made the case for the borough to be treated differently.

The extra expenditure that I have referred to falls directly on the local taxpayer, bearing in mind that the commercial rate element will be calculated solely by reference to the registered charge payer, which excludes all visitors, who of course generate the need for extra services. As a prime tourist area, Aberconwy is particularly vulnerable to that anomaly, with its high incidence of holiday serviced accommodation and large day visitor population.

The Welsh Office has had five years to consider Aberconwy's case, but it has not given any positive response. One graphic example, perhaps, of the special nature of Aberconwy is the fact that the borough has six fairly extensive promenades to maintain—all at considerable cost.

Uniquely, Aberconwy is underprivileged because it receives no funding from Europe. I plead with the Minister about objective 5b status. I recently went to Brussels to argue the case for the borough. I sincerely hope that the Minister of State and the Secretary of State will consider Aberconwy's case. The A55, welcome though it is, runs across the north Wales coast. To the east, there is some assistance from European funds, and to the west likewise, but the A55 is effectively ensuring that any investment speeds through Aberconwy. I am sure that the point is obvious from the way in which it now qualifies. It qualified five years ago under the criteria that then applied, but it has a strong case now and I urge the Welsh Office to consider it in due course. I am sure that it will.

The recent standard spending assessment changes in social benefit have also had a considerable effect on the finances of Aberconwy. Information on the enhanced population generally and for recreation is derived from two particular statistical sources—the "All Wales Tourism Statistics" and the "Long Distance Travel Survey".

In principle, the council does not query the basis of the source of information, but it takes issue with the weighting factors used in respect of serviced accommodation and caravans—another point which the hon. Member for Torfaen rightly referred to in opening the debate. Serviced accommodation such as hotel bed space has a weighting factor of one, while caravans attract a factor of four multiplied by the number of caravans concerned.

As stated in the report to which I referred, it is contended that large caravan sites do not face the level of requirement to spend as a result of tourism because many caravan parks are self-contained. The difference in waiting clearly gives great advantage to those areas where large caravan or camp sites exist.

I should also refer to the application of the composite secondary indicator which causes wide variations in the calculation of the SSA. There is little doubt that where high unemployment exists there is greater need to spend, but does the factor of population in unfit properties cause authorities to spend on such matters, or are they content to derive benefit in terms of SSA without placing an increased call on their expenditure? Similarly, in more densely populated areas, it is reasonable to conclude that it is relatively more costly to service population areas that are more diverse.

Unemployment in the borough was 8·6 per cent. in April 1991, 9·7 per cent. in April 1992 and 10·3 per cent. in April 1992—a total of 2,293 people out of work. There is also the added need for attraction-related expenditure such as promenades, swimming pools and leisure centres, all at great cost and highly necessary in the competitive world of leisure.

Tourism is the principal industry; it is vital to the borough. It is reasonable to expect, therefore, that the cost of supporting and investing in that industry should be adequately recognised by the block grant mechanism. Significant tourist areas such as Aberconwy do not extract the same level of outside investment from the development agencies, county councils and the EC as manufacturing industrial areas. That places a heavy demand on the district council to fill the void.

The economic success of areas such as Aberconwy is dependent on the holiday industry which is becoming increasingly competitive. The true costs of tourism to a local authority are difficult to determine. An independent survey commissioned by the council in 1984 concluded that the total direct and indirect revenue costs to the council approximated at a minimum one fifth of the council's annual net rate requirements. While the figures may be open to interpretation, they illustrate that the cost of tourism to the council should not be overlooked and is a significant factor.

It is important to recognise that expenditure on tourism falls into two different categories—population and attraction-related expenditure. I have mentioned attraction-related expenditure, but the population factor is of equal importance. It results from an influx of visitors which creates a demand for extra services.

Population-related services include planning, street cleansing, refuse collection, car and coach parks, all at great cost. However, the central problem in evaluating the effect of increased population as a result of tourism is that there is no comprehensive or accurate source of information on bed nights and day visitors. Proxy information is used based on the information which the Welsh tourist board collects. That is based partly on an inventory maintained by the tourist board collected from providers of accommodation which may or may not be accurate, but it is hardly a scientific approach to the problem.

*[Mr. Elfyn Llwyd]*

The council estimates that visitor nights and day trips are far in excess of those shown in the GREA for enhanced populations. A recent survey by Gwynedd county council in 1984 estimated that the WTB figures for Aberconwy could be out by as much as 30 per cent. which is a decidedly important figure. The situation is exacerbated by the introduction of the new caravan data, and the abolition of the long-distance travel survey information. Aberconwy is not an area of high caravan occupation; as I have said, it is an area of serviced accommodation. The new data will put more emphasis on caravan occupation. I consider that misplaced, as caravans do not require the same servicing by public authorities as traditional holiday accommodation.

It is a supreme irony that Aberconwy should be saved from capping, albeit for a short while, by the recent flood disaster. However, effectively it will still suffer from rate capping. Under the Bellwin formula, it will have to find 15 per cent. of the qualifying expenditure in dealing with the effects of the storms and floods that hit the area some weeks ago. That will inevitably mean a cut in services; there is no other answer. The cut will be all the more serious because of the large number of elderly retired people who live in the borough.

I hope that the Government will look again at Aberconwy's plight and its reasoned, persuasive arguments, and will ensure that it can set a budget for next year that will enable it to enhance and improve local services rather than cut them—which is likely to be the regrettable, and avoidable, cost to the charge payers of Aberconwy. I ask the Government to reconsider the way in which they have been let off the hook, as the hon. Member for Torfaen put it earlier. They have hardly been let off the hook in real terms; the burden is extremely heavy. I urge the Welsh Office to reconsider.

10.41 pm

**Mr. Nigel Jones** (Cheltenham): I send greetings to the House from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), who is on a parliamentary delegation to Romania.

I welcome the Secretary of State to his new role. I know that he will have a wonderful time meeting the people and visiting the places in a beautiful nation which is also very near Gloucestershire. I also welcome the Government's change of mind over the capping of Aberconwy. It seemed bizarre when it was first announced that the Government intended to cap it to reduce average council tax bills by the magnificent sum of 2p a day.

The position was summed up by the distinguished journalist Iorwerth Roberts in the *Daily Post* on Wednesday April 28. He said:

"Aberconwy has no record of irresponsible spending, and its council tax is no higher than many of its neighbours. Making an example of it for the sake of a mere £8 a house seems to be using a sledgehammer to crack a tiny nut."

It is good that the new Secretary has seen sense, and is allowing elected local councillors to set a budget at the level that they judge is needed to provide high-quality, properly managed services at a price that local people are prepared and able to pay.

It does not surprise me that the right hon. Gentleman has made that decision. He is a fair-minded man; I have some experience of that. Last year, he was the Minister who heard the capping appeal from my own county council, Gloucestershire, and I am sure that he was instrumental in raising the cap on that occasion. I feel a tinge of regret that, having shown a talent for listening then, and again in the case of Aberconwy—a talent rare in the present Government—the right hon. Gentleman has moved into his new job too soon, leaving this year's English capping decisions to a new and disappointing team at the Department of the Environment.

It would have been perverse of the Government to continue with their plan to cap Aberconwy, which is not a loony, high-spending council. The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) reminded the House of the severe damage and disruption caused to the area on 10 and 11 June, when serious flooding took place. Along with other hon. Members, I seek an assurance that the Government's lifting of the cap is not the end of the story for the people of Aberconwy. As the Secretary of State will know, 4,000 people are registered as having been affected by the floods, in which 5 in of rain fell in three hours. The House will know of the widespread discontent among local authorities about the formula that the Government use to determine standard spending assessments. SSAs are to accuracy what Evel Knievel is to road safety.

Only today, at the Association of District Councils' conference in Bournemouth, a motion was passed, with support from all parties, expressing no confidence in the formula. I understand that a Conservative councillor from Buckinghamshire was tempted to table an amendment saying that he had little confidence in the formula, but he was persuaded to withdraw it at the last moment.

Following the disaster in north Wales, the Government should consider an additional parameter. When calculating SSAs, they should take into account an area's propensity to flood. I cite as an example the Meadows estate and the surrounding area at Llandudno junction, which have flooded four times in 16 years. It seems that natural disasters are becoming more frequent as a result of ecological change.

As the hon. Member for Torfaen said, the Bellwin formula is insufficient to deal with the problem. Only 85 per cent. of the money can be recovered. If a local authority needs to spend £5 million, £750,000 has to be met from its budget. In Aberconwy, between 600 and 700 council houses are currently uninhabitable because of the floods, yet social fund loans are available only to those on income support and are currently taking six weeks nationwide to process.

In addition to the welcome lifting of the abhorrent cap, we need a system of crisis fund payments. The Prime Minister will have received a letter from Roger Roberts, whom the Minister of State will know as his Liberal Democrat opponent at the election. Roger Roberts is asking for £2 million as a starter for the crisis fund payments. Many elderly people's bungalows have been flooded for the second time in two years, but there seems to be little hardship help. Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that help will be forthcoming? Will he use his new-found influence in Cabinet to persuade the Government to abandon capping once and for all because it is a democratic abomination?

10.47 pm

**The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood):** The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) asked me to explain the basis of my decision and I am happy to do so.

In coming to my decision on a final cap for Aberconwy, I took very careful account of all the relevant information available to me, including the representations made to me by Aberconwy and the severe flooding that occurred between 10 and 11 June. I saw the extensive damage for myself when I visited the borough on 11 June and, as the House knows, I announced on 14 June that financial assistance through the Bellwin scheme would be available to local authorities to meet 85 per cent. of their revenue costs for emergency arrangements and repairs.

Aberconwy's preliminary assessment is that the revenue costs for remedial work and for the accommodation of the temporarily homeless will be about £3 million. The authority considers that its share of that under the Bellwin rules, coupled with the loss of revenue from tourism and conference facilities which have been damaged, could amount to more than £500,000, although I hope that that will prove to be an overestimate.

The authority will have to meet the costs by drawing on its reserves and curbing the budget for other services. I am told that it currently has reserves of £448,000, which would enable the council to meet its obligations. It is not legally permissible to put a higher figure in the order than the original budget and I have decided that, in these exceptional circumstances, the confirmation of the provisional cap of £8,566,950 could prejudice Aberconwy borough council's ability to maintain an acceptable level of services for its residents while meeting the costs of the floods. For that reason I ask the House to approve a final cap of £8,734,695, the sum of the authority's original budget—the maximum permissible.

**Mr. Murphy:** The Secretary of State said that the local authority has about £400,000 worth of reserves. He will, of course, be aware that district auditors and the Audit Commission are anxious that all local authorities should have a reasonable balance in their accounts. Would not it be wrong to take away such a large sum and leave the council with no balances at all, as a result of having had to tackle the flooding, which is totally beyond its power?

**Mr. Redwood:** The hon. Gentleman is right that some reserves must be left and it is up to the council, its advisers and its auditor to decide what would be a prudent reserve. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree that £448,000 for a council of that size leaves it considerable scope to pay the bills that will, unfortunately, fall to it as a result of the tragedy.

I stress that the flooding is the sole reason for my decision to relax the cap. If the events of the weekend of 10 June had not taken place I should be asking the House to approve the proposed cap of £8,566,950 notified to the authority on 26 April. Aberconwy has been generously treated under recent local authority revenue settlements. Hon. Gentlemen have asked questions tonight about the adequacy of its standard spending assessment, but I must tell the House that its SSA of £8,487,933 for 1993-94 represents an increase of 14·5 per cent. over that for 1992-93, and that for the three years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 taken together its SSA has increased by 58·9 per cent., a level of increase more than 14 percentage points higher than the average increase in district SSAs over the same period. I hope that the House will agree that that is a large increase, at a time of recent restraint on general public expenditure.

The hon. Member for Torfaen was a little more cautious in his remarks than the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), who went to Llandudno shortly after I did, and tried to terrify local people into believing that there would be no Government support whatever for the council at this time of great stress. That is most regrettable, as I promptly announced the Bellwin formula, which provides substantial aid in such difficult situations, and I have now announced that there will be no restrictive cap on the authority, so it will be allowed to spend at its previous budget level.

Of course, the hon. Member for Torfaen is right to say that I expect the council to make some use of its reserves and to manage its resources well.

**Mr. Ron Davies** (Caerphilly): The Secretary of State referred to the increase in the expenditure that the local authority is allowed during the current financial year. When he has been in the job a little longer he will have had the chance to read the records and then he will realise that that apparent increase is a direct result of this year's financial settlement for Welsh local authorities, in which the bulk of support was transferred from the county authorities to district authorities. It creates a false impression to suggest that the districts are doing well.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman is totally misinformed if he believes that when I visited Llandudno I suggested that no Government aid would be forthcoming. However, I certainly pointed out to many people who were closely interested that under the Bellwin formula a substantial initial cost would have to be borne directly by the local authority, which would mean cuts in services to meet the expenditure incurred as a result of the flooding.

In addition, 15 per cent.——

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. I believe that this is an intervention, but it very long, and I must ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat.

**Mr. Davies:** May I finish my sentence, Madam Deputy Speaker?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** No, because this is far too long for an intervention. The hon. Gentleman may seek leave to intervene again, but not just at the moment.

**Mr. Redwood:** The hon. Gentleman got into a muddle about whether the money was going to the county or to the districts. I am under no delusion; the money was switched to the districts, and that was exactly my point. I was saying that Aberconwy, which is a district council, had a generous settlement this year and the previous two years, compared with other districts, with counties and with local government across the United Kingdom. I think that the hon. Gentleman has become muddled on that subject and I am sorry that he is so confused.

I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's clarification of his true position on the generous aid and support that the Government have offered for the floods. However, that was not the impression given in the newspapers in the region after his visit. I am glad that the fact that the hon. Gentleman's remarks were misconstrued in the press has been read into the record of the House.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** I am grateful to the Secretary of State as I can now complete the point that I was making. I am not responsible for the way in which the newspapers interpret the Government's parsimony. I was saying that the local authority will have to meet the initial cost of many of the works and, under the Bellwin formula, will have to find 15 per cent. of the cost. That is in any circumstances, a generous settlement, especially when the cost of the works will have to be met at the direct expense of services being provided by the local authority.

**Mr. Redwood:** The hon. Gentleman is responsible for the remarks that appear as quotations from him in the newspapers, but I am sure that the House is grateful for clarification of what he really meant on that visit. I am sure that the constituents of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will be interested to see the record corrected in that way.

The general issue of standard spending assessments was raised by various hon. Members in our short debate. Tourism, visitors and recreation is taken into account in the SSA formula. I have the calculations used to work out the SSAs in the guide that we issued to the House. It is made clear that those calculations include enhanced population—caused by visitor nights and day trips of people coming from 25 miles away or more for business and non-business purposes. The formula contains a genuine attempt to reflect the extra costs to authorities caused by visitors and tourism such as that incurred by Aberconwy. It is partly because of that element of the formula that Aberconwy enjoys an above-average SSA per head compared with other Welsh districts.

I promise that there is an opportunity each year for the formula to be reviewed. It is done in a consultative way in Wales, which I widely welcome. It is up to Aberconwy and its supporters to put their views on the formula to the Welsh consultative council.

**Mr. Llwyd:** Earlier I referred to the fact that a detailed report was commissioned from experts on the subject. It was made known that the attempt to reflect the current position was not succeeding. That point was made with clarity, but it did not achieve anything.

**Mr. Redwood:** That is for the consultative council, which includes all the important interests in local government in Wales. Just as Aberconwy can commission a study that proves one thing, so other districts and counties can commission studies that might purport to prove something else. The consultative council and Ministers have to make a different judgment on the balance of the factors in the SSA in order to be fair to the various pressures on different councils around Wales. I am pleased to inherit a system based on agreement with and through the local council organisations as that greatly helps in ensuring a just settlement.

**Mr. Murphy:** Earlier, I said that we in Wales sometimes received bad things from England. One of the good factors that we could have been granted was what has taken place in the Department of the Environment—a commitment to a proper review of the general SSA system, which is overdue. The SSA system does not take into account long-term unemployment, chronic ill health and other factors. If a review of the system can take place in England, why cannot it happen in Wales?

**Mr. Redwood:** I have already said that there are opportunities for change and reform in the SSA system in the Welsh way. I am proud to inherit the Welsh model. The review in England is ministerial because that is how things are done in the English system. The review will take account of all the representations made by local government in England. In Wales we can do something similar; we can, through the consultative process, review how satisfactory we find the existing calculation. I invite councils to write to the consultative council in the usual way if they wish to see changes. However, the issue will have to be debated with other colleagues from local government to try to sort out the best way forward.

I believe that we have a good system. I hope that the House will welcome the fact that I have done the decent thing tonight by proposing a capped limit at the original budget and have not attempted to make life more difficult for Aberconwy. I do not think Aberconwy should have been put through a rebilling exercise in the middle of cleaning up after the floods. However, I make it clear to the rest of local government in Wales that it was only the flooding that led me to that conclusion because I know that many other districts and councils worked hard to live within the capping limits. I am pleased that they did that and that was the right thing to do. Without the floods, Aberconwy would have been proposed for a tighter capped limit tonight.

I acknowledge the spirit of co-operation and partnership between my predecessors and local government associations in Wales. That is typified by the arrangements for discussion and agreement on the distribution of resources through the SSAs. I intend to sustain and foster that system because I think that it is right for Wales and right for local government.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the draft Council Tax Limitation (Wales) (Maximum Amount) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 21st June, be approved.

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

### TRANSPORT (FEES)

That the draft Department of Transport (Fees) (Amendment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 7th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

*Question agreed to.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** With permission, I shall put together the next four motions relating to statutory instruments.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

### PARALYTIC SHELLFISH POISONING

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1338), dated 21st May 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 25th May, be approved.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) (No. 2) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1413), dated 4th June 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th June, be approved.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) (No. 3) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1476), dated 10th June 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th June, be approved.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) (No. 4) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1483), dated 10th June 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## Petition

11.1 pm

**Mrs. Llin Golding** (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I wish to present a petition on behalf of a wide-ranging campaign run by students at Keele university in my constituency to combat the rising tide of racism and fascist activity:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament Assembled.

Sheweth

That since the establishment of the British National Party Headquarters in Welling there have been at least two racist murders in the neighbouring area and one of the highest recorded incidence of racist attacks in the country; that the report of the European Parliament on Racism found that the British National Party "is an openly Nazi Organisation" and that its leaders' "crimes range from bomb making, organising illegal paramilitary groups, possession of firearms and a series of convictions under Race Relations and Public Order Acts," and that "BNP publications are uninhibited in their racist style and report unashamedly on their members stabbing black people";

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House do urge the Home Secretary to close the Headquarters of the British National Party at 154 Wickham Lane, Welling.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

*To lie upon the Table.*

# Air Incident (Heathrow)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

11.2 pm

**Mr. David Wilshire** (Spelthorne): The matter that I wish to raise tonight is the Department of Transport air accident report 3/93, which is a terrible tale of human error by a ground engineer and what I can only describe as selfish attempts to avoid personal inconvenience by a pilot.

One of the results of all that was that my constituents were exposed to the catastrophic consequence of an aircraft crashing during an emergency landing at Heathrow airport. Mercifully, that did not happen, but if one reads the report, it appears to have been a pretty close run thing.

Although I readily accept that my constituents are not the only people living near Heathrow, they are always probably more concerned than most, because the last crash near Heathrow was at Staines in my constituency and that memory lives on in the collective consciousness of the people whom I represent.

I raise this matter in the House tonight because the report exposes loopholes in the current safety procedures and contains recommendations for Government action to close them. If those recommendations were implemented, the risks faced by tens of thousands of people living near Heathrow would be significantly reduced. I am therefore making no apologies for using every avenue open to an hon. Member to press the Government to take immediate action.

The facts of the matter are complex and highly technical. The report itself runs to 31 pages, plus highly technical drawings and graphs. I will try to summarise them as briefly and simply as I can, but I fear that that will not be easy.

On 7 March 1992, while landing at Heathrow, the pilot of a Lockheed TriStar belonging to West Indian Airways found that he could not get reverse thrust on his No. 1 engine. The airline's duty ground engineer correctly identified the problem at Heathrow as being caused by the reverser's cowl being jammed. As is permitted by internationally approved maintenance and safety procedures, the ground engineer disconnected the cowl and manually secured it in the in-flight mode. At that time, the relevant regulations permitted that aircraft to be operated in what I can only describe as a botched-up state for up to 10 days. Needless to say, things have changed since that accident.

Having made those temporary adjustments, the ground engineer released the aircraft to fly to Trinidad. Unfortunately, and unknown to that ground engineer, in solving the immediate problem that he faced, he had created new ones which ultimately resulted in parts falling off the aircraft while it was in flight.

Prior to releasing the aircraft at Heathrow, the ground engineer telexed the airline's home base in Trinidad, asking it to carry out further checks on the problem. However, by the time the aircraft reached Trinidad on 8 March, the airline's maintenance staff had been diverted to a much more serious problem on another of its TriStars. As a consequence, the TriStar from Heathrow remained unrepaired and was pressed into service as the replacement aircraft for a Trinidad to New York flight.

The airline's maintenance staff were still distracted when the aircraft returned to Trinidad from New York; that was still on 8 March. It was therefore allowed to fly to Frankfurt without any of the inspections or repairs being carried out. The original ground engineer from Heathrow did, however, carry out further work on the TriStar at Frankfurt and then released it to fly to St. Lucia on 9 March. Shortly after take-off, parts of the cowl fell off, causing damage to the aircraft.

That is the background. Complicated though it is, I hope that I have managed to summarise it accurately.

I now refer to the air accident itself. The TriStar took off from Frankfurt for St. Lucia at 14.35 on 9 March 1992. The air accident report describes what happened next. It states:

"As it"—

the aircraft—

"climbed through Flight Level 100 there was a thud, accompanied by what appeared to be a compressor stall, and the aircraft shuddered".

A few moments later, as the report explains,

"there was a slight vibration and a passenger reported having seen . . . 'something come off the engine'. About four minutes after the initial accident, the commander shut down the No. 1 engine."

At that point, as the report makes clear, an immediate landing was not necessary. The report goes on to explain what happened next. It states:

"As about 106,000 lb. of fuel would have to be jettisoned to reduce the aircraft's weight to the maximum permitted for landing, a procedure which he (the commander) estimated would take at least 30 minutes, the commander decided to divert to London Heathrow Airport, as this was the company's main European maintenance base."

The commander subsequently carried out checks and concluded, correctly, that the thrust reverser translating cowl had come off and, incorrectly, that there was no other damage. However, the report reveals that the left wing suffered superficial damage while the left horizontal stabiliser suffered severe damage.

At 15.20, the commander reported his situation to air traffic control on the Dover section and obtained clearance to dump fuel over the sea and to divert to Heathrow. The controller asked the commander whether he wished to declare an emergency. The cockpit voice recorder reveals the reply from the commander of the aircraft as

"No. I don't think so. We'll be all right."

The report, however, concluded that an emergency already existed despite the statement made by the commander of the aircraft and that that emergency became more severe as subsequent events unfolded. The voice recorder in the aircraft also reveals

"that the commander's decision not to declare an emergency was largely based on the inconvenience which would consequently be experienced by him and his crew after they had landed, rather than the condition of the aircraft."

That is a damning thing to find in such a report.

A short time later, the commander became concerned about the way in which the fuel was being jettisoned and therefore stopped the process. Some time later, it was recommenced. A little later again, a passenger reported that there was damage to the left horizontal stabiliser. He had noticed it at the time of the initial incident but believed that it was now becoming worse. Noting this information, and the length of time being taken to jettison the fuel, at 15.51 the commander requested an immediate landing at Heathrow.

Ten minutes before touchdown, the commander was requested to divert to Stansted. The report records that episode as follows:

"For operational reasons, BAA would have preferred the aircraft to land at Stansted."

The air traffic controller therefore told the commander:

"'there's a request from BAA at Heathrow that you divert to Stansted'."

The report continues:

"The commander replied that he would prefer to continue to Heathrow . . . Recorded flight deck conversation indicated that the commander thought that the reason was because the aircraft had lost part of its engine structure and BAA was concerned about it overflying a large built-up area."

My researches suggest that the report may be covering up an even worse truth—bearing in mind the fact that the truth revealed by the report is pretty shocking anyway. I have been told that Heathrow's airfield operations department asked air traffic control to request the commander to divert to either Manston or Stansted for the following three reasons, and not just for the one quoted in the report. First, if the aircraft's controls and braking system were damaged and if it were overweight, it might need the longest possible runway to stop, and that happens to be Manston. Secondly, Heathrow landings on the day in question were to the west, involving a long approach over densely populated west London. Thirdly, if a runway at Heathrow were closed as a result of the landing, air traffic in much of western Europe could be disrupted; in that case, it would make sense to use a quieter airfield such as Stansted.

At 16.04, when the aircraft was at 4,000 ft and 18 miles from touchdown, it appeared to develop landing gear problems. That took the crew's mind off fuel dumping, which was still going on. As a result, the aircraft reported passing a marker just 7 miles from touchdown—in other words, right over the densely populated area of west London—and at less than 2,000 ft while still dumping fuel. However, regulations prohibit the dumping of aviation fuel at less than 7,000 ft in winter or 4,000 ft in summer.

Happily, a safe but overweight landing took place at 16.10, but not before Heathrow staff had decided to declare a full emergency, despite the commander's refusal to do so. As a result, Heathrow police called in the air accident investigation branch, which produced the report that we are considering tonight.

The report was published on 9 June, some 15 months after the incident. It contains two formal recommendations: first, that commanders be told why requests for diversion are made; and, secondly, that those selecting emergency routes for aircraft in such circumstances should make the avoidance of densely populated areas a primary consideration. I agree wholeheartedly with both those recommendations and ask my hon. Friend the Minister to assure the House that the Government not only accept them but intend to implement them immediately. Nothing less will reassure my constituents.

If my hon. Friend thinks that this is the point at which he can give that assurance and we all go off for a night cap, he is mistaken. Unfortunately, the matter raises other points on which I wish to press him. The first point is the shortcomings revealed in two written answers to my questions about the report. Those answers revealed that copies of such reports are sent to the Library of the House only

"in the event of accidents and incidents likely to attract considerable public interest".—[*Official Report*, 22 June 1993; Vol. 227, c. 99.]

I wonder, therefore, whether my hon. Friend could tell us his definition of "considerable public interest". Does he consider a "considerable" number to be the hundreds of thousands of people who live under the flight path of this aircraft and who had highly flammable aviation fuel dumped on their houses and gardens? I certainly do. Since only three reports were issued in 1991 and only six in 1992, it is not asking much for the Government to deposit copies of all air accident reports in the Library. It would not add much to their work load.

Copies of reports are sent only to those hon. Members who show an interest in the interim bulletin. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister could tell us how we are supposed to show interest if we are not told about the existence of an interim bulletin. I should be fascinated to know how we are supposed to do that. Surely it is not beyond the ability of my hon. Friend's extensive and highly paid staff to identify the local Members in such an incident and see that they are properly briefed. As the representative of 70,000 people who were put at risk by this accident, I believe that I have the absolute right to be kept informed. However, I was left to read about the report in the national press several days later.

The second point that concerns me is the Government's failure to notify the local press. I regret having to tell my hon. Friend that, despite the enthusiasm of his publicity department to brief the national media and journalists based many miles from Heathrow, it failed to brief my local newspapers. I hope that that failure was nothing more sinister than an accidental oversight. Kim Chapman, the editor of my oldest local newspaper—the *Staines and Ashford News*—asked me to tell my hon. Friend that she is absolutely furious. Perhaps in time someone will apologise to her for not sending a copy of the report.

The third point is the need to review the hours worked by and the qualifications of ground engineers. The report revealed that the ground engineer who made the temporary repairs to the aircraft worked on it for 12½ hours at Heathrow on 7 March. He then worked on other planes at Heathrow for five hours on the morning of 8 March before flying to Frankfurt and spending a further nine and a half hours repairing the offending aircraft. I make that a total of 27 hours work, plus travel, in only two days. We should not, therefore, be surprised that some errors of judgment occurred.

The report says that the ground engineer

"allowed himself to operate beyond his own knowledge of the aircraft and, because of misunderstandings, beyond what was permitted . . . (he) did not recognise the structural or procedural significance of the disconnections . . . made in the reverser."

The report also criticises the engineers at the airline's main base in Trinidad for failing twice to carry out the inspection requested by the ground engineer at Heathrow. Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that those matters and the two recommendations in the report need urgent attention?

The fourth point is the low-level dumping of aviation fuel over London. If anyone stops to think about it, the implications of that are horrendous. Large quantities of highly flammable and toxic liquid were released at very low levels over a densely built-up area. In the circumstances, does my hon. Friend agree that air traffic control should be required to insist on a diversion to

*[Mr. David Wilshire]*

another airfield when such dumping may clearly become necessary? If so, will he issue immediately the necessary instructions to air traffic controllers?

The fifth point is the question of taking action against pilots who wilfully endanger—I choose my words deliberately—life for their convenience or the commercial convenience of their employers. In case that sounds somewhat strong, I quote again from the report. The report says:

"the crew decided not to declare an emergency because they believed they would have to undergo medical checks and would not be able to operate the following day."

One needs to let that sink in.

The report also states that the commander requested to go to Heathrow

"as all of their facilities were there . . . Meanwhile the flight engineer consulted Air Canada, the handling agent, who were adamant that the aircraft should come to Heathrow."

The House and the Minister will note the absolute and complete absence of any safety considerations whatever in those two statements. I cannot help wondering whether that constitutes grounds for legal action against the commander and/or the airline. If it does not, I believe that it should and that the law needs changing. I urge the Minister to do something about it.

My last comment is on the misleading comments in the report about the request to divert to Stansted. The report says:

"BAA would have preferred (the aircraft) to land at Stansted Airport; the reason was that, had it been necessary to close a runway after the aircraft had landed there would have been less disruption to traffic flow".

As I have already explained, my research reveals that that was but one of three considerations leading to a request to divert and that two airfields were considered by BAA.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister agrees that the report, as written, invites us to conclude that Heathrow airport staff—who could well have been my constituents—concerned themselves only with delay and disruption at Heathrow on this occasion. That is grossly unfair because the airport is clearly worried about passenger safety and public risk. I believe that the record should be put right. Will my hon. Friend take steps to have that erroneous impression of Heathrow staff rectified?

Through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, may I thank Madam Speaker for allowing me the opportunity to raise all these issues. I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for giving up a little of his beauty sleep to listen to me and to reply. I hope that I have persuaded him and the House that the matters that I have raised are deeply worrying and potentially raise issues of life and death for those whom I represent.

My constituents and I accept that eliminating all risk for those who live near Heathrow is beyond the scope of all human endeavour. However, we at Heathrow believe that we have the right to expect that everything possible should be done to reduce all the risks to the lowest possible level. The report reveals a catalogue of avoidable risks. Happily, it goes on to identify ways of getting a little closer to the perfection that we all seek. Therefore, I beg my hon. Friend the Minister to act and to act quickly.

11.22 pm

**The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris):** I congratulate my hon. Friend on his good fortune in having obtained this debate on an issue which I know that he takes seriously, and which the Government acknowledge is important. Air accident report AAR3/93 which led to the debate demonstrates clearly the international nature of aviation. The essence of the incident was that a part of one of the aircraft's thrust reversers became detached and damaged the tailplane before falling to the ground soon after take-off from Frankfurt. The aircraft, which was registered in Trinidad and Tobago, diverted to Heathrow, where the company had significant maintenance facilities available. Although the failure occurred over Germany, it was agreed with the German authorities that the investigation would be carried out by the UK's Air Accident Investigation Branch because the aircraft was available for inspection in London.

Although the accident report properly deals largely with the technical problem, it also highlights two important points about air traffic control advice to, and routing of, aircraft in emergency situations. It is understandable that there is public concern to minimise the risk to people on the ground. Safety is always the first priority.

I should make it clear that in the United Kingdom the regulation of civil aviation safety is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority. Indeed, the Secretary of State's letter to Christopher Chataway setting out the CAA's objectives when he was appointed chairman of the CAA in 1991 makes it very clear that safety is the responsibility of the CAA and that the Government do not intend to interfere in the discharge of those duties.

However, the United Kingdom is an active member of the International Civil Aviation Organisation, whose safety standards are accepted by virtually all countries. The United Kingdom recognises the adherence to these standards by foreign operators and in return British aircraft are accepted overseas. As a major aviation trading nation, the United Kingdom benefits greatly from this reciprocity and, of course, the communities around our airports share in the prosperity generated by international flights in and out of the United Kingdom.

Aircraft accidents in the United Kingdom are investigated by the Air Accident Investigation Branch of the Department of Transport. This organisation is deliberately separate from the CAA so that the regulators are not put in the position of having to judge the effectiveness of their rules and regulations. The AAIB is very widely respected in the aviation community. For instance, its painstaking reconstruction and report of the Lockerbie disaster has drawn worldwide acclaim.

In this case I can assure the House that the CAA has studied the AAIB's report carefully as it does in all such cases. In particular, I can report that the CAA has accepted the AAIB's safety recommendations and that supplementary instructions to air traffic controllers on the handling of aircraft in emergencies will be included in the manual of air traffic services within the next week.

The CAA has given this matter detailed consideration in formulating its response to the safety recommendations. It has been careful to avoid taking away responsibility from the aircraft commander, while giving him all possible assistance in an emergency. It is important not to increase

the pilot's workload at a critical time. It is also important to avoid circumstances which might dissuade pilots from declaring emergencies when they should do so.

In response to the AAIB recommendations in respect of this accident the following instructions and advice will be issued for handling aircraft in an emergency. When a pilot has declared an emergency and stated the aerodrome to which he wishes to proceed, controllers will acknowledge this message. If the controller is instructed to inform the aircraft that it is required or requested to divert to another aerodrome, the reason for this change should be established. The message, including the reason, will then be passed to the captain and his intentions requested.

It is desirable that aircraft in emergency should not be routed over densely populated areas. If this is inconsistent with providing the most appropriate service to the aircraft, for example when any extended routing could jeopardise the safety of the aircraft, the most expeditious routing is the one that should be given. Where possible, suggestions of alternative runways or aerodromes which would avoid densely populated areas and be consistent with safety should be passed to the pilot and his intentions requested.

These instructions to air traffic controllers emphasise that the decision on whether to comply with advice or instructions to land at an airport other than his selected diversion lies with the captain of the aircraft. It is stressed that the captain has ultimate responsibility for the safety of his aircraft. The controller will do everything he can to assist the aircraft commander, but the latter is in the best position to judge the hazard to his aircraft. He has that ultimate responsibility. That is an internationally accepted principle and it is one from which it is difficult to resile.

In this case, the aircraft commander's decision to proceed to London was reasonable, given that he was initially unaware that the separated part had damaged the tail. Also it provided the time to reduce the weight for landing and meant that rectification would be easier. His reluctance to declare an emergency, even when he became aware of the tail damage and asked for an immediate approach into Heathrow, is a matter which has been brought to the attention of the state registry and the international aviation community by the AAIB's comprehensive report. Fortunately, the air traffic controller took the initiative to treat the flight as an emergency, and all facilities were on standby at Heathrow, where the aircraft landed safely. The controller concerned is to be congratulated.

The unfortunate feature of this incident was that the aircraft continued to dump fuel until a few minutes before landing. As my hon. Friend said, it is normal practice for responsible airlines, when fuel must be jettisoned to avoid an overweight landing, to do so above 5,000 ft. From such heights the fuel dissipates and evaporates. In addition, air traffic control tries to arrange for dumping to occur over the sea, if possible. Regrettably, the aircraft in question had difficulty in jettisoning fuel. In the event, it made an overweight landing, albeit safely.

I have no wish to suggest that this was other than a serious incident—the fact that it was the subject of a formal United Kingdom investigation emphasises this point—but I want to put matters in perspective. Since January 1988 there have been only 11 occasions on which objects falling from aircraft have been reported as causing any damage to property. There are no records of any third party having been injured or killed. This is in the context of about 1·25 million air traffic movements handled by the London air traffic control centre in 1991-92.

My hon. Friend raised one or two other points on which I should like to comment. He correctly identified the questions that have been raised about the role of the ground engineer. He will appreciate that the report did indeed spell out a number of inconsistencies in the way in which the ground engineer operated. He was right to draw attention to the seriousness of the issues raised. These have been highlighted in the report. On the matter of the briefing provided to his local media and to himself, I should say that aircraft accident reports are specialised reports with a high technical content. They are of interest principally to the aviation community. They are preceded, soon after the event, by a bulletin that sets out the essential facts but draws no conclusions.

On the day of publication of the final report a press notice is issued. Copies of AAIB reports are sent to the Library in the event of accidents thought likely to attract considerable public interest. These are normally fatal public transport accidents, such as those at Lockerbie and Kegworth. Our understanding is that numerous copies of this press release were sent to both national and local media. My hon. Friend was kind enough to suggest that his local radio station discovered its copy in the wastepaper basket. I can only say that my Department is clear about the fact that it issued the reports to as many people as possible. If my hon. Friend is concerned, I shall discuss with him afterwards ways in which his keen interest in affairs at Heathrow can be translated into his receiving more regular reports.

This is an important incident, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me an opportunity to set out some of the background to it.

*The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour,* MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

*Adjourned at twenty-eight minutes to Twelve o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Thursday 24 June 1993*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

CROYDON TRAMLINK BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SA TY) BILL *(By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEM ERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

*Orders for Second Reading read.*
*To be read a Second time on Thursday 1 July.*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [8 February],* That the Bill be now read a Second time.
*Debate to be resumed on Thursday 1 July.*

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

*Order for Second Reading read.*
*To be read a Second time on Thursday 1 July.*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Volunteering

1. **Miss Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about initiatives to promote volunteering.

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd):** The Home Office funds a number of organisations which promote voluntary activity. For example, at the beginning of this month, with support from the Home Office and the BBC, the Volunteer Centre UK organised a highly successful volunteers week, on which I congratulate it. More than 12,000 inquiries were made by prospective volunteers on the telephone helplines alone.

**Miss Nicholson:** I thank the Minister for his full response. Can he tell me whether the Prime Minister's Christmas message mentioned the importance of volunteering as central to our society? Does my hon. Friend see the number of volunteers swelling and the ways in which they assist in the community growing, as I do? Does he agree that it is a wonderful initiative whereby hundreds of thousands of people give freely of time, energy and professionalism and the Home Office supports their work?

**Mr. Lloyd:** My hon. Friend is right. The Prime Minister spoke about the importance that he places on volunteering. About half the population volunteer for charitable work at some time in their lives. We want to increase the number of volunteers, the regularity with which they do charitable work and their effectiveness.

**Mr. Michael:** I am tempted to wish the Minister a happy Christmas after that question. I welcome him to his new responsibility for bringing together charities and voluntary organisations and express pleasure that the Government are catching up with the Labour party in that regard. Does he agree that volunteering should not be regarded as a cheap way of getting a job done and that we need to respect the professionalism of volunteers as well as their commitment? Will he give an undertaking to expand the way in which the Government provide training and resources for the support of volunteers? Does he accept that there is a danger that the contract culture may lead to a top-down approach in which the Government may seek to constrain too tightly the work of voluntary organisations?

**Mr. Lloyd:** I believe that contracting will probably mean an increase in the use of voluntary organisations. Professionalism is extremely important. It is not a cheap way of providing service, although it is the most cost-effective way of doing so. The great advantage is that it harnesses the enthusiasm of people who want to do that work and provides a flexibility that publicly funded and directed organisations cannot, with the best will in the world, supply.

**Mr. Rowe:** Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Prime Minister has shown considerable interest in making it possible for a large number of young people to give one year of their time to voluntary service if they so choose? Does he agree that, by so doing, they will enhance their self-respect as well as learn that they grow by giving? Will he do everything in his power to encourage that initiative?

**Mr. Lloyd:** My hon. Friend draws attention to an important aspect of volunteering, where it is of benefit to the volunteer, especially those special groups of people whose self-respect needs developing. I refer particularly to former young offenders. Because of my Prison Service responsibilities and my responsibility for voluntary organisations, I take particular interest in organisations such as the Community Service Volunteers, to which I believe that my hon. Friend was referring, to ensure that they are developed further.

### Carl Bridgewater Case

2. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to complete his review of the Carl Bridgewater case; and if he will make a statement.

**The Minister of State, Home Department (Mr. David Maclean):** I shall reply to the representations that I received on 8 June when they have been fully considered, and after any necessary further inquiries have been carried out.

**Mr. Corbyn:** Is it not now obvious to the Minister and to all normal thinking people in the country that there is something seriously wrong with the conviction of the Bridgewater Three? In the light of the revelations made by the foreman of the jury at the original trial about the

evidence that was put before the jury, is it not obvious that it is time for the Home Office rapidly to complete its review of the evidence that was put before it and enable justice to be considered by referring the case back to the Court of Appeal? The issue could then be brought out into the open again and justice could finally be done.

**Mr. Maclean:** It is highly premature of the hon. Gentleman to jump to that conclusion. I assure him that we shall pay close attention to Mr. O'Malley's views when we look again at the case. However, it is well established that a simple change of mind by a juror cannot by itself have any legal significance for the safety of a conviction. The solicitor for the convicted man acknowledged that point in the recent petition. I repeat that we shall consider carefully all the representations that we have received before coming to any conclusion.

**Mr. Garnier:** Does my hon. Friend recall that in the past few weeks one of the defendants in the Bridgewater case has been demonstrating on the roof of Gartree prison in my constituency? Will he take this opportunity to congratulate the governor of that prison on his calm handling of the demonstration and to congratulate the Prison Service and the local police on bringing the matter to a close without injury or loss of life? Does he agree the proper way to deal with complaints such as that raised by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is to approach the Home Office directly rather than demonstrating on or about the prison?

**Mr. Maclean:** I congratulate the governor of the prison and his staff most sincerely on the sensible and caring way in which they handled that demonstration. I can only agree with my hon. Friend. We shall consider the representations that have been received thoroughly and carefully before coming to any conclusion on the matter. External demonstrations do not help our deliberative processes one iota.

**Mr. Mullin:** May I put it as gently as possible to the Minister that it is obvious to most sensible people who take a serious interest in the case that there is something seriously wrong and that the case should go back to the Court of Appeal? There is also an urgent need for the Home Office to demonstrate that it has learnt some lessons from the events of the past five years. Therefore, the sooner the case is referred back to the Court of Appeal, the better.

**Mr. Maclean:** I do not suppose that this is the first time that it has been said to the hon. Gentleman that his opening remarks were phrased in a slightly biased way. It is not for the Home Office to decide the guilt or innocence of the men. That is for the Court of Appeal. The issues that have been raised recently in publicity have been considered by the Court of Appeal in previous reviews. However, fresh representations have been made and we are going through them carefully to determine whether they contain any information that suggests that new evidence could be referred to the Court of Appeal. Of course, we want to reach conclusions as soon as we can, but it is more important that we are careful and exact in our deliberations.

## Sentencing

3. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Office what consideration is being given to further changes to the criminal sentences available to the courts.

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard):** The Government are determined to ensure that the courts have available an effective range of measures to deal with offenders who appear before them. I will not hesitate to add to or increase the level of those penalties if the need arises.

**Mr. Evennett:** I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his reply. Does he agree that custodial sentences are essential to protect the public from those citizens who want to destroy or disrupt society? Will he condemn those, including members of the Labour party, who wish to leave the courts powerless to deal with persistent juvenile offenders, who are a growing problem within our society? Will he reinforce his commitment to the secure training units at which such juveniles could be locked up and kept off society's streets and out of the way so that ordinary members of the public can go about their business in peace and security?

**Mr. Howard:** The answer to all my hon. Friend's questions is yes. We are determined to take action to ensure that, in particular, those juvenile offenders who persistently flout the law and cause great offence to people who witness and suffer from their behaviour are subject to a period of detention. I certainly intend to pursue the objectives that were set out by my predecessor.

**Mr. Blair:** First, I welcome the new Home Secretary to his position and hope, at least for the sake of the continuity, that he will stay a little longer than his predecessors, though not for too long. Does he agree that one major cause of concern about sentencing is the disparity in the types of sentence given for similar types of offence? That was highlighted again this week by the so-called vigilante cases, some of which were treated relatively leniently and others, such as the Norfolk case, with considerable severity. What proposals will the Home Secretary consider to introduce greater consistency in sentencing so that sentences are handed down by the courts on the basis of established principles of justice and not as a lottery?

**Mr. Howard:** First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his welcome and I look forward to facing him across the Dispatch Box for a long period, so long as he remains on the Opposition Bench and I and my hon. Friends remain on the Government Bench.

We wish to see greater consistency in sentencing. As the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well, however, cases that appear before the courts involve an infinite range of circumstances, which have to be taken into account. In recent months the hon. Gentleman has taken it upon himself to parade as a guardian of law and order, but the trouble is that he himself has a large number of previous offences to be taken into account. The hon. Gentleman offended by voting against the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the Public Order Act 1986, the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and the Criminal Justice Act 1991. He has offended by voting against the prevention of terrorism Act on each and every occasion that it has come

before the House. The hon. Gentleman has no credentials to appear in the guise of a guardian of law and order, and we will make sure that the country does not forget that.

**Mr. Thurnham:** I begin by most warmly congratulating my right hon. and learned Friend on his well-deserved appointment. Will he recognise the value of the right of appeal against lenient sentences? Is it not a disgrace that Labour Members failed to admit their mistake in opposing that measure?

**Mr. Howard:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his good wishes, and I entirely agree with the point that he made. In the teeth of opposition from the Labour party and other parties, we introduced the provisions that now enable the Attorney-General to refer lenient sentences to the Court of Appeal. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has still not admitted that he and his party were wrong to oppose that measure.

### Royal Commission on Criminal Justice

4. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Office when he now expects the royal commission on criminal justice to report.

**Mr. Howard:** I understand that the Royal Commission plans to publish its report on 6 July.

**Mr. Bennett:** Does the Home Secretary agree that the royal commission was set up because of the considerable concern about the relatively small, but extremely disturbing, number of miscarriages of justice and the soaring crime rate in this country? It was set up for those reasons, but one of the main lobbying groups wants to get rid of the right to silence. Does the Home Secretary agree that getting rid of the right to silence will do nothing to solve the problem of miscarriages of justice, and may increase the number of cases? It certainly will not reduce crime levels in this country, as it will not increase the number of people caught. Does he accept that many Ministers like to use the right to silence and not answer questions in the House, but we cannot presume that they are all guilty?

**Mr. Howard:** The royal commission was set up because of a widespread feeling that our system of criminal justice was not working as well as it should and had become far too much of an esoteric game, and not enough of a vehicle for determining guilt and innocence, which should be its function. I shall look carefully at the royal commission's report when it appears; I shall not prejudge it, and I shall not answer the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, as I want to see what the royal commission has to say on the matter. In due course, I shall announce my proposals.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there are two kinds of miscarriage of justice, one being the conviction of the innocent and the other the acquittal of the guilty?

**Mr. Howard:** I entirely agree with my hon. and learned Friend, who makes an extremely important point. Anyone who takes lightly the extent of concern in this country about those guilty people who walk free from our courts is actually behaving in a way which will earn them the contempt of our people.

**Mr. Maclennan:** The Home Secretary said that he would not prejudge the royal commission, but he has already announced a number of amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill which is before the House of Lords. Has he had prior notice of the views of the royal commission, or has he prejudged it?

**Mr. Howard:** We have not announced any amendments to any Criminal Justice Bill before the House of Lords, but we have tabled several amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill which is before the House of Commons, because, in common with most other people who have considered these matters, we recognise that there are deficiencies in our existing arrangements which need to be remedied without delay. We need to provide without delay for the courts to be able to examine all previous offences and we need to remedy the inability of the courts to take account of the fact that offences have been committed while the offenders were on bail. Where we see clear and blatant deficiencies in our law, we will not hesitate to act speedily to remedy them.

**Mr. Bellingham:** When my right hon. and learned Friend meets the royal commission, will he bear in mind the case of the Harleston Two, the so-called Norfolk vigilantes? Is he aware that both men, who were sentenced to five years' imprisonment, had no previous convictions whatsoever? Will he discuss with the royal commission the need to speed up appeals, and will he do all that he can to ensure that that particular appeal is dealt with as soon as possible?

**Mr. Howard:** I understand the widespread concern about the case to which my hon. Friend refers. He will know that as that matter is the subject of a pending appeal, I cannot comment upon it. It is important that we retain the distinction between vigilance and vigilantes and we must not condone any suggestion that it is right for people to take the law into their own hands. I know that my hon. Friend will agree with that, but I know the concern that is widely felt about the case to which he refers.

**Mr. Allen:** While unemployment and poor housing can never be an excuse for crime, does the Secretary of State accept that 14 years of Government policies on unemployment, housing and education could have contributed in any way to the appalling rise in the levels of crime over the same period?

**Mr. Howard:** No. Assertions such as those made by the hon. Gentleman do more to blur the crucial distinction between right and wrong than almost anything else. The Conservative party knows that that distinction must never be blurred, and we will not blur it or seek refuge in the verbiage emanating from the hon. Gentleman.

### Police Numbers

5. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he intends to change procedures for determining the number of police officers in each police force.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle):** My right hon. and learned Friend will be making a statement in the near future when he lays before Parliament his White Paper on police reform.

**Mr. Moss:** Does my hon. Friend recognise that chief constables will warmly welcome the freedom to take their own decisions regarding manpower levels? Is it not absurd that the knee-jerk opposition to the proposals so aptly shown by Labour Members will lead them to oppose a reform which will give chief constables the option of putting more police on the beat?

**Mr. Wardle:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Under the present system, a chief officer who wishes to increase his funding effectively has to express his bid in terms of additional police officers, but it cannot make sense for the Home Office to determine how many officers each force should have. It must be up to the chief officers to decide on the basis of local intelligence and local needs.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** May I express my surprise that the new Secretary of State expressed support for the Criminal Justice Act 1991, which we are currently in the process of seeking to amend? Will his support for more policemen on the beat be enhanced by the Government's proposals for restrictions on spending on police recruitment for the next three years?

**Mr. Wardle:** Many aspects of the 1991 Act made a great deal of sense. If the hon. Gentleman is following the Committee proceedings on the Bill, he will understand how it is now to be improved.

As for police funding, the hon. Gentleman and the House must agree that it is up to chief officers to use their resources and to decide what to spend on manpower and what to spend on equipment. That must make sense.

**Mr. Brandreth:** Does my hon. Friend agree that in the past 14 years police numbers have risen by 16,500 and funding for them has risen by about 80 per cent? That shows the priority that we attach to the police. Does he agree that civilianisation and other ways of putting more police on the beat are to be encouraged and that it must be up to the local chief constables to decide how best to serve the community?

**Mr. Wardle:** My hon. Friend is right. In addition to the statistics that he has just provided, I am sure that he will bear in mind the fact that, since 1979, almost 15,000 more civilian posts have been created and about 6,600 uniformed officers have been released for beat duties as a result of the civilianisation process.

It must be up to chief officers to decide how to deploy their resources. The House will understand that I cannot speculate about the White Paper, but some pointers were provided in the statement on 23 March. I can assure the House that the theme of the White Paper will be partnership between the police and public, and locally based and locally organised policing—so much was clear from the statement.

## Sheehy Report

6. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his timetable for consultation on the report of the Sheehy inquiry.

**Mr. Howard:** The report will be published next week. I intend to ask for comments on its recommendations by the end of September.

**Mr. McFall:** This heavily leaked report has caused nothing but public fear and concern. What benefits will performance-related pay and crime league tables bring to the maintenance of public tranquillity and good community relations? Is this not a privatisation too far? In their haste to privatise, the Government will do nothing but destroy the public ethic.

**Mr. Howard:** I shall certainly not comment on leaks of the report long before it has been published, but I hope that there will be no knee-jerk reactions of the sort that we have just heard from the hon. Gentleman on the part of the Labour party or from any other quarter. I hope that everyone will recognise that we must have up-to-date arrangements within which the police can operate, give their best and be able to wage the war against crime more effectively. That is the purpose of all the reforms that we have in train, including those on which Sir Patrick Sheehy will report next week.

**Sir Anthony Grant:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend know whether the Sheehy inquiry has been looking into the possible recruitment to the police force of Army officers who are unfortunately available as a result of the "Options for Change" policy? Does he agree that those officers could probably provide the high fliers that the police need so much? Is he aware, however, of the resistance of this idea on the part of the more stick-in-the-mud elements in the police? Can this matter be raised in the consultations?

**Mr. Howard:** I have a great deal of sympathy with that point. It can certainly be raised in the consultations on the Sheehy report. As to whether it is dealt with in that report, I fear that we shall have to wait until next week.

## Miss Hilda Murrell (Murder)

7. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations have been made to him to reopen the case of the murder of Miss Hilda Murrell of Shrewsbury.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations about the case from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), from the publishing company Simon and Schuster, and from Mr. Gary Murray.

**Mr. Dalyell:** With the publication of Gary Murray's book "Enemies of the State" by the reputable publishing house of Simon and Schuster, and with the reopening of the police investigation, should not the Home Office deal with the question of whether taxpayers' money was involved in what Chief Detective Superintendent David Cole, in the course of a three-hour interview with me, described as a brutal and callous murder? In the light of the answer by the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), then Minister of State, Home Office, on 19 December 1984 in the Consolidated Fund debate, and again in an Adjournment debate in June 1985, is there not an obligation on the Home Office to take a deep interest in these tragic events?

**Mr. Wardle:** If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence of the misuse of public funds in this regard, I hope that he will bring it to the Home Office. No such evidence is available at the moment. West Mercia police have always been willing to consider new evidence in this unsolved case if it should come to light. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the

Home Office will keep abreast of any developments arising from West Mercia's review of Mr. Murray's latest allegations. I hope that it will help the hon. Gentleman and the House if I say that nothing has come to light yet that would cause me to depart from the assurance given by my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw)—when he was a Home Office Minister—in a letter dated 28 December 1984, when he asserted that allegations about the security services being involved in Miss Murrell's death were totally without foundation. The situation has not changed.

## Sentencing

8. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Office what representations he has received regarding sentencing; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Howard:** I have received a large number of letters expressing concerns about sentencing. I take those concerns extremely seriously. As my hon. Friend will know, proposals are currently before the House to enhance the ability of the courts to deal appropriately and effectively with those convicted of criminal offences.

**Dame Jill Knight:** Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the mounting public concern about children below the age of criminal responsibility who are none the less persistent and dangerous criminals? Often they are aided and abetted by social services, which enables them to get off scot free and to commit crimes again. Does my right hon. and learned Friend appreciate that, because of sentencing policy, these youngsters are acquiring a very dangerous disrespect for the criminal justice system? Will he, in his own words of a few moments ago, remedy the present situation without delay, for the help and protection of the public?

**Mr. Howard:** I certainly understand and sympathise with the point raised by my hon. Friend. It is possible for young children who are below the age of criminal knowledge to be brought before the courts now, if they are beyond parental control. The most important lesson that children can learn is the difference between right and wrong—a lesson which cannot be learnt too soon, in their homes and schools. I welcome the efforts of all those who are increasingly drawing attention to its importance.

**Mr. Dowd:** Does the Home Secretary agree that, while it is critically important that we have a sentencing policy that both reflects the severity of the offence and punishes the wrongdoer, it is also important that we have a judicial system that does not inflict sentences on people who are patently innocent? I wrote to the Home Secretary some days ago requesting an urgent meeting to discuss the issues arising from the Court of Appeal judgment, a fortnight ago, in respect of my constituents Lisa and Michelle Taylor. When will the Home Secretary respond to my request for an urgent meeting, and when can we consider in full the damning indictments of the conduct of the Metropolitan police and certain sections of the press?

**Mr. Howard:** Of course it is true that we must have a system of criminal justice that both acquits the innocent and convicts the guilty. The hon. Gentleman's request is under consideration in my Department.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of a recent incident on the Weston estate in Macclesfield, where local responsible, sensible people unfortunately had to take the law into their own hands in dealing with a persistent young juvenile offender, who has appeared before the courts on many occasions but who has been released back into the community? Will my right hon. and learned Friend act to ensure that the courts of this land, which currently cannot impose adequate sentences on persistent juvenile offenders, have the power to do so in the very near future, in order to prevent people being forced—for their own defence and in their own interests—to take the law into their own hands?

**Mr. Howard:** I have made it abundantly clear that I am determined to make sure that the courts have the sentencing powers that they need to deal adequately and effectively with offenders. I am sure that my hon. Friend will acknowledge that we cannot allow people to take the law into their own hands. Members of the public can do a great deal to help the police without taking the law into their own hands. I am absolutely convinced that we will make progress in this area only if we can build an effective partnership between the public and the police, and if we do not leave the fight against crime entirely to the police. There is much that can be done short of people taking the law into their own hands. A part of that is making sure that the courts have adequate sentencing powers.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** How can the Minister possibly talk about knowing the difference between right and wrong when a Minister gives a present of a watch to a crook, and other Ministers go round the world trying to get funding? *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I can shout as loud as hon. Gentlemen. Did the Minister hear that question?

**Mr. Howard:** I heard it, Madam Speaker. I thought that it was an astonishing contribution from the hon. Gentleman, whose association with the Greater London council, which did so much harm to law enforcement, law and order and policing while it had some vestigial responsibility in this capital of ours, is well known and will not be forgotten, at least by anyone on this side of the House.

9. **Mr. Peter Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department has taken to ensure that those who commit rapes and other sexual offences receive appropriate custodial sentences.

**Mr. Howard:** We are ensuring that courts have the powers they need to impose severe penalties for serious offences. The Criminal Justice Act 1991, which was mocked by the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) a few moments ago—I hope that his constituents will know that he mocked it—gives the courts power to pass longer sentences on violent and sexual offenders in order to protect the public from serious harm.

**Mr. Atkinson:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend acknowledge that recent cases have proved that the Attorney-General needs the power to appeal against lenient sentences? He mentioned the opposition of hon. Gentlemen to that measure. Is he aware that the recent decision to extend to custody the sentence of a young man convicted of a serious sexual offence was greeted with

enthusiasm by a number of hon. Gentlemen? Are we expecting a U-turn, or is this to be another matter to be "set aside" by hon. Gentlemen?

**Mr. Howard:** If the Opposition were remotely consistent in their approach, we might expect a U-turn, but all we have at the moment are parrot cries of enthusiasm when the Attorney-General exercises the powers to which the Opposition were persistently opposed and complete silence from the Labour party as to whether they now, belatedly and reluctantly, recognise that we were right to give the Attorney-General those powers. I thought that even today the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) might admit that he was wrong to oppose giving the Attorney-General those powers, but he sits there in silence, despite the fact to which my hon. Friend referred.

**Ms Ruddock:** Does the Home Secretary accept, further to his answer, that, in the longer-term interests of society, what happens to sexual offenders while in prison is equally important? Can he explain, therefore, why, when 2,000 inmates are eligible for sexual offender treatment programmes, provision has been made for a mere 300?

**Mr. Howard:** I am very sorry that the hon. Lady did not respond to the invitation that I offered to her hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield a moment ago. Many people will have regretted the fact that she, too, chose to remain silent on that issue. On the question that she posed, that is a matter that I am prepared to look at. I am given to understand that the figures which the hon. Lady quoted are inaccurate, and I will look into their accuracy. I understand that we have a programme under way for dealing with the point which she raised, and we will pursue that.

**Mr. Congdon:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there is a link between the spread of pornographic material and the growth in offences of rape and serious assault? Is he prepared to consider strengthening the law to prevent the spread of such material?

**Mr. Howard:** We certainly need to look at the law in this area. I have not yet reached any conclusions on that matter, but I will certainly take my hon. Friend's point into account.

**Dr. Lynne Jones:** Does not the Secretary of State agree that there might be some improvement in this area of concern if it were compulsory for judges to undergo sexual awareness training?

**Mr. Howard:** No.

## Security Information

10. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultation he has had about the co-ordination of security information between police forces.

**Mr. Howard:** My Department keeps closely in touch with police forces and the Security Service about these arrangements. Lead responsibility for intelligence work against Irish Republican terrorism in Great Britain was transferred to the Security Service in October and I am not persuaded that further changes are necessary.

**Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, at a time when crime is becoming ever more sophisticated, it is ridiculous that there is not one proper centre to co-ordinate intelligence between the 43 police forces in England and Wales? Can he give the House an undertaking that he will overhaul and streamline the system so that drug trafficking, terrorism and other vicious crimes do not flourish?

**Mr. Howard:** I am as keen as my hon. Friend to make sure that such crimes do not flourish, but I am not satisfied that the present arrangements need to be changed in the way that he suggests. As I said a few moments ago, lead responsibility for intelligence work in terrorism has been transferred to the Security Service. The head of the anti-terrorist branch has a co-ordinating responsibility in relation to police work in this area. I am not satisfied that a case has been made for any change in those arrangements.,

**Mr. Trimble:** May I urge the Home Secretary to reconsider what he has just said and to look again seriously at suggestions recently made by his right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath)? It is clear that there is a need for more to be done. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that it is also clear that on both sides of the Irish sea the security services are not having the desired success? Consequently, there is merit in the suggestion that a senior Minister with authority throughout the United Kingdom should be appointed to tackle this issue.

**Mr. Howard:** I am not persuaded that the hon. Gentleman's case has been made out. It would, for example, be very odd if we were to remove responsibility for security operations in the Province from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I am not satisfied that what the hon. Gentleman suggests would constitute an improvement in the arrangements.

**Mr. Allason:** Is my right hon. and learned Friend satisfied by the exchange of information between the Security Service and West Mercia police force in relation to the murder of Miss Hilda Murrell? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the author of a recent book, who has raised allegedly new evidence on this case, is in fact a dog handler for the RAF police, with Security Service experience of some 20 years ago, who has been misrepresented by the publishers of the book as a serving member of the Security Service?

**Mr. Howard:** I note my hon. Friend's comments. I have nothing further to add to what was said by my hon. Friend a few moments ago on this question.

**Mr. Skinner:** What happened to the co-ordination between the security forces and the police force at the time that Asil Nadir decided to flee the country? Is it a fact that the British establishment and the Tory Government aided and abetted Asil Nadir to get out of the country, because he would have spilled the beans about all the Tory Ministers and Tory MPs if he had got into court?

**Mr. Howard:** I shall leave others to comment upon the paranoia of the hon. Gentleman's conspiracy theories. I am perfectly satisfied with the arrangements for co-ordination that have been in existence for some time, including during the period to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

### Probation Service

11. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps the probation service is taking to work with the voluntary sector.

**Mr. Maclean:** The probation service undertakes a wide range of partnerships with the voluntary sector to support effective programmes for dealing with offenders in the community. The Home Office currently provides over £20 million a year in grants to voluntary bodies to supplement the resources made available by probation committees. We greatly value the contribution that the voluntary sector is making in reducing crime in that and other ways.

**Mr. Coombs:** Does my hon. Friend agree that far too many probation officers seem obsessed with community service as rehabilitation rather than punishment? Is it not small wonder that far too many persistent offenders see community service as a very soft option indeed and cock a snook at the law? Will he make sure in his discussions with probation officers that any future programmes instil a sense of discipline and responsibility?

**Mr. Maclean:** Service in the community and community service orders should not be—and I will ensure that they are not—a soft option. The probation service can do a lot of good in the community by dealing with offenders who are sentenced. One such sentence is a community service order, and we will ensure that by no stretch of the imagination will it be regarded as a let-off.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

Q1. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 June.

**The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major):** This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

**Ms Quin:** In view of the leaked letter in the *Daily Mail* today, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman to say where he thinks the borderline lies between a ministerial misjudgment and a resignation offence?

**The Prime Minister:** I have stated before in the case to which the hon. Lady refers, and I reiterate today, that I believe that my hon. Friend has acted with complete propriety in raising with the Attorney-General concerns that had been put to him about Mr. Nadir's case. I have no criticism of my hon. Friend on that account, or of his performance as a Minister of State in the Northern Ireland Office.

My hon. Friend has been to see me this afternoon. He told me that he deeply regretted the embarrassment being caused to the Government by continuing speculation about his role. On those grounds, and on those grounds alone, he asked me if he could stand aside from his duties. With regret, I have accepted his resignation.

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** May I ask my right hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The House must come to order. We are wasting valuable time.

**Mr. Bruce:** As my right hon. Friend has personal knowledge of Nigeria, may I ask him to say what reaction Her Majesty's Government have to the declaration by the military regime in Nigeria that they will overturn the results of the general election for the president, particularly in view of the fact that all the international observers and internal monitors felt that the election was free and fair?

**The Prime Minister:** I believe that this is an important matter. I wrote to President Babangida last week to support the transition to civilian rule. I deplore the military Government's subsequent decision to ignore the results of elections which British and other observers considered free and fair. We are, as a result, reviewing our relations with Nigeria, including new aid, and we have taken a number of immediate steps.

We are withdrawing our military advisory team and will not provide new military training courses. We have suspended the issue of visas to members of the Nigerian armed forces and the privileged treatment of visa applications by Government officials. We are consulting European Community partners and other allies on possible further measures. I hope that the Nigerian Government will take full account of the strength of international feeling and will reconsider what I believe is a gravely mistaken decision.

**Mr. John Smith:** Is it not deplorable that the lack of any industrial policy or of a proper strategy for our defence industries has resulted in a polarised choice between Rosyth and Devonport for the Trident contract and a loss of thousands of jobs at both yards? Why do the Government not accept that, for industrial and defence reasons, this country needs the capability and expertise of both dockyards and their highly skilled management and work force?

**The Prime Minister:** I must say that the right hon. Gentleman neglected to mention in that supplementary question precisely what the circumstances might be if the defence cuts that his party proposed should ever come into being. He proposed defence cuts that would probably have meant that we had no yards at all, no capacity to defend ourselves, very few soldiers, hardly a Navy and barely a plane.

**Mr. John Smith:** Is it not a matter of record that the Government announced in the House in 1984, and repeated in 1985, that the refit contract would go to Rosyth and that such a commitment was repeated to the work force at the time of privatisation? What weight does the Prime Minister attach to specific promises given to either Rosyth or Devonport?

**The Prime Minister:** I seem to recall that at that time the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his party were keen to scrap Trident and said so repeatedly. How odd it is, people may think, that the Opposition want to scrap military hardware on one day and then fight for it desperately on another day. One is bound to ask where their hearts really lie.

**Mr. John Smith:** Does the Prime Minister accept, as he was reminded by the noble Lord Younger, who had responsibility in the Conservative Government, that a

specific commitment was given to the House in 1984? Does the Prime Minister accept that that is the case? If it is, what weight can anyone give to any undertaking that the Government give to anyone?

**The Prime Minister:** In view of the total disconjunction between the Opposition's policies and what they are now saying, that sort of comment from the right hon. and learned Gentleman is barefaced cheek. I suggest that he sets that aside.

Q2. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Hawkins:** My right hon. Friend will be well aware that the construction industry has had a difficult time during the recent recession. Will he join me in welcoming the good news yesterday that orders for new housing are now up by nearly 30 per cent. and that building is going on across the country, including in my constituency? Will he join me in saying that that is good news for the construction industry and all those who work in it?

**The Prime Minister:** I know that it has been a difficult time for our construction industry throughout the United Kingdom. That is why we announced special measures to help that industry in the autumn statement last year. I welcome the much better news that is becoming more apparent daily. It is good news for builders and for the economy as a whole. In construction, manufacturing, exports and on all sides, our prospects are improving and the economy is strengthening.

**Mr. Ashdown:** Last night the Secretary of State for Social Security called for a widespread cross-party public debate on the problems created by our present mountain of debt and the implications for long-term rises in social spending. That is an interesting suggestion. What specific proposals does the Prime Minister have to make it a reality?

**The Prime Minister:** As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we have made it perfectly clear that we are carrying out a review of social security and I understand that, in secret, the principal Opposition party is doing the same. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues will also contribute to that debate and we shall be happy to receive any representations from them. However, the day that I get representations from the Liberal Democrats about any difficult decision will be a remarkable day indeed.

**Mr. Roger Evans:** Will my right hon. Friend join me in rejecting the impudent talk about an industrial policy from the Labour party and welcome, for example, the success of QPL Holdings of Hong Kong and its new £42 million investment in south Wales? Does my right hon. Friend recognise that it is the significance in commercial and industrial prosperity of the concentration of enterprise and expertise which attracts orders and creates jobs?

**The Prime Minister:** I note with interest that the Opposition scoff at fresh jobs for Wales. It has been a good week for Wales and for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. It shows how attractive Britain now is to inward investors. It shows also that the Labour party hates new jobs, wherever they may come from, if it feels that any of the credit will rub off on the Government's policies. We intend to keep Britain attractive for inward investment. There will be no minimum wage, no works councils, no social chapter and none of the nonsense that we hear from the Opposition that represents their industrial policy.

Q3. **Ms Coffey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave some moments ago.

**Ms Coffey:** Is the Prime Minister aware of the escalation in housing association rents, which is causing especial hardship to elderly people who are not entitled to full housing benefit? What has he to say to my constituent, Mrs. Riley, whose rent has increased from just under £26 a week to just over £50 a week? Does he think that that is totally unacceptable and what is he prepared to do about it?

**The Prime Minister:** In this country, we have perhaps the most generous system of housing benefit that we have ever seen and if the hon. Lady genuinely wanted a response to her question, she should have provided me with details of Mrs. Riley's income so that I could have responded.

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** Does my right hon. Friend recall that, when Mr. Baldwin, in his day, was under assault from the press barons of that time, his retort was that the newspapers were seeking to exercise power without responsibility, which is the traditional role of the harlot?

**The Prime Minister:** I will reply in a parody of the words of another great Englishman: Assault? I see no assault.

Q4. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave some moments ago.

**Ms Eagle:** Does the Prime Minister share the sense of outrage at today's revelations that British taxpayers will have to foot a £1 million legal aid bill run up by that generous benefactor of the Tory party and bail bandit Mr. Asil Nadir, who does not seem to be short of a bob or two in northern Cyprus, at the same time as his Government are denying millions of people of modest means any access to legal aid at all? What is the Prime Minister prepared to do about that outrageous use of public money?

**The Prime Minister:** It is extremely unusual to hear the Labour party worrying about the taxpayer—refreshing perhaps, but just a touch unusual. As for legal aid, the usual cry from the Opposition Benches is for more and more legal aid.

**Mr. Coe:** Does my right hon. Friend welcome the recent education and industry initiative that encourages industry to make an input into the future direction of our educational needs? Does he agree that those people who are for ever claiming to speak on behalf of the country's manufacturing base, and the necessary skills for its survival, do so with no credibility whatever while they are still supporting the boycott of tests this year and the dismantling of our city technology colleges?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, my hon. Friend's logic is unanswerable. I agree with him entirely. Opposition Members may claim to speak for industry—we build for it.

Q5. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave some moments ago.

**Mrs. Campbell:** In view of the Government's decision to cut the defence budget by 15 per cent. over the next five years, will the Prime Minister tell the House when he will announce a proper defence diversification strategy and prevent an appalling loss of skilled jobs?

**The Prime Minister:** I can only assume that the hon. Lady was not here for the earliest part of Question Time or she may not have asked such a question. She should consider the impact of her own party's defence policies before she criticises ours.

Q7. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Rowe:** Can the Prime Minister advise me on how I might reply to a 73-year-old constituent, who is in frail health and is partially deaf and partially blind? She wrote to me about the review of the social security budget and said that the Opposition have no programme whatsoever except to take taxation up and that were this Government ever to be unseated the results would be unthinkable.

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend's constituent is very perceptive. I think that he should say to her that she can rest assured that the Government will stand by their commitment to the weak and vulnerable. Secondly, he could say to her that she should not believe the routine scares that come from Opposition Members day by day. Thirdly, he could tell her that the Labour party has no constructive ideas and, fourthly, he could tell her that we have no intention of doing other than remaining in government for the rest of this century and beyond.

# Dockyards

3.30 pm

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind):** With permission, I should like to make a statement on the future of the naval dockyards.

The House has been waiting to hear our proposals on the future of the royal dockyards, and in particular on the location of nuclear refitting. This matter has been under long and careful consideration and I am now ready to place our proposals before the House.

During the 1980s, the size of the nuclear submarine refit programme as a whole meant that all existing submarine docks at Devonport and Rosyth were required, and a new dock had to be provided for refitting Trident. We indicated at that time that the new facility was to be built at Rosyth. With the end of the cold war and the reduction in the size of the submarine and surface fleet, it became possible and desirable to consider new and less expensive solutions. Accordingly, in July 1991, some two years ago, the Ministry of Defence invited Devonport and Rosyth to make proposals for nuclear refitting work.

Since that time, we have subjected the proposals made by the two dockyard companies to the most detailed and intense scrutiny. We have had three proposals: two from Babcock Thorn Ltd.—one in respect of the new RD57 facility at Rosyth and the other for upgrading existing docks at Rosyth—and one from Devonport Management Ltd. in respect of the upgrading of existing docks at Devonport. The proposals have been evaluated for comparative purposes by the Ministry of Defence, supported by independent specialist advisers.

That evaluation has taken some time. I know that the decision has been keenly awaited, but I do not regret the time that has been taken. The fact is that the upgrade proposals that are now being considered cost more than £250 million less than those that we originally had under consideration. I make no apologies for allowing the competitive process to push the cost down, to the benefit of both the Royal Navy and the taxpayer. We were also keen to ensure that both dockyards had a full opportunity to put forward proposals on a fair and equal basis.

The scrutiny has, however, not been simply a cost comparison. Before we could consider the cost of the proposals, two conditions had to be fulfilled. The first was that the proposals had to be completely sound and technically well-founded. Our detailed examination has reassured us that the proposals from both yards can be relied on to produce facilities of the required standard and that both yards have the skills and the experience to carry out submarine and surface ship refitting. In the past 10 years, Devonport has refitted seven nuclear submarines and 72 surface ships; Rosyth has refitted five nuclear submarines and 79 surface ships, including 11 frigates and destroyers.

The second key consideration has been safety, which rightly must be subject to independent validation. Our detailed analysis over a period of months shows clearly that each of the three proposals should reach the very high standard that is required.

Turning to the comparison of the cost of the various proposals, our scrutiny has taken place against the background of the need to get the best possible value for money from the defence budget. In particular, I need to ensure—as do the chiefs of staff—that the proportion of the defence budget spent on the support of the armed forces is kept as small as possible, so that the proportion that can go directly to the front line should be as large as possible. I am sure that the House will join with me in supporting that objective.

We have considered both the capital costs and the operating costs associated with the various proposals. With regard to capital costs, the results of the analysis show that our estimate, on a like-for-like basis, of the three proposals is as follows: the proposal to build new docks at Rosyth, known as RD57, would cost some £369 million on top of the £100 million already spent; the proposals for upgrading of docks in Rosyth would cost £248 million; and the proposals from Devonport would cost about £236 million. This shows that, despite the sums that have already been spent, the RD57 project—that is, a new purpose-built dock—is very much more expensive than either of the other two proposals, and I do not propose to consider it further. The two upgrade proposals are much closer in capital cost, but there is a clear difference, in Devonport's favour, of £12 million.

With regard to operating costs, we have looked at these over 15 years, by which time the capital work would have been completed, the necessary rationalisation taken place and the new arrangements settled down. Our analysis shows that, on operating costs, Devonport is again the cheaper yard, by a total of some £52 million over the period. Taking all those factors into account, the total difference between the two bids is £64 million in favour of Devonport. Those figures do not include redundancy costs, which again are less if Devonport is the nuclear yard.

Three days ago, we received a completely new suggestion from Babcock Thorn Ltd. That suggestion is that the number of docks where nuclear work can take place should be reduced from two to one, and that the emergency docking facility should be used as the nuclear defuelling and refuelling facility. When we received that suggestion, we had already spent several months in detailed consultation with both companies on their proposals in order to be able to report with confidence the figures I have quoted today. Our period of consideration was extended in January, in part to ensure that Babcock Thorn was able to propose an upgrading solution on the same basis as Devonport. It is quite unreasonable to produce completely new ideas so close to a decision which, if they were relevant, could have been presented at any time over the last six months. But, more important, we are not able to accept any proposal which would deprive the Trident submarines of a dedicated emergency docking facility for significant periods; which would mean that the single nuclear refuelling facility was used for all our submarines, so exposing us to unacceptable risks in the event of an incident or other difficulty; and which, indeed, is untested from a technical and safety point of view.

The view of the First Sea Lord, with which I agree, is that that suggestion imposes an unacceptable level of operational risk and that it should be ruled out. The same would apply to any proposal we received at this stage from Devonport based on the same engineering approach. The only way forward is for us to take a decision based on the analysis which we have before us.

The Government do not believe that it would be prudent to ignore the capital difference of £12 million and the overall difference of £64 million between the Devonport and Rosyth proposals. There are no other relevant factors that point decisively or conclusively to one

yard or the other. I am therefore announcing today our conclusion that, subject to satisfactory contractual negotiations, we shall proceed with the Devonport nuclear refitting facility proposals.

I now turn to our long-term plans for the future of Rosyth. I made it clear in my 9 February statement that our aim is to achieve a healthy competitive structure for non-nuclear refitting. We wish Rosyth to develop into a yard that will bid competitively for surface ship refits and other work. Rosyth already has considerable experience of surface ship work—for example, the highly successful refits of type 42 destroyers carried out over recent years—and we have every confidence in its ability to become a major and successful surface ship yard.

I am conscious of the fact that a significant period of transition will be required to help Rosyth to restructure so that it can concentrate on such work. To enable Rosyth to make that transition, we intend to continue with an allocated programme for 12 years, until 2005. Once nuclear work is concentrated at Devonport, the only allocation of surface ship refits will be to Rosyth; all other refit work will have to be won in competition.

The programme for Rosyth would comprise over half of surface warship refitting, including all aircraft carrier refits, virtually all type 42 destroyer refits and all Hunt class mine warfare vessel refits, as well as other refits of type 23 and type 22 frigates. After the year 2000, that programme will begin to taper down until 2005. These proposals mean that we expect Rosyth to be allocated responsibility for the refits of some 18 major warships. We expect Devonport—as the nuclear yard—to be allocated responsibility for the refits of some 12 nuclear submarines.

Employment at the yards is a matter primarily for the companies concerned. At present, there are some 3,700 people employed at Rosyth. Taking into account the allocated programme to which I have just referred, we estimate that there will be a reduction of about 450 in the work force as a direct result of reduced Ministry of Defence work. Employment on Ministry of Defence work should continue at about this level at least to the turn of the century. The allocation should also provide the basis for Rosyth to bid for extra work and to develop new markets. There is every reason for confidence that, given the skills of the work force and the traditionally high standard of their work, it will be possible for Rosyth to win work in competition, over and above the allocated programme, and that should increase employment beyond the levels I have outlined. Reductions in employment will not be confined to Rosyth. Because of the declining overall refit programme, we would expect reductions in the numbers employed at Devonport of about 350.

Given the benefit of competition, I am pleased to be able to say that, even during the period of an allocated programme of the kind I have mentioned, there will be a higher proportion of the refit programme available for competition than at present. That proportion will increase after the year 2000 and will apply to the whole of the surface ship refitting programme after 2005. Both dockyards, as well as shipbuilders, will be able to compete for that unallocated work.

Further information setting out the background to these conclusions will be contained in a consultative document which will be published in the near future to provide a basis for consultation with the parties concerned.

I believe that the proposals I have set out today will provide a healthy future for both yards. Trident submarines will carry the deterrent well into the next century. It is therefore essential that they be refitted to the high standards that the Royal Navy expects. The taxpayer equally has a right to expect value for money. My proposals achieve both these objectives, and I commend them to the House.

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): As the Secretary of State for Defence has admitted, the statement is long overdue. The delay and the Government's indecision have caused great distress and division. The procedures adopted by the Ministry of Defence in considering the Trident refit have set yard against yard in the most divisive way, as with the helicopter landing ship, when what is needed is overall planning that gives priority to the defence and industrial needs of the whole country.

We have no doubt about the capacity of the work force at Devonport to carry out the Trident contract satisfactorily, and we acknowledge the sincerity of those in the south-west of England, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) and Plymouth city council, who have argued their case powerfully and fairly. However, I am sure that they will accept that the decision is a bitter blow for the men and women of Rosyth. It is also a betrayal of the promises given by previous Tory Secretaries of State for Defence, as Lord Younger recently confirmed. The decision to——

**Hon. Members:** You would scrap it.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The Secretary of State's statement was heard in silence. I hope that all hon. Members during these exchanges will be heard civilly.

**Mr. Foulkes:** That defence commitment is there to provide free speech in this country, Madam Speaker. The decision announced today must also put the Secretary of State for Scotland in a difficult, if not untenable, position.

The Secretary of State for Defence must give some assurances by answering the following questions. First, as Ministry of Defence consultations have had little impact on the final decisions, will he say whether the latest Rosyth bid will be considered further during the consultation period? Will he also assure the House that the full defence assessment of the costs of both bids will be published in full—not just the totals given in his statement?

Will the Secretary of State also spell out what contractual obligations the Government will have for the refitting work at Rosyth on other vessels during the 12-year period? Such a guarantee is necessary because the Government's bland assurances have proved to be hollow. The work force at Rosyth are clearly not convinced by his promises and they deserve a firm and convincing guarantee.

Will the Secretary of State also say whether he has received an acknowledgment from Babcock Thorn that what he has announced will enable it to continue as a viable operation since, according to my count, he has guaranteed only 18 major ships in 12 years, whereas during the past 10 years it has refitted 79 ships? Will he also say whether Babcock Thorn accepts his assessment of the work force that it can retain on the basis of future work from the Ministry of Defence?

*[Mr. Foulkes]*

Will the Secretary of State also assure us that if Babcock Thorn is for any reason unable or unwilling to continue with the contract at Rosyth, the Ministry of Defence will ensure continued operation of the yard? He has agreed that an alternative to Devonport is vital for reasons of competition; it is also necessary for the preservation of our strategic capacity.

This is yet another announcement from the Ministry of Defence that will result in workers losing their jobs—in this case, 800 thrown on the scrap heap in Rosyth and Devonport.*[Interruption.]* I am coming to that. During the past three years, approximately 125,000 defence-related jobs have been lost all over the United Kingdom because of defence cuts, yet the Government continue to reject the call for a strategy for defence conversion and diversification, which was made again today by one of my hon. Friends.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have campaigned for the future of Rosyth dockyard, which is now the largest industrial employer in Scotland. There is absolutely no doubt that it will be under the gravest threat if the Secretary of State, because of his adherence to the free market dogma of privatisation, contractorisation and competitive tendering, fails to give the commitments for which I have asked. I urge him to put the security and economy of the nation before political dogma and to give those guarantees to the House.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman referred to previous statements made in the 1980s. In the nicest possible way, may I remind him that in July 1987 he signed an early-day motion that called on the Government "to cancel Trident" in the light of the changing international climate and impending arms reductions? Does he not realise that, if that recommendation had been accepted by the Government, not only would there have been no nuclear work at either Rosyth or Devenport but the 3,000 civilian jobs in the west of Scotland—arising from Faslane and Coulport—would not have been available? The hon. Gentleman should reflect on what would have been the consequences of his advice. Of course, I have regretted the uncertainty that has been perpetuated over the past few months, but I think that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, and I know that the House certainly will, that the saving of some £250 million achieved as a result of the process must be a factor that weighs heavily.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that today's announcement will be a bitter blow for the people of Rosyth. Of course I recognise that fact, but I believe that those people will also be relieved and pleased to see that the Government are committed to a two-dockyard solution. As the hon. Gentleman himself confirmed, total job losses as a result of today's announcement will be about 800 at both yards over the next few years.

The purpose of the period of consultation is to enable all who are interested in and affected by the proposals to make suggestions to the Government so that we can see whether they are matters that should have been considered, yet were not taken into account, or they are other relevant matters. In the consultative document, we shall seek to spell out as much information as possible.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about contractual obligations for the allocated programme. That programme will work in future on exactly the same basis as we have used over the past few years. We enter negotiations with the yard; we reach agreement on a price; and on that basis the work is allocated. That has been true of both Rosyth and Devonport, and there will be no change in that position.

The hon. Gentleman misunderstood one aspect when he compared the 18 major warships that I mentioned in my statement with the 79 ships that Rosyth has completed over the past few years. He must remember that most of the ships that Rosyth has completed in recent years were fairly minor vessels.

**Mr. Foulkes:** But very important.

**Mr. Rifkind:** Indeed, they are very important, but the 18 vessels to which I referred will be major warships. To that number has to be added a large number of smaller vesels, for which Rosyth will continue to be responsible.

**Mr. Phil Gallie** (Ayr): Did my right hon. and learned Friend hear the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) refer earlier today to what he anticipated would be an announcement of thousands of job losses associated with Rosyth and Devonport? Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the total number of jobs that the Ministry of Defence assesses will be lost are 450 at Rosyth and 350 at Devonport?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I have to say that there has been a lot of scaremongering both in the south-west of England and in Scotland about the consequences of the decision. As we all really know, both companies have been primarily interested in obtaining the monopoly work that Trident represents and, in order to advance their campaign, there has been a tendency in both parts of the country to exaggerate the consequences of failure. I fully accept that, if we had not been able to announce that we believe in retaining two dockyards in order to ensure competition in the future and if we had not been able to provide the allocated programme for Rosyth, there would, indeed, have been serious and substantial consequences for jobs. However, I can tell my hon. Friend and the House that, in view of the total work that will be available to Rosyth, and the man hours that it will require, the only factor that could change the job figures that I have mentioned would be improvements in productivity at either Rosyth or Devonport.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (Fife, North-East): The right hon. and learned Gentleman was Secretary of State for Scotland when his predecessor, Lord Younger, gave an undertaking that the submarine work would go to Rosyth. Did the right hon. and learned Gentleman endorse that undertaking at that time; if so, what does he say in response to Lord Younger's contention that an announcement in the terms of his statement today constitutes a "breach of faith"? In the light of the departure from that undertaking, what reliance can people at Rosyth place on the undertakings that the Secretary of State has given today?

Finally, there was no reference in his statement to either strategic or operational considerations. Was any consideration given to the location of the submarine refitting work at Rosyth, in close proximity to Faslane, where the nuclear submarines are to be based?

**Mr. Rifkind:** My noble Friend Lord Younger was concerned—he was perfectly entitled to be concerned—

about the job implications that would flow from whatever decisions might be taken on submarine matters. The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware, as is my noble Friend, that, because of the basing of Trident in the west of Scotland, some 3,000 civilian jobs have been created and will continue to be available for the life of the Trident programme. He will also be aware that, as a result of the statement today, the employment situation in Rosyth will remain healthy for the foreseeable future.

The strategic situation is an important matter that needed to be addressed. The view of the Royal Navy and the Ministry of Defence is that the strategic considerations can be satisfied by the placing of Trident work at either Rosyth or Devonport. As to the other matters, the hon. and learned Gentleman might reflect on the vitriolic opposition to Trident which the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) professed and which he sought to persuade his Liberal colleagues to adopt in years past.

**Sir Nicholas Bonsor** (Upminster): My right hon. and learned Friend was faced with an extraordinarily difficult task. It was clear that, whichever dockyard failed to get the order, there would be recriminations from those who supported it. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the care with which he has gone into the issues before making his decision.

Clearly, the Select Committee on Defence will want to examine the figures behind the decision and be reassured that the amount of work that will be given to Rosyth will ensure that we have a two-dockyard future. I should be grateful if my right hon. and learned Friend could tell us when the detailed figures will be available so that we can examine them and get the reassurance that we need.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The decision which we reached and which I announced today was a difficult and painful one because we were conscious of the fact that, whatever decision was reached, it would have sad consequences for the other yard. I hope that hon. Members will understand that, because the Cabinet reached its conclusion this morning, it is not possible to have the consultative document available today. Of course, we will make it available in the near future and I appreciate the point made by my hon. Friend.

**Mr. Henry McLeish** (Fife, Central): Does the Secretary of State appreciate that today's statement will be met with profound disappointment by the workers at Rosyth and their families? There will be widespread anger about the breach of faith, betrayal of promises and classic Tory treachery. What do we tell the young apprentices at Rosyth about what will happen after 2005? Can we believe anything that the Secretary of State says, in view of what has happened in the past? Does he acknowledge the comments made by the Secretary of State for Scotland in the *Glasgow Herald* on 14 May 1993, "Rosyth will survive. I want Rosyth to survive with Trident. There is a level playing field. It is half time and we are up three goals to nil."? Why was he defeated yesterday by 11 goals to one? What a team and what a disgrace. Both Secretaries of State should consider resigning.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I would say to the young apprentices at Rosyth that there are few other firms or industries that have an allocated programme of work for the next 12 years. The programme will provide a substantial amount of work and ensure that, over the next 12 years, Rosyth will have the time that it requires to adapt to a surface ship role. It already has considerable experience in that area —as I said earlier, over the years it has refitted no fewer than 79 surface ships.

The hon. Gentleman should share my belief in the quality of work and expertise at Rosyth. If he has the interests of the yard in mind—I am sure that he has—I suggest that he will do no service to the young people at Rosyth if he implies that the 12 years of guaranteed work somehow means that they have no prospect of a long-term future. He might end up willing the end that he so obviously wishes to avoid.

**Mr. Robert Hicks** (Cornwall, South-East): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the decisions will be received with eager anticipation and enormous relief not only in the Plymouth travel-to-work area but throughout the west country? Does he agree that securing the Trident refit contract reflects enormous credit on the management and work force of Devonport Management Ltd.? They have put together an attractive package which secured the contract on the basis of the defence needs of the nation and value for money.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I can certainly confirm that both companies made their proposals with a great deal of care and preparation. It fell to us to take the difficult decision of identifying where the conclusion should lie. I said in my statement that the consideration that had to prevail was the gap of some £64 million between the total cost of the two projects. In all other aspects, the position was too close to call on the merits of either bid.

**Mr. John McWilliam** (Blaydon): Given that the savings to be made in future are speculative and that the investment of £130 million in Rosyth will not now be used and has been poured down the drain, will the Secretary of State tell us who were the specialist external advisers who assisted him in making that difficult decision?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The money invested in Rosyth was for the RD57 new-build project. It is an inescapable fact that, even if one takes that investment into account, more than £350 million would remain to be spent on Rosyth for a new-build dock. That is £100 million more than the upgrade proposal at either Rosyth or Devonport. Therefore, I do not believe that any serious arguments can be made that it would have been sound or responsible to continue with the new-build project, even taking into account the money already spent. We considered the matter on that basis, but that was the unavoidable conclusion.

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson** (Aberdeen, South): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, although there will be bitter disappointment in Rosyth at the fact that it did not land the Trident contract, there will also be a great sense of relief that together my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence can guarantee Rosyth's long-term future? Does he further agree that Conservative Members should take no lectures from the Labour party on our commitment to Rosyth? In particular, we will not take lectures from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who has spent his entire political career campaigning against Trident and talking down Rosyth and its work force.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Member for Dunfermline,East was, indeed, a passionate opponent of Trident. If his views had been accepted, neither the 3,000 jobs in the west of Scotland nor any jobs in nuclear work in any other part of the country would exist.

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): When the Secretary of State for Defence heard about the nuclear alert at Faslane last weekend, did he recall the words of Lord Younger when he said that he had sold the siting of nuclear bases in Scotland by making the specific commitment that the associated work would go to Rosyth? That being the case, why should people in Scotland today take the Rifkind combination of radioactivity in Faslane and redundancies in Fife? Is the commitment to Rosyth today as firm as the commitment to Ravenscraig that was accepted in 1987?

If, as Lord Younger says, the primary issue here is faith, how does the Secretary of State for Defence have the brass neck to remain in office? Why is not the Secretary of State for Scotland taking stock of his position?

**Mr. Rifkind:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland played a major part in ensuring that Rosyth had an important future to which to look forward and that the job implications were as modest as I was able to state earlier. If the Labour party wishes to forget its past policies, the hon. Gentleman might at least admit the current policies of the Scottish National party. Those policies not only would have been of little benefit to Rosyth but would have destroyed 3,000 jobs associated with Faslane and Coulport. In recent weeks, the SNP has been noticeably quiet about the matter. We all know perfectly well why. None of the defence-related jobs would last a moment if the hon. Gentleman's views were endorsed.

**Mr. George Kynoch** (Kincardine and Deeside): I am disappointed for, and sympathise with, the management and staff at Rosyth, who must be disappointed after having put so much work into their bid for the contract. I welcome the positive package that my right hon. and learned Friend has provided. I am disappointed that the Opposition seem to have little faith in the ability of management and staff to build on that programme. Until the year 2000, will the allocated programme be sufficient to enable the yard to be profitable without attracting extra work, or will it be required to bid for non-allocated work to be profitable?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The allocated programme will continue until 2005, not the year 2000. I am not in a position to comment immediately on the profitability of Babcock Thorn, which is the contractor at the present time. The contractual arrangements with Babcock Thorn will continue for two or three years unless they are renewed. Just as Devonport in the next few years will benefit from the nuclear work, which is in effect an allocated programme because of its monopoly characteristics, so Rosyth will benefit from the large programme that I have announced today. That means that, for example, aircraft carriers such as Ark Royal and Invincible will be available for refitting in Rosyth. That was not the case in the past and is well worth reflecting on.

**Mr. David Jamieson** (Plymouth, Devonport): On behalf of my constituents in Devonport, may I say that the statement that the Secretary of State has made today about the nuclear refit contract will be greeted in my constituency and the south-west with great relief at the knowledge that many thousands of jobs will be secure? That sense of relief will be tempered by the knowledge that many jobs will be lost in Scotland.

Does the Secretary of State share my concern at the way in which the tendering process has been handled, as it has caused much distress and worry in both Plymouth and Scotland? Will he review the way in which contracts are awarded to prevent communities such as those in my region and in Rosyth from suffering the sort of agony that they have endured in the past six to eight months?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I appreciate that the period of uncertainty has been a problem; in ideal circumstances, we would want to avoid it, but the responsibility does not lie purely with the Government. Over the past six months, both Devonport and Rosyth have brought forward several modifications to their proposals and requested us to take them into account before reaching a decision, which we have done. That has been an important factor. We could have refused to consider them, but I feel that the hon. Gentleman would have been the first to complain that the case put forward by his local community had not been fully considered. The hon. Gentleman should bear that in mind.

**Mr. Anthony Steen** (South Hams): I welcome today's historic decision, which will delight the west country taxpayers—as well as the Royal Navy—who believe in fair competition and the principles of the citizens charter. Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that unemployment levels in the west country, which are currently higher than those in Scotland, will remain at the same level? Will Devonport Management Ltd. be allowed to release the land that is surplus to its requirements so that it can be used for industrial development and further job creation?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am sure that we all wish to welcome those benefits. The matter of most important comment today is that, because of the overall implications of our announcement, the reduction in employment at both Devonport and Rosyth will be far more modest than many anticipated or predicted. Clearly, with the Royal Navy declining in size, it is inevitable that fewer people will be required for refit work, but a reduction in employment in Devonport of 350 and in Rosyth of 450 between now and the turn of the century can be absorbed in both communities without significant difficulty.

**Mr. Gary Streeter** (Plymouth, Sutton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his announcement will be widely welcomed by my constituents and will be seen as a turning point in the economic fortunes of the west country? He will understand that I also wish to pay tribute to the skill and tenacity of the management and work force of Devonport Management Ltd. in winning the contract race. Will he confirm that it is not just my constituents or DML that will benefit from the announcement? The British taxpayer will also benefit from the excellent decision which he has made today.

**Mr. Rifkind:** Not only the taxpayer but the Royal Navy will benefit from the decision, which had to be taken on the basis of the relative cost of the two tenders. It was a hard-fought compaign by both yards and one pays tribute

to the tenacity of both companies. At the end of the day, the significant difference between the costs of the two proposals proved to be the decisive factor.

**Mrs. Irene Adams** (Paisley, North): The Secretary of State will recognise that there was concern not only at Rosyth but in many constituencies throughout Scotland where there are ancillary jobs connected with the work at Rosyth. Did he make his estimate of 450 redundancies with Babcock Thorn? What is his estimate of job losses in ancillary industries throughout Scotland as a result of this decision?

**Mr. Rifkind:** Obviously, we have not been able to inform Babcock Thorn of the details of the proposals before informing the House—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Opposition Members should not be surprised about that; they would have been concerned had it been otherwise. We know Babcock Thorn's expectations of job changes over the next few months and years. The company has been contemplating certain redundancies that are totally unconnected with Ministry of Defence work, but that has nothing to do with Ministry of Defence work—it is something on which Babcock Thorn will need to comment. We have been able to determine the volume of work which the allocated programme that I am announcing today represents. We know the number of man hours of work it represents and how many employees it has required in the past; therefore, unless there are improvements in productivity, which would be welcome, the figures are a consequence of the decision I have announced today.

**Dr. John Reid** (Motherwell, North): No one ever thought that it would be an easy decision, but the manner in which the Secretary of State has conducted it and his previous record on commitments have left him wide open to accusations of a lack of defence strategy, months of dithering and distress and years of deceit, particularly to Rosyth and Scotland.

Will the Secretary of State answer one or two simple questions? The first has already been put to him. When he was asked by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) about the remarks made by Lord Younger, he commented that naturally Lord Younger was distressed, but that was not the question. Did not the noble Lord say that the decision which has been taken today would be a breach of faith for the Scottish people by the Tory Government? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that, when that initial promise was made, he was in the Scottish Office and was 100 per cent. party to the decision that he has rescinded today?

Secondly, if the facts and figures are so obvious and were put out in such detail today to the Cabinet, will the Secretary of State guarantee that they will be available to the House and right hon. and hon. Members, not tomorrow, not next week, but today, right at the beginning of the consultation period?

Thirdly, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm to us the following simple figures? How much expenditure is he committed in his proposals to making, first, at Devonport and, secondly, at Rosyth by the year 2005? Those figures were missing today and will be extremely interesting. I have no doubt that will continue questioning, but we want the ammunition made public and not kept behind the closed doors of the Cabinet so that genuine consultation can take place.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman might have begun his comments by confessing that he, too, called for cancellation of Trident in past years.

**Dr. Reid:** It is another lie. It was not the Trident system.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman has put his question. I have allowed him to do so. He must now contain himself and hear the answer.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that the number of Trident boats determines the number of jobs and the refitting work that is required, and the hon. Gentleman's opposition to a crucial part of the Trident programme does not square well with his comments today.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the views of my noble Friend Lord Younger. He should consider the views of my noble Friend, who, in his letter to *The Times*, said:

"I know that many in Scotland would therefore feel badly let down if a major part of these jobs were now to be removed from Scotland."

The consequence of the statement today is that employment in Rosyth and in Devonport is broadly the same. The hon. Gentleman might like to reflect on that.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. We are now moving on to the business statement.

# Business of the House

4.15 pm

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** With permission, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week. The business will be as follows:

MONDAY 28 JUNE—Opposition day (15th allotted day). Until about 7 o'clock there will be a debate entitled "The Economic, Environmental and Proliferation Implications of a Decision to bring THORP into operation" in the name of the Liberal Democrats; followed by a debate on regional development in the name of Plaid Cymru.

Motion relating to the first report, Session 1991-92, of the Select Committee on Members' Interests entitled "Registration and Declaration of Members' Financial Interests" (HC 326).

Debate on the third report, Session 1990-91, of the Select Committee on Members' Interests entitled "Parliamentary Lobbying" on a motion for the Adjournment of the House (HC 586).

TUESDAY 29 JUNE—Remaining stages of the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion on the Disclosure of Interests in Shares (Amendment) Regulations.

WEDNESDAY 30 JUNE—Second Reading of the European Parliamentary Elections Bill.

THURSDAY 1 JULY—There will be a debate on law and order on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 2 JULY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 5 JULY—Opposition day (16th allotted day). There will be a debate entitled "The Continuing Closure of Coal Mines" on an Opposition motion.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committees will meet on Wednesday 30 June at 10.30 am to consider European Community Documents as follows: Committee A, documents Nos. 4116/92 and 6227/93 relating to colours for use in foodstuffs; Committee B, documents Nos. COM (92) 84, 9973/92, 5456/93 and 6006/93, relating to structural funds.

*[Wednesday 30 June:*

*European Standing Committee A—Relevant European Community documents: 4116/92 and 6227/93, colours for use in foodstuffs; relevant reports of the European Legislation Committee: HC 24-ix (1991-92), HC 79-xxx (1992-93).*

*European Standing Committee B—Relevant European Community documents: COM (92) 84, 9973/92, 5456/93 and 6006/93 ; relevant reports of the European Legislation Committee: HC 79-ii (1992-93), HC 79-xiv (1992-93), HC 79-xxvi (1992-93) and HC 79-xxx (1992-93).]*

**Mrs. Margaret Beckett** (Derby, South): May I remind the Leader of the House that there is a long-standing request for a debate on the Government's public expenditure programme? As I have reminded him in the past, we would like to debate the public expenditure programme in its full glory before it is hacked to pieces in the process of Cabinet discussion.

In terms of the use of public expenditure, I also ask the Leader of the House to seek a statement from his colleagues about the use of legal aid. The right hon. Gentleman will be conscious of the concerns of hon. Members on both sides of the House at the suggestions in the press today that—at a time when many people on low incomes are being denied access to legal aid because of the Government's decisions—Mr. Nadir may benefit from what may be as much as £1 million of taxpayers' money in legal aid. Many hon. Members would like some information about that.

On the matter of law enforcement—particularly as there is to be a debate on law and order next week—I wish to raise a matter with the Leader of the House that has been raised with him a number of times before. May we have as early a statement as possible about the Government's plans for the structure of the police force, as rumours have caused considerable anxiety across the country? Can the right hon. Gentleman give any information on whether there will be a statement soon on the Sheehy report, which has implications for the morale and development of the police service?

**Mr. Newton:** On the first and much repeated request concerning public expenditure, I am afraid that I cannot undertake to find Government time next week for a debate. I continue to find some conflict in the demands from the right hon. Lady who, were I to announce a debate on public expenditure, would almost certainly demand a Supply day. I am meeting her Supply day requests at a fairly rapid rate—roughly once a week.

The right hon. Lady will not have to wait beyond the end of next week for the satisfaction of her demands in respect of a statement on law enforcement, but I cannot precisely predict the day on which they will be met—except to say that she will have an opportunity to debate this extensively on Thursday.

**Sir Michael Marshall** (Arundel): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the increasing number of problems to do with human rights that some of us have had a chance to see in Belgrade and Zagreb? Will he find time to discuss those matters, perhaps within the wider context of a foreign affairs debate?

**Mr. Newton:** I well recognise my hon. Friend's concern and the opportunities that he has with the Inter-Parliamentary Union to observe these matters at first hand —and to express his own well-known concern about them. I cannot give him a specific undertaking for a debate of the kind that he suggests, but I shall bear his request in mind.

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): The Leader of the House has already referred to the pressure on the time of the House. May we have an early statement arising out of my question last week about the reform of the scrutiny of legislation for Northern Ireland? We need proper scrutiny, not a charade.

**Mr. Newton:** Perhaps I may take this opportunity to thank the hon. Gentleman for his courteous letter, following our misunderstanding arising out of last week's question. I am afraid that I cannot give him the promise he seeks; but the debate that is about to take place would seem to offer him the chance to raise the points about which he is concerned.

**Mr. Stephen Milligan** (Eastleigh): Would my right hon. Friend consider holding a further debate on the financing of political parties? Is he aware that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) is a great advocate of the principle of the right to reply—indeed, he introduced a Bill for that very purpose? Given the unsubstantiated charge that he made in Tuesday's debate, would it not be right to

hold another debate to give Ministers a chance to reply to what was a cowardly charge, because it was made when the President of the Board of Trade was recovering from a heart attack?

**Mr. Newton:** I am not quite sure whether I would like to make again the speech that I made on Tuesday evening —I do not know how the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) would feel about making hers again. I certainly take my hon. Friend's point, however. In the course of that debate, I observed, probably in more vigorous language, that I found it rather strange that the hon. Member for Hammersmith should repeat his allegations in the face of the clear statement by the Saudi ambassador to the United States, which I read out no less than twice in the course of the debate.

**Mr. Gerald Kaufman** (Manchester, Gorton): In requesting an urgent statement from the Secretary of State for National Heritage, may I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to information that I have received from a highly reliable source to the effect that it has been decided to abolish "News at Ten" and replace it with an ITN news bulletin at 6.30 pm? That would mean no news on the ITV network after 6.30 pm, and no news on the commercial network after 7 pm. That in turn will mean that the ITV network will not be fulfilling its national responsibilities. It is essential that we have a statement from the Government on this matter.

**Mr. Newton:** I shall certainly put that suggestion to the Secretary of State for National Heritage, but that is not to be taken as my assent to the proposition. My initial reaction is that this is primarily a matter for the broadcasters, not for the Secretary of State. They should determine at what times the news is broadcast.

**Mr. Peter Luff** (Worcester): I do not know whether my right hon. Friend has received the same sort of vigorous representations as I received on Saturday in my constituency surgery from my local myalgic encephalomyelitis support group. If he has, he will understand why I attach such importance to an urgent debate in the House on that subject. ME sufferers are concerned about the detailed implications of the current benefits review and about some of the attitudes displayed by the Department of Health. Such a debate would do a great deal to reassure a large group of people about the importance that the House attaches to their problems.

**Mr. Newton:** I have not recently had representations of that sort, but as a constituency Member and based on my long ministerial experience in health and social security, I am certainly aware of the anxieties to which my hon. Friend refers. He will probably know that a task force is being set up, with representatives from the Royal College of General Practitioners, ME voluntary organisations and the Department of Health, with a view to looking at the existing literature and research and to disseminating information to health care professionals in a way that we hope will significantly aid the treatment and care of people suffering from ME.

People suffering from ME, in the same way as those suffering from any other disease with disabling effects, would be entitled to benefit if it is shown that they are incapable of work.

**Mr. Eddie McGrady** (South Down): May I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to decisions made last week in the Paris Commission by the committee dealing with European environmental issues? Having learned that the atmospheric discharge of nuclear toxics would be increased by 1,100 per cent. and that maritime discharges would increase by 900 per cent., the committee passed a resolution asking the British Government to re-examine the introduction and commissioning of the THORP plant at Sellafield, and to arrange an independent inquiry on the real environmental effects. Moreover, the Nuclear Information Centre in Tokyo has said that the permitted level of discharge in the British Isles is five times the level permitted in Japan.

Given that this environmental problem affects all of us, may we have a general debate on the effects of the nuclear industry on the environment?

**Mr. Newton:** I assume that the hon. Gentleman was present during my statement. The first debate that I announced—for next Monday, which is an Opposition day—will deal with precisely that subject:

"the economic, environmental and proliferation implications"

of bringing THORP into operation. That should give the hon. Gentleman the opportunity he seeks.

**Mr. Rupert Allason** (Torbay): Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that we can have a debate on defence immediately after the publication of the White Paper, which is imminent? Is he aware that last week's defence debate was considerably delayed? Is he further aware that a debate next week would give hon. Members from the south-west an opportunity to point out that they have always supported the nuclear deterrent, and the Trident programme in particular?

It might also give our right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence an opportunity to tell the House whether he was influenced by the fact, and by the corresponding fact that most of those lobbying for Rosyth from Scottish constituencies have been opposed to the Trident programme in the past?

**Mr. Newton:** I imagine that a number of people have observed the facts cited by my hon. Friend in the second part of his question. As for the first part, he will know that it is normal practice for the Select Committee on Defence to have an opportunity to study and report on the defence estimates before they are debated. That must obviously be an influential factor in the determination of the timing of such a debate.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): May we have a statement and an apology next week from the Secretary of State for Education, who has persistently accused Labour-controlled local authorities of preventing fair discussion of any opt-out proposals? May I draw the Leader of the House's attention to early-day motion 2209?

*[That this House condemns the Chairman of Governors at Wibsey First School in Bradford for failing to ensure that all governors were notified of a meeting to discuss opting out, failing to ensure, as promised, that the teachers, who voted by 18 to two against, would have their views conveyed to parents, failing to comply with the 1988 Act by providing a true and accurate record of those eligible to vote when requested to do so by a parent-governor, censoring the material of the opposition group of parents and governors, changing the date of voting so that a meeting to discuss the*

*[Mr. Bob Cryer]*

*issue was to be held after ballot papers were issued rather than before, as had been agreed; condemns this record of cheating and chicanery which denies the proper conduct of the democratic process; and calls on the Secretary of State for Education to repudiate the actions of the Conservative Chair of Governors.]*

As the motion explains, the Conservative chairman of Wibsey First school, in my constituency, has engaged in considerable chicanery by changing the times of meetings and preventing teachers who voted 18 : 2 against opting out from conveying their views to parents. He has also engaged in a host of other activities designed to destroy the democratic process.

It is time that the Secretary of State accepted that any chicanery comes from the Conservatives involved, not from members of the Labour party, who are trying to present a fair case. That is not happening in Wibsey First school.

**Mr. Newton:** Let me leave the politics aside and deal with the practicalities. The arrangements for balloting parents on such matters are the responsibility of the governing body of the school; in those circumstances, it would not be appropriate for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to comment. However, it is open to those who have complaints—as the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) clearly has—to write to the Department setting out the grounds for those complaints, which will then be considered.

**Mr. Rod Richards** (Clwyd, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in the light of Tuesday's debate, when Labour Members—if I may paraphrase—made silly buggers of themselves, many Conservative Members wish that every day was an Opposition day? Does he agree, however, that, given the importance of the issues that might have been debated on Tuesday, fewer days should now be allocated to Labour Members, until they learn to behave like a responsible Opposition?

**Mr. Newton:** I suppose that half of me finds that an attractive suggestion, but the other half has not quite reached the stage of wanting to blow up the usual channels.

**Madam Speaker:** I remind the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) of "Erskine May's" words:

"Good temper and moderation are the characteristics of parliamentary language."

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): As regards Monday's debate on Members' interests, would it be possible for the Leader of the House to arrange for the letters that were written by Conservative Members to the Attorney-General about Mr. Nadir's case to be put in the Library? Would it not be appropriate for us to see precisely why Conservative Members with no constituency interest wrote to the Attorney-General, instead of just reading about the matter in the newspapers from time to time?

**Mr. Newton:** As I think the hon. Gentleman knows, the motion on Monday is concerned with proposals from the Select Committee for clarifying the rules for the Register. I suggest that it will be best if the debate is confined to that.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. We are now going to move on.

## Trident Refit

4.31 pm

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): In view of the statement by the Secretary of State for Defence earlier today, I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision today by the Cabinet on the Trident refit contract and its adverse effect on the economy of Scotland."

First, it is clear from the reaction to the statement that there is widespread concern in the House that the decision made is contrary to previous undertakings by Defence Ministers that the Trident refit would go to Rosyth. Secondly, there is a need for the Government to give further details of how the decision was arrived at, to explain the economic and financial justification for the decision, and to outline what action is to be taken to protect the interests of the workers whose jobs are now threatened. Finally, there is a need for the House to consider how today's decision will jeopardise the security and defence of the country.

Rosyth is the biggest single industrial employer in Scotland, and its subcontractors and suppliers employ many thousands more. The Government have a duty to explain and defend their decision to the House, and to do so today.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision today by the Cabinet on the Trident refit and its effect upon the Scottish economy."

I am satisfied that the matter raised by the hon. Member is proper to be discussed under Standing Order No. 20. Has the hon. Gentleman the leave of the House? I require 40 Members standing.

The motion for the Adjournment of the House will now stand over until 7 o'clock tonight, when a debate on the matter will take place for three hours.

*The leave of the House having been given, the motion stood over under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) until 7 o'clock this day.*

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I think that it would be helpful and for the convenience of the House if, in the light of your decision, I said that the Government would not, in these circumstances, proceed with the draft Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1993—that is, the second item of Northern Ireland business—this evening.

**Rev. Ian Paisley** (Antrim, North): I should like to thank the Leader of the House for that statement.

**Madam Speaker:** That is most helpful. We should now make progress.

## Points of Order

4.34 pm

**Mr. Barry Porter** (Wirral, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am very much aware of the effect that the recent announcements have on people in Scotland, but are you aware that, in two or three days, the shipyard of Cammell Laird—a Scottish name—in Birkenhead is to close? That has a significant effect on the economy of Merseyside, and I put this hypothetical question: if I asked for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20, would you grant it?

**Madam Speaker:** The question may be hypothetical, but I must tell the hon. Gentleman and the House that I take these matters very seriously. He may have raised that point in some joviality, but I take such things seriously, and I will consider any Standing Order No. 20 application that he puts to me.

**Mr. Gerald Bermingham** (St. Helens, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Reported in the newspapers today is a copy of a letter sent by a Member of Parliament to an officer of the Crown. I need not say which letter it is, because all know about it. What concerns me gravely is that this letter has been intercepted and leaked. It can have been leaked only by the sender, the receiver, or a firm of accountants that carried out a raid on a certain gentleman's house. That must be a breach of privilege. I ask you, as the Speaker of this House, to set in motion inquiries to ascertain who leaked and who——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman mentioned privilege. If he thinks that this is a matter of privilege, he must write to me, not raise it on the Floor of the House. I have not seen the letter. I know nothing about it. I shall look at his letter when it comes to me.

### BILL PRESENTED

CIVIL RIGHTS (DISABLED PERSONS) (WALES)

Mr. Barry Jones, supported by Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. Alex Carlile, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Neil Kinnock, Mr. Ray Powell, Mr. Donald Anderson, Mr. Gareth Wardell, Dr. John Marek, Mr. David Hanson, Mr. Roy Hughes and Mr. Martyn Jones, presented a Bill to prohibit, in Wales, discrimination against disabled persons on the grounds of their disability; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 215.]

### STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),*

BRITISH NATIONALITY (HONG KONG)

That the draft Hong Kong (British Nationality) (Amendment) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—(*Mr. Kirkhope.*)

*Question agreed to.*

# Orders of the Day

## Northern Ireland Act 1974

4.35 pm

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew):** I beg to move,

That the draft Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period Extension) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 26th May, be approved.

This draft order renews for another 12 months the temporary provisions of the Northern Ireland Act 1974, by which government by direct rule continues in Northern Ireland. It has become customary over the years to give the House an account of the Government's stewardship in Northern Ireland over the previous year and it is my intention to do the same again this afternoon.

Last year in the equivalent debate I said that I was committed to achieving the goal of a peaceful, just and prosperous way of life for all the people of Northern Ireland. While there has been progress, despite many factors pulling in the opposite direction, I must of course acknowledge with regret that peace, justice and prosperity do not as yet prevail for all in Northern Ireland.

Violence, injustice and loss continue to be inflicted by evil means and by evil people. They have struck no less viciously than elsewhere at communities where the people have long lived together in peaceful harmony and prosperity. I think of Coleraine, among others. The House shares the anger, the grief and the resolution of the victims, and of all the other victims and their families.

The ruthless use of violence for political ends remains the most malign and dangerous obstacle in our path. The threat to everybody's safety and security remains serious from terrorists at both extremes. The House will recall many of the 75 brutal murders by terrorists in Northern Ireland last year, and many of the 34 that have been perpetrated since the beginning of this year. It will also recall the bomb attacks on commercial and domestic property, such as Belvoir Park, Bangor and more recently Belfast, Portadown, Magherafelt and Newry. It will recall, too, the attacks on security force bases. There have been, for example, three mortar attacks on the Crossmaglen police station and patrol base this year.

It is difficult to do justice to the steadfastness of the men and women of the RUC, and of the forces who support them. It is beyond praise, as the whole House will agree. It is well matched by the qualities of the public, including the business community, of Northern Ireland as a whole.

We owe it to the security forces not to minimise or play down, let alone overlook, the significant successes that they have scored in the past year against the terrorists. We owe it to the general public, too. Throughout the past year, the security forces have had every support and strong, courageous leadership from my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates). I pay a warm and most grateful tribute to his work as a colleague over the past 14 months.

Last year, 405 people were charged with terrorist-related offences, including 101 with murder and attempted murder. This year, as at 13 June, 168 people had been charged with such offences. Important finds of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other terrorist equipment continue to be made. In addition, determined inroads have been made upon the sources of terrorist finance, assisted by new legislation. Other considerable successes have been achieved which get scant publicity. The security forces have worked tirelessly to disrupt and prevent terrorist operations, and I will give some examples.

Since the beginning of March, four bombs in transit containing over 300 kgs of explosives have been intercepted, resulting in several arrests. Over 6,600 kgs of fertiliser, used in the manufacture of explosives, have been recovered. A range of other weaponry has been seized and several other murderous attacks by paramilitaries on both sides have been foiled, with the capture of Republican and Loyalist gunmen en route to commit murder. Those are some of the successes.

Both the numerical level and the equipment of the security forces are kept under careful review. So, too, is the adequacy of the criminal law by which those guilty of terrorist offences may be brought to justice and judicially punished. It is important to recall the recent words of Sir Hugh Annesley, the Chief Constable of the RUC, who said:

"When a terrorist outrage occurs there is often a reaction suggesting that the handcuffs should be taken off the police and the army: that our hands should be untied from behind our backs. There are no restraints on the security forces, save those imposed by law and by the very nature of our democratic society. There is no political restraint stopping us from doing our duty or doing our best."

I assure the House that the Government remain unrelenting in their commitment to the defeat of the terrorists. That is our highest priority. I find inspiring the staunchness and resilience of those who resist their cruel attacks, and our commitment to their defeat is no less implacable.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): There may be a degree of pessimism about how far terrorism can be defeated in the Northern Ireland context, bearing in mind how long it has been going on, but does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, although the terrorist campaign—I speak principally of the Provisional IRA—has been going on for nearly four times the length of the last world war, there is not the slightest evidence of the terrorists achieving their objective? Does he further agree that neither in the House nor in the country is there the slightest wish to give up the campaign against terrorism or to give in to the bombers?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I endorse every word that the hon. Gentleman said, and it cannot be said too often or too widely. There are many who recognise the truth of those words in the ranks of those who have perpetrated such crimes. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said and for what he consistently says in that sense.

**Rev. Ian Paisley** (Antrim, North): When does the right hon. and learned Gentleman expect to be in a position to respond to the proposals for changes in the law suggested by the Chief Constable?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The Chief Constable has proposed certain changes in the law, some of which are well known, as representing his opinion. They call for careful and balanced consideration. It is necessary to ensure that all legal weapons are available to the security forces.

On the other hand, it is necessary to ensure that the state of the criminal law is not such as to represent in reasonable people's minds too draconian a body of law, so

that support for the security forces is thereby lost—*[Interruption.]* This is not a laughing matter, and I do not think many people think it is a laughing matter. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) does not laugh often. It is a pity that he laughted then.

**Mr. Seamus Mallon** (Newry and Armagh): Regarding the Chief Constable's recommendations, is it not essential for the Secretary of State, as the representative of the Government in Northern Ireland and as an eminent legal person, to state clearly that there cannot be any circumstances in which the core of the Chief Constable's request—that is, the shifting of the onus of proof from the state to the accused—can be met? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that it is in the interest of the law that such a statement should be made publicly and as soon as possible to the Chief Constable?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I am being tempted to deal bit by bit, as the occasion arises and on invitations of that kind, with the serious and considered representations made publicly by the Chief Constable. I must resist that temptation.

**Mr. David Trimble** (Upper Bann) *rose*——

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I have given way three times on the trot. I hope that hon. Members will now permit me to continue with my speech.

I come to the performance of the economy of Northern Ireland in the last year, and the House may take heart from that performance. It is becoming recognised that the Province has held up remarkably well under adverse worldwide economic conditions. Seasonally adjusted unemployment in May was down 1,100 on the previous month, the fifth fall recorded in the last six months. Although the total, at 104,500, or 13·9 per cent. of the work force, is still far too high, it has come a long way from the peak of 17·6 per cent. in 1986, and is significantly lower than the rate of unemployment in the Irish Republic, where it is 16·9 per cent.

Output levels in Northern Ireland have risen by 3 to 4 per cent. in the past year, which compares favourably with the figure for the United Kingdom as a whole, of about 1 per cent. Further encouragement can be drawn from the results of recent surveys of the local business community, where high levels of business confidence and improving market performance are reported. Those indicators provide evidence of the resilience of the Northern Ireland economy and of those who create wealth and employment in it. I am confident that its performance will continue to improve as the national recovery gathers greater momentum.

The Government's strategy of working in partnership with business to help improve its competitiveness will reinforce the progress made last year. Exemplifying that progress, I point to the record of the Industrial Development Board. The IDB had a very successful year. Ten new projects have been attracted by way of inward investment, bringing new products and technology to Northern Ireland and offering about 2,000 jobs. The high level of demand for the IDB's export services was another encouraging feature. Export orders worth £120 million were reported by companies using the IDB's export marketing services.

I report also the continuing development of a number of joint initiatives between the IDB and its counterpart in the Republic, the Irish Trade Board. Their purpose has been to promote the increased use of source materials obtained from within the island of Ireland and the joint marketing of Irish products overseas.

A good example of that was the successful exhibition mounted by the Irish Trade Board and the IDB in Chicago earlier this month, in which 25 Northern Ireland companies participated. I find that the best ambassadors for Northern Ireland as a base for investment from overseas are those who have already been encourged by the IDB and others to take the plunge. Once they have done that, they are the best ambassadors to those who are hesitating about whether to do the same, and they say, "Send them to us. We will tell them about it." I pay great tribute to the IDB.

There have also been impressive achievements on the small business front, for which the local enterprise development unit—LEDU—is responsible. Those have included a record number of new business start-ups, a 4 per cent. net rise in employment among LEDU's companies, representing about 1,000 jobs, and a record number of LEDU companies expanding and transferring to the IDB. A good contribution continues to be made by the Training and Employment Agency to the overall economic strategy to increase company competitiveness.

Similarly, in its first year of operation, the industrial research and technology unit has successfully delivered almost £20 million of European Community support for Northern Ireland made available under the Stride, Prisma and Framework programmes. That has significantly strengthened the region's technological infrastructure. It has improved those quality testing services that are vital for industrial exports, and it has stimulated commercial networking between Northern Ireland companies and academic institutions and their European Community counterparts.

Tourism is an important topic. The highest ever number of visitors was achieved in 1992, the fourth successive record-breaking year, when almost 1·3 million visitors came to Northern Ireland. Individually, just as is the case with corporate visitors, their overriding impression of surprise is how normal the place is. They expect often to step off the aeroplane into a kind of Clint Eastwood scenario. They are astonished by how normal life is in Northern Ireland and by how unusually attractive it is in many respects.

The Government's continued commitment to encouraging the growth of tourism is demonstrated by the increase in resources made available to the Northern Ireland tourist board this year—£12 million in total, which is almost £5 million more than only two years ago.

In addition to our support for the development of a desirable tourism infrastructure, the European regional development fund, influenced by the tourist board, has provided over £35 million in the period 1990 to 1993, and that in turn generated investments worth £51 million. I am an admirer of NITB, especially of its television advertisements, and I am one of a growing number.

I report with some pride the completion of the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland Electricity plc, the transmission, distribution and supply business, was successfully floated on the stock exchange on Monday 21 June. The sale of the Province's four power stations to three independent

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private generating companies was accomplished in early 1992. A total sum of £700 million has been realised for the public purse.

One of the Government's main aims in privatising NIE was to broaden and deepen share ownership. In the event, in common with previous privatisations, the flotation of NIE proved very popular. Two thirds of the shares have been taken up by private investors. I was particularly pleased that so many Northern Ireland people and employees of NIE decided to invest in the company. Over 40 per cent. of the shares available to the general public have been allocated to Northern Ireland citizens, some 140,000 of them. Just as pleasing is the fact that almost 50 per cent. of NIE employees applied for and received shares, and therefore gained a direct stake in their company and its future development. That is a demonstration of their confidence not only in the company but in the future of Northern Ireland. All that is a very satisfactory outcome in relation to our original objective. Its success is a great tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, and to his official and professional advisers.

**Mr. Eddie McGrady** (South Down): The Secretary of State has made great play of the benefits that the privatisation of electricity has provided for the investors, but he has not referred to the consumer. It is forecast that in the near future electricity prices in Northern Ireland will rise by 15 per cent. over the rate of inflation on a base that is already in excess of the rest of the United Kingdom. How does he justify that when energy costs for industry are so high and the ordinary consumer will have to pay a high price for electricity in addition to the VAT to be imposed next year of 8 per cent., and subsequently 17·5 per cent?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The hon. Gentleman knows that up to 70 per cent. of electricity generated by NIE is produced by plant that uses oil. If the value of the pound comes down, the price of oil goes up. That is the principal reason for the increases in electricity to which the hon. Gentleman alludes. I am glad that I have been able to ensure that there will be no rise in excess of single figures—that is 9 per cent.—this year and that the transitional arrangements shall extend across the range of industrial users, and there are 4,000 of them.

I am sure that the consumers in the hon. Gentleman's constituency will have benefited—I am sure that they will say that it is a good thing—from the special incentives for buying the shares. There are advantages for them.

For consumers there are wider benefits yet resulting from the privatisation. The industry has been restructured in the interests of promoting competition both in generation and supply. The planned development of the pipeline, and an electricity interconnector with Great Britain, promise, in time, improved fuel diversity and increased competition. They are attracting some £125 million of European Community support. The establishment of an office of electricity regulation, staffed by professionals and entirely independent, has further strengthened consumer rights in relation to electricity supply.

I believe that the House will welcome these indicators of increased economic activity. I have every confidence that, as the national economic recovery continues to take hold, Northern Ireland is well placed to take advantage of growth opportunities, and that it will seize that advantage.

Nothing could be less welcome than this to those who have an interest in fostering instability. They hate to see more jobs and do their best to destroy them. Along with constitutional politicians of every party, the Government are in the business of encouraging their creation, preservation and all the resulting blessings of productive lives. So, as in previous years, we have gone on tackling adverse conditions in those areas characterised by disproportionate disadvantage and inequality in Northern Ireland. The "Making Belfast work" initiative continues to be at the heart of that campaign. This year a further £24 million has been made available for it and put to good use. That will take the total allocation to date to over £124 million. Those funds are additional to the extensive resources which Departments continue to put into these areas through their normal mainline programmes. They have been put to good use. The areas concerned are by no means confined to Catholic areas.

Similarly we have gone on giving high priority to the "Targeting social need" initiative. TSN is the third public expenditure priority in Northern Ireland, coming next only to our commitment to law and order and to strengthening the economy.

**Mr. Max Madden** (Bradford, West): Will the Secretary of State pay tribute to the Republic for the number of Bosnian refugees that it has accepted? Bearing in mind his remarks about the normality of everyday life in Northern Ireland, and the number of visitors to the Province, is he ready to accept a number of refugees from Bosnia into Northern Ireland so that they may enjoy the normal life and the care which I am sure they would receive from both communities?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I am afraid that I am not familiar with the Republic's record. However, Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom and will operate the same immigration and asylum laws and regulations as the rest of the United Kingdom. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that if refugees were to be received there they would be met with the greatest care and kindness.

Through TSN, Government policies and programmes are targeted more sharply at the areas and people in greatest need. It is central to the TSN initiative that it is directed at need wherever it exists. It is not, as some have suggested, directed at one side of the community but to both Catholic and Protestant communities. Disproportionate need and disadvantage create the same malignities wherever they are to be found. Accordingly, wherever they are to be found, it is our purpose to eliminate them.

Success here will bear directly upon the efforts so many have been making in the past year to encourage better community relations. I pay tribute to the innumerable individuals and organisations—sometimes tiny organisations—who at local level have committed themselves to this work. I hope and believe that they find themselves well supported by the Government. This work continues to expand, reflecting a growing desire within the community itself for peace and an end to all violence.

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): How can the voluntary agencies continue to serve the sectors of real need when there have been decisive cuts? For example, in

the Eastern board area the cutbacks are injuring the physically handicapped in the Island centre in east Belfast; they are affecting the Derryvolgie centre for those with hearing and vision deficiencies and other places. Under the principle of care in the community we are supposed to be moving from hospital provision to community provision.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** If the hon. Gentleman gives me particulars of what he has described, I should be happy to deal with them. As is well known, the boards are responsible for the expenditure of their allocated sums. What the hon. Gentleman has described is by no means a consistent picture. Only last week I went to the Glenveagh special school. The hon. Gentleman was there. He heard that school described as a world leader—not just a national or European leader—and I am confident that that is right. I was delighted by the scale of the premises and the proper abundance of equipment available for those who are perhaps in most need. That needs to be recognised. I pay tribute to those who have worked in that sector.

Despite the continuing violence in Northern Ireland, there is clear evidence that positive changes are taking place in the relationships between the two main traditions. Recent British social attitudes surveys have indicated that people are much more inclined than formerly to support programmes aimed at improving community relations, and that these are achieving some success. Over the past four years we have devoted around £20 million to this kind of programme alone.

**Sir James Kilfedder** (North Down): Will the Secretary of State comment on the possibility of renewing talks on political progress? Has he made any decision about what form those talks should take, and does he intend to issue guidelines or make Government proposals on areas where no agreement has been reached in recent talks?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I hope that my hon. Friend will allow me to come to that in a moment or two. I have a slot reserved with which I intend to finish.

I turn finally, I note, to developments on the political front. *[Laughter.]* In the preceding weeks before my addressing the House last year, there had been intensive discussions between the British Government and the four main Northern Ireland parties on what has come to be known as strand 1. We were discussing the relationships between the people of Northern Ireland, including the relationships between any new institutions and the Westminster Parliament.

Subsequently, on 6 July last year, the Irish Government joined the discussions, with the consent of all the participants. Thus enlarged, the participants moved on to consider issues in strand 2: relationships among the peole of Ireland. On 28 July, the two Governments held the opening meeting on the third strand, concerning future relationships between them.

Those talks continued until the summer holiday, resumed in the autumn and closed on 10 November. I told the House the following day that we had not as yet succeeded in our ambitious task of securing an overall settlement——

"a new beginning for relationships within Northern Ireland, within the island of Ireland, and between the peoples of these islands."—[*Official Report*, 11 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 877.]

I will not reiterate my account to the House at that time. It is enough to say that I was sure that that delicate and arduous process was by no means without significant achievements to its credit. It was clear that the talks witnessed a substantive and detailed engagement between responsible and representative political leaders on issues of the utmost importance. It was a long, candid but generally harmonious process.

A lot was done to identify what turned out to be common ground between the participants, to enlarge that common ground and to increase the respective understanding of others' positions and their respect for those positions.

Although the talks came to a close, the independent chairman, Sir Ninian Stephen, expressed the view that their objectives remained valid and achievable. The two Governments also agreed that further dialogue was necessary and desirable. The four Northern Ireland parties agreed and undertook to

"enter into informal consultations with a view to seeking a way forward".

That is the current state of events. I believe that it is an important phase. It is in a different format from much that went on last year, although it is fair to say that some of the talks, towards the end, took place in a similar format, and very constructive they were. We should perhaps enlarge the areas in which we take counsel, because there is one thing of which I am certain: the people of Northern Ireland, right across the spectrum, expect politicians to talk.

I remain keen to assist the reopening of dialogue to establish how we might build on the advances of the past two years; perhaps I weary some people in my repeated assertions of that. At Downing street on 16 June, the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach reaffirmed the desire of the two Governments for further talks. As I said, I have been in contact with the four main Northern Ireland parties.

There are issues that require further and private consideration between us, but my overall aim remains unchanged—to go on developing the common ground and working towards the kind of agreed settlement by which alone a less antagonistic way of living in a divided community may be achieved. I am sure that the people of Northern Ireland hope for and expect no less.

**Mr. Dennis Canavan** (Falkirk, West): We are debating the Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period Extension) Order. How interim is interim? Nineteen years is a long time to be described as "interim". When does the Secretary of State envisage a new constitutional settlement being reached, embracing the island of Ireland and a new relationship between the island of Ireland and Great Britain?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I have much sympathy with the frustration that is implicit in the hon. Gentleman's question. Nineteen years is a very long time—too long. I cannot give him the answer. That lies principally with the people of Northern Ireland, but it is our duty to give what help we can.

If we can achieve that accommodation, part of which the hon. Gentleman described in his last few words, it will hasten the day, to which I ardently look forward, when conditions in Northern Ireland are such that direct rule can be brought to an end. It is bad for Northern Ireland that opportunities for democratically sustained political responsibility are so limited. I want to see them greatly enlarged and my own immediate responsibilities accordingly diminished. There is, in my experience, a very

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strong desire across the community to achieve through political discussions a widely agreed foundation for such a reform, and not only for that reason either.

Any such reform, in order to survive, would have to be widely agreed. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and I, accordingly, will continue to help in this by all means that seem likely to be fruitful. The potential prize is too great by far to make it permissible to be discouraged, let alone deterred. Regrettably, however, a lot more progress must yet be made before direct rule will no longer be needed in the interests of all the people of Northern Ireland.

In the meantime—in the interim—I submit that direct rule must continue. As long as it does, we shall go on doing our best, with the invaluable help of dedicated officials here and in Northern Ireland, to provide good and, we hope, progressively better government for all the people of Northern Ireland. In that spirit, I commend the order to the House.

5.5 pm

**Mr. Kevin McNamara** (Kingston upon Hull, North): At the outset, I pay tribute to the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates). I disagreed with many of his policies and with some of his judgments on Northern Ireland, but he has always been dedicated to Northern Ireland, which is perhaps not the most popular issue in the House, and I know that on becoming a Northern Ireland Minister he felt that he had fulfilled his ambition to serve in Northern Ireland. I therefore regret the circumstances which brought about his decision to resign. I also pay tribute to the work that he did before becoming a Minister and to his dedication to Northern Ireland and the island of Ireland through his work for the inter-parliamentary tier, of which he has been a dedicated and keen supporter.

**Mr. Winnick:** Is my hon. Friend aware that, as someone who has repeatedly called for the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) to resign—and I am pleased that he has done so—I have made it clear that, although I am sure that I would have been strongly opposed to his ministerial work in any other Department, I felt that he was doing a good job at the Northern Ireland Office, as he had done in his other work on Northern Ireland? I therefore share my hon. Friend's sentiments, although I believe that in all the circumstances it was right for the hon. Gentleman to resign and that if he had not done so he should have been sacked.

**Mr. McNamara:** In the 17th century, a Northern Ireland Minister ended up on the block and said, "Put not your trust in princes". On this occasion, it must be "Put not your trust in Majors". Although I would not go overboard in support of the policies pursued by the hon. Member for East Hampshire, I pay tribute to his dedication to Northern Ireland, to which many more hon. Members should pay attention.

I join the Secretary of State in paying tribute to the work of the security forces in Northern Ireland in impartially upholding the rule of law. We should recognise that they have a difficult task to carry out in very trying circumstances. The Secretary of State paid tribute to the civil servants who have been involved in the period of direct rule and to the many people of the voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland who play an invaluable role through the services that they give to all sections of the community.

Each year, we begin this debate with a ritualistic incantation deploring the continuing need for direct rule and expressing the sincere desire that this will be the last year that the renewal order is debated by the House. The Labour party continues to adhere to such sentiments, but mere recitation of a desire to achieve settlement is not sufficient. The Labour party has consistently supported the talks process. However, we recognise that the prospects of restarting the talks in the immediate future are not good. The aftermath of the local government election results has seen further entrenchment of positions, and the role of the Secretary of State and the Government leaves much to be desired.

The Democratic Unionist party has reiterated its preconditions for a return to the negotiating table. These include an end to the Hume-Adams talks and repeal of articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution. What the Democratic Unionist party fails to recognise is that the Irish Government can amend the Irish constitution only after a referendum of the citizens of the Republic. It is hard to imagine that Irish citizens would accept amendments to their constitution except as part of an overall settlement and, in particular, unless there were widespread support among Northern nationalists for such changes. The Ulster Unionist party now appears to be seeking to unravel the agreed structure and principles upon which the talks process has been based in the past. Such a development, I believe, would be short sighted and would represent a step backward.

What is more important is that we still have no clear idea about what the Secretary of State's proposals will be. We have had reassurances—far from convincing—that there will be no move away from the three-strand structure and the principle that nothing will be agreed until everything is agreed. However, the Secretary of State's speech in Liverpool appeared to indicate that he would be in favour of an internal settlement with limited North-South institutions. There can, however, be no settlement that does not recognise the three relevant interlocking relationships, to which the Secretary of State paid attention today: the relationship between the two communities in Northern Ireland, the relationship between the North and the South of Ireland, and the relationship between Britain and Ireland. To ignore any one of these relationships, or to downplay one at the expense of another, would represent a failure to recognise —indeed, to understand—the underlying causes of the conflict.

**Mr. Peter Robinson** (Belfast, East): If the hon. Gentleman feels so strongly about the importance of the interlocking relationships between what are, essentially, the three strands of the former talks process, why was he so much in favour of proceeding with the Anglo-Irish agreement, which failed to deal with all those relationships at the same time and marginalised the Unionist community?

**Mr. McNamara:** For the very reason that these talks, as I understand them, seek on behalf of the Unionist and Nationalist parties to replace the Anglo-Irish agreement

with something greater, more permanent and more acceptable to all the people involved. I understand that to be the basis upon which the talks have taken place.

The 1991 census returns clearly demonstrate the widening gulf between the communities in Northern Ireland. Approximately half the population live in areas that are more than 90 per cent. Protestant or more than 90 per cent. Catholic. Only 7 per cent. live in areas with roughly equal proportions of both religions. Even in wards that appear to be mixed, the two communities are often separated by so-called peace lines. This segregation is a reflection of the polarisation of the two communities and serves only to reinforce prejudices and the communal divide. The new census evidence is a dramatic demonstration of the failure of direct rule. Direct rule has failed to foster links, understanding and trust between the two communities.

The level of violence remains depressingly high, although we always welcome the successes of the security forces, and a sense of alienation from the political process is still tangible. The status quo has hopelessly failed the peoples of Ireland. It has failed to tackle the underlying causes of the present conflict. Direct rule has simply exacerbated the tensions and heightened the sense of desperation and alienation felt by the minority population and, increasingly, by members of the majority population. Not a great deal has been done to alleviate the siege mentality of many in the Unionist community. Direct rule in no way recognises that Ireland is the site not just of one minority community but of two, and not just of one majority community but of two—first, the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, and the Protestant minority in the island of Ireland; secondly, the Protestant majority in Northern Ireland, and the Catholic majority in the island of Ireland.

In addition, the census shows that the percentage of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland has significantly increased, standing now at approximately 43 per cent. A majority in favour of a united Ireland is therefore no longer a distant dream, but a distinct possibility. Whether or not one believes that there will be a Catholic majority in 10, 20 or even 30 years' time, the fact that it is now a possibility makes the need for a just and equitable settlement all the more urgent and makes all the more pressing the need to create durable and acceptable institutions that will encompass and cushion such a demographic and possibly constitutional change.

**Rev. Ian Paisley:** I have been following the hon. Gentleman's argument very closely. Is he suggesting that every person listed in the census as a Roman Catholic wants a united Ireland? Should not his views take account of what a Roman Catholic priest said recently in Dungannon—that a large number of Roman Catholics want to stay in the United Kingdom?

**Mr. McNamara:** I accept that that may well be the case. Equally, quite a number of Protestants would be quite happy to be in a united Ireland. But the possibility of more than 50 per cent. of the population wanting to vote in that way cannot be denied. Even if what the hon. Gentleman has said about the voting intentions of Catholics is correct, that does not remove the need to have in Northern Ireland institutions that are acceptable to both communities, recognise the traditions and cultures of both and treat them with equality. If there were a change in the constitutional position, such institutions would cushion and encompass it. Whatever the circumstances, the argument stands.

**Mr. Clifford Forsythe** (Antrim, South): The hon. Gentleman has mentioned census percentages. Is he aware that, in the case of Protestants, only members of the main churches were counted? People belonging to, say, the Free Presbyterian and Baptist churches were not included. That will have made a considerable difference to the figures.

**Mr. McNamara:** I do not think that that is the case. However, if we are to bandy statistics about, we should do so elsewhere to avoid taking up a considerable amount of time in the Chamber. The perceived proportions of 57 per cent. Protestant and 43 per cent. Catholic are generally accepted as being the result of the census. That is the way it is.

It would be no more desirable to have a discontented Unionist minority in a united Republic of Ireland than it is now to have a discontented nationalist minority in Northern Ireland. A way forward must be found which recognises these realities and seeks to create certainty and institutions for stability. Safeguards must be put in place to protect the rights and cultures of all traditions in the island of Ireland. Direct rule has predictably failed on all those counts, despite the good will of the House of Commons and of successive Governments.

**Mr. Peter Thurnham** (Bolton, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. McNamara:** As a result of Madam Speaker's decision to grant an emergency debate, we have less than two hours in which to conclude this one. At least six hon. Members, including representatives of five other parties, want to take part. I should be happy to continue to give way were it not for the fact that it would be at the expense of other people. If the hon. Gentleman wants to make his point, well and good, but he is certainly the last person to whom I shall give way.

**Mr. Thurnham:** I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman, but I have not heard him welcome the successful privatisation of the electricity undertaking in Northern Ireland. Is that not an example of how to give the people of Northern Ireland a stake in their economy? It is an example of the Government's enterprise policies in Northern Ireland, of which I have had personal experience. It is surely through the prosperity of such enterprises that the people of Northern Ireland can look forward to the happy and successful future that they so richly deserve, rather than the terrorism to which they have been subjected.

**Mr. McNamara:** It would have been wiser not to give way. The hon. Gentleman should have listened more carefully to the interjection of my hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), who pointed out the dangerous effects of the great increase in electricity prices on the standard of living of the people of Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State mentioned the number of people who had taken up shares and he used the statement to answer my hon. Friend, but the hon. Gentleman should know that for every person in my hon. Friend's constituency who took up shares nine did not and they will bear the brunt of the increase in prices caused by the Government's ideology and dogma in these matters.

*[Mr. McNamara]*

Any solution to the Northern Ireland conflict must take into account the interrelated causes of the conflict. The first is the deep-seated distrust which has developed between the two communities and which is enforced by deeply entrenched religious and cultural differences. The second cause is the competing national aspirations of the peoples of Northern Ireland. Majorities in both communities sincerely believe that, for principled and historic reasons, they should belong to different nation states, and those beliefs are reflected in the claims of their respective states to sovereignty over the region.

The third is the inequality—cultural and economic—between the two communities in Northern Ireland, which still persists and breeds understandable resentment and alienation. The fourth is the effect of decades of political violence and repression, and the bitterness and hatred that they have engendered. The fifth is the failure of the security forces and the judicial system to secure legitimacy in the eyes of a large section of the population.

As I suggested in the recent emergency powers debate, the Government should investigate the possibility of developing a new system of policing which would take account of the fact that Northern Ireland is a divided community. Ninety two per cent. of the regular constabulary and 94 per cent. of the full-time reserve are drawn from one section of the community, while almost 100 per cent. of those in the Royal Irish Regiment recruited locally for service in Northern Ireland are from the Unionist community. In addition, 93 per cent. of those working in the prison service are from the Unionist community. They are the facts which must be tackled. It is only through a new and imaginative approach and by working to end the disparities in representation that we shall secure widespread acceptance for the forces of law and order.

Any solution to the Northern Ireland conflict must also take into account the fact that Northern Ireland is the site of contested sovereignty claims by two nation states. Under section 75 of the Government of Ireland Act 1920, as modified by the Ireland Act 1948 and the Northern Ireland Constitution Acts, the United Kingdom claims unqualified sovereignty over Northern Ireland, while under articles 2 and 3 of its constitution the Republic of Ireland claims Northern Ireland as part of its national territory. Those competing claims must be recognised and resolved because they reflect the national aspirations of two sections of the community in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland is the only region within the United Kingdom that the Government formally state—in an international treaty—that they would allow to secede, possibly even "with pleasure", if the majority so wished. In November 1990, the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), declared:

"The British Government has no selfish, strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

In November 1992, the present Secretary of State went still further, asserting that the

"British Government is not guided by any blue print or master plan leading to some pre-selected outcome of our choice".

Those statements were positive steps forward, but we are worried that recent statements by the Secretary of State appear to contradict the policy of declared neutrality.

The Secretary of State still claims that the Government have set no agenda of their own, but in his Liverpool speech he ruled out the possibility of a united Ireland for the foreseeable future and the possibility of simple majority rule. He firmly ruled out joint authority. He also minimised the role of the Republic in the talks process and in the future of Northern Ireland.

In his speech to the Northern Ireland Conservative area council, the Secretary of State fervently supported the electoral integration of Northern Ireland, declaring:

"We want to see elected across Northern Ireland as many Conservatives supporting our policies as possible".

He also looked forward to a time when a Conservative Secretary of State could be elected from Northern Ireland. I think that Mr. Lawrence Kennedy has some time to wait.

In his speech to the Hazel Grove Conservative association, the Secretary of State asserted that Northern Ireland

"is part of our own country, no less than Scotland, Wales or England".

He went on to argue that that gave the Conservatives "a clear directional signal" as to their "purpose". If that is the basis of Conservative policy in Northern Ireland, it is reasonable for the House to deduce that the Secretary of State's "direction and focus" will lead the talks towards an internal settlement with extremely limited North-South institutions. By no definition is that a neutral agenda.

The Secretary of State has decided to bring forward solely British proposals, despite the fact that the Irish Government are co-sponsors of the talks, which has left the Irish Government with no alternative but to draw up their own proposals. That difference between the co-sponsors of the talks has occurred at the very time when the two Governments need to be seen to be working together as closely as possible in order to resuscitate the talks process.

The Labour party would prefer the parties of the island of Ireland to determine their own future by themselves resolving the differences between the two communities. Ideally, the parties in Ireland should be able to negotiate a settlement, without any external interference, which would gain widespread acceptance throughout the island of Ireland. However, the talks process seems to be in abeyance for the foreseeable future. That is the unfortunate fact.

No one would welcome more than the British Labour party an announcement by the Secretary of State that the talks are to start immediately on the original basis——

**Mr. Mallon:** If the talks are to resume on the previous basis, it would surely be on a joint invitation from the two Governments who sponsor the talks.

**Mr. McNamara:** My hon. Friends will have noted that I made that point obliquely when talking about the British Government's proposals.

No one would welcome more than the British Labour party an announcement from the Secretary of State that the talks are to start immediately on the original basis. As that is unlikely to happen, however, it is for the British and Irish Governments, working within the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to recognise the responsibility that they share. It is time for both Governments to reinvigorate and deepen their co-operation within that agreement.

The two Governments should seek to make whatever progress is possible and seek ways to share responsibility and ensure that the needs of the peoples of Northern

Ireland for security, equality and justice can be met. It is imperative that a lasting and peaceful solution is found which will recognise the integrity and aspirations of both traditions within the island of Ireland and which will establish stable, legitimate and democratic institutions.

If the parties are not able to talk together, in renewing this order for direct rule there is an increasing responsibility on both Governments—the Government of the Republic and of the United Kingdom—to resolve their differences and to establish new institutions which will win the respect of the peoples of Northern Ireland and of the peoples of the whole of the island of Ireland.

5.28 pm

**Mr. Andrew Hunter** (Basingstoke): I shudder to think of the nightmare in which we would be embroiled if the Labour party formed the Government of the day and if what we have just heard were the Government's policy, but I shall be ultra-selective in my remarks, for the sake of brevity.

If our deliberations end in a Division—I am not entirely sure whether that will be the case—I shall support the extension order, but I shall do so with regret and misgivings. I shall support it because, in the prevailing circumstances, I believe that it is the only responsible course of action. There is no practical alternative on the agenda. I should support the order with regret, however, because I increasingly feel that we should not be in this position, and that the sooner direct rule ends the better.

Tonight, there is nothing whatever to celebrate. If I calculate correctly, this is the 18th time that an extension order has been laid before the House. The "interim period" has lasted for 19 years. Stormont was prorogued and direct rule introduced 22 years ago. Meanwhile, the power-sharing executive, the constitutional convention and the rolling devolution Assembly have come and gone, and achieved nothing.

Those initiatives were certainly well intentioned——

**Sir James Kilfedder:** My hon. Friend says that the last Northern Ireland Assembly achieved nothing. That was not the impression given to me or to other members who served in it. I have heard Members of the House and Members of another place say that they greatly appreciated the hard work that was done, which was manifested in the reports that emanated from the assembly. If the Government had not embarked on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, but had maintained their support for the Northern Ireland Assembly, we should not now be in the present difficult position.

**Mr. Hunter:** I accept that correction. I said that, for the sake of brevity, I was accelerating my argument. The point that I was making, albeit too briefly and indistinctly, was that the lack of continuity has meant that nothing permanent has been achieved. Of course I accept the hon. Gentleman's correction.

Hanging in the air is the prospect of renewed inter-party talks—the initiative started by the previous Secretary of State and continued by my right hon. and learned Friend the present Secretary of State.

Direct rule is unhealthy. The most that can be said for it is that there can be circumstances in which it is the lesser of evils. Nevertheless, it is profoundly unsatisfactory that direct rule has lasted so long, and profoundly disturbing that attempts to establish alternative structures have had no lasting effect. The fundamental weakness of direct rule, as the Secretary of State has already said, is that it denies locally elected politicians the responsibility of deciding policies for Northern Ireland. For that reason above all others, I believe that it is vital that inter-party talks are not merely resumed but brought to a positive conclusion.

Some of the omens for the inter-party talks may not be very promising. I regret that the Social Democratic and Labour party has not convinced many observers of the genuineness and sincerity of its commitment to the search for an agreement. I also regret the President of the Republic's ill-advised recent visit to Belfast. It has reawakened old suspicions. It was a backward step which has undermined her position as a builder of bridges. Despite welcome improvements, the Irish Government can still demonstrate their good faith by delivering more in the fight against terrorism, and by further clearing the air on articles 2 and 3.

I remain convinced that the three-strand approach is correct, but the greatest emphasis should fall on strand 1, the development of relationships within Northern Ireland, including relationships between any new institutions of government there and the Westminster Parliament. Conversely, least emphasis should be placed on strand 2. I greatly fear that there will be a groundswell of disillusionment and frustration if the political parties do not resume talks and cannot implement an agreement, at least on strand 1.

The process cannot continue indefinitely. My personal perception is that the participants in future inter-party talks have one last chance to put their house in order. If the talks do not start, or if they fail to reach a conclusion, the Government should take a different course of action.

The Westminster Government should then address the task of establishing in Northern Ireland structures and institutions of local government acceptable to the majority of people. In those circumstances, the Government will have to decide between imposing full legislative devolution in the form most acceptable to the majority, and a policy of integration, which would mean governing Ulster as exactly as possible in the same way as the rest of the United Kingdom. I believe that the participants have one last chance before one of those courses of action is taken.

Incidentally, the time has come for the creation of a Northern Ireland Select Committee. The case is overwhelming, and the absence of such a Committee is unacceptable.

I hope that this will be the last time that we have to extend the provisions. Direct rule is unhealthy. It is to be hoped that the inter-party talks will reach a successful conclusion, but if they fail we must take either the course of imposed devolution or the course of integration.

5.35 pm

**Mr. James Molyneaux** (Lagan Valley): I feel bound to remind the House that, when we embarked on this charade at the same time last year, I said that I did not intend to speak in the debate, on the ground that my commitment to the talks, or the summit, inhibited me somewhat, lest I should inadvertently breach the confidentiality that I considered essential for any possible success in the talks. Unfortunately, it was not long before that confidentiality was breached. Furthermore, the talks were terminated by the decision of the two Governments in November.

*[Mr. James Molyneaux]*

The House should be clear about what we are being asked to do in any such initiative, summit or high-wire act —this is relevant to the speech by the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter). In the first place, the requirement is to find a formula or a structure of government acceptable to every party, with a place therein for every party; but that is only the beginning.

There would have to be continuing adherence to the structure thereafter. If one party withdrew its support, the structure—not the coalition, but the structure—would collapse. In countries abroad that are cursed with proportional representation, when a coalition is brought down by the desertion of a minor party, a new accommodation is cobbled together, and the structure remains. However, the Northern Ireland Office specification, time-honoured by 20 years of experimentation, ensures that, in that event, the structure of government itself collapses utterly.

The consequences were spelt out with brutal clarity by a former Secretary of State, Lord Prior, in 1982, when he received a deputation from my party, led by the then President, the late Sir George Clark. I remember Sir George asking the Secretary of State the simple question, "In the event of an all-party coalition being established, what would happen if, for example, the SDLP withdrew?" With disarming frankness, Lord Prior replied, "Oh, that's simple. I would then dismiss the remaining native Ministers and claw power back to myself."

Our SDLP colleagues, who are sitting on the Bench in front of me, will not mind if I say that Lord Prior made the position clear when he made a broadcast towards the end of the election campaign for his rolling devolution Assembly. In fact, it was a kind of election broadcast, although admittedly Lord Prior did not field any candidates, so it was a tactical exercise without troops.

He assured the SDLP and its electors that, if it boycotted the assembly, as—for reasons that I entirely understand, incidentally—it had suggested it would, he would withhold powers from the three parties that took their seats. At a later stage, it was made clear that any of those three parties could be dispensed with; only the SDLP was indispensable. I am sure that that makes the SDLP feel proud, and I can understand that.

All that happened in 1982. Since then, a more disruptive influence has entered the frame in the shape of the insistance of the Irish Government on something approaching joint authority over Northern Ireland. Such an idea is repugnant not only to the Unionists but to that category mentioned by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and those with whom he had exchanges—that element that I call the greater number. I am referring to the Protestants and Roman Catholics, the greater number of all faiths and none, who simply want to remain in the greater unit of the United Kingdom in which the protection of rights and freedoms are taken for granted.

Incidentally, those rights and freedoms are taken for granted by millions of people of Irish descent who are scattered through the United Kingdom. They participate in electing members to represent them in this Parliament, which has evolved over 700 years into a system for the protection of minorities unequalled in the world. The 17 of us who are sent here for that purpose recognise the perceived authority of the United Kingdom Parliament to ensure that those rights are never eroded.

What I have said is not an argument for stalemate or despair. On the contrary, I hope that it has removed the debris of failed initiatives, so that we can make a positive start on restoring accountable democracy, if necessary by easy and modest instalments.

I was greatly encouraged by a passage in the speech of the Secretary of State on 22 June at Coleraine. He said:

"The Secretary of State praised Coleraine councillors, and others throughout the Province, who gave of their time to serve local government and who are willing to work together to improve standards of life in the community.

Sir Patrick said he wanted to see wider responsibilities conferred on local councillors, and added: 'I am sure that even more people of high quality will come forward to serve as councillors if they have more opportunities to get their teeth into issues which are of real concern to the community.'"

I fully support those words—they are in line with everything I said during the election campaign in May. The 17 of us can, without any difficulty, help the Secretary of State to identify non-controversial powers and some real scope.

I shall take the liberty of quoting a passage of my television election campaign in which I, unlike Lord Prior, had some troops:

"My Ulster Unionist candidates are offering you the opportunity to insist on the restoration of accountable democracy to all the citizens of Northern Ireland. As a community we can no longer tolerate the overlapping layers of remote authorities which waste our money, time and resources.

This is no sectarian issue, for there are neither Orange nor Green roads—only good or bad roads—and the bad can be mended more efficiently by District Councils. One can think of many more examples."

Hon. Members will remember that, when the Secretary of State announced the termination of the talks in November 1992, I said that I intended to consult any people who wished to talk to me—that is, anyone who accepted the constitutional position and was prepared to act in a democratic way. My aim was endorsed by the 468 delegates at the annual meeting of my party in March. I am happy to report to the House, as I have reported to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State, that the response has been encouraging.

A volume of support is emerging for practical steps to restore stability to Northern Ireland. What is encouraging is the willingness of organisations and influential individuals, who perhaps in the past did not play their full part in society in Northern Ireland, not to engage in party politics—that was never required of them—but to use their influence at the provincial level as well as in towns, villages and rural communities to steady nerves and make national decision-making possible.

The Government have a role in confidence-building, mainly in taking steps to bring about real accountable democracy. The Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights made its contribution a few days ago by pressing Her Majesty's Government to rid Parliament of that degrading Order in Council method of governing Northern Ireland, especially on legislation of fundamental importance to the entire Northern Ireland populace.

Like the Secretary of State, I see many encouraging signs of further movement towards practical co-operation. As he knows, that capacity has always been there. It is evident in the House when the Northern Ireland

representatives put the Great Britain parties to shame in the matter of co-operation, even on matters of bread and butter importance to the people of Great Britain.

Implicit in the remarks of the Secretary of State was a willingness to contribute to that process, and I welcome that. While we share the hope that this farce of renewing an interim measure after two decades will not be necessary in future, we may not see it entirely disappear in the next 12 months. However, I sincerely hope that in the next 12 months we will take modest, practical and constructive steps towards that goal.

5.46 pm

**Rev. William McCrea** (Mid-Ulster): Once again, we have been invited by Her Majesty's Government to support the renewal of the draft Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period Extension) Order 1993. We continue this debate, as we have done for the past 11 years since I entered the House, under the shadow of the bomb and the bullet. Several of our major town centres have been wrecked recently and we have been left with wastelands by the IRA bombers. Last night, another body lay on the highway in my Mid-Ulster constituency, the victim of an IRA court of republican justice.

It is important that we carefully consider the system of government that we are being asked to rubber stamp tonight. It has been said by some hon. Members that the direct rule that we have endured in the past is not acceptable but that we must simply continue on that road. Others have suggested that we must continue until the Unionists are willing to surrender their Unionism.

We have heard vintage propaganda from Her Majesty's supposedly loyal Opposition Front Bench about how to get rid of part of Her Majesty's territory. Those who know the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) are not surprised by anything he says. Indeed, we would be surprised if he had said anything else because we are used to that sort of propaganda, which would give only succour—whether intentional or not—to the enemies of the United Kingdom. Unfortunately, the people of Northern Ireland will have to endure the suffering because of some ill-timed statements and ill-thought-out words from Her Majesty's Opposition Front Bench.

The draft order is not a complex document. We all have a copy of it. Indeed, 30 seconds is probably sufficient time to read it. However, the implications of that document are profound and will be deeply felt by the Northern Ireland community. Like the constituents of every other Member of Parliament from Northern Ireland, my constituents have to endure a system of government that is a denial of democracy and an insult to our great British standard of democracy.

More than 20 years ago, the people of Northern Ireland were robbed of effective government by the suspension of our Northern Ireland Parliament. In its place, we have a Northern Ireland Office that is accountable to no one in the Northern Ireland community; nor does it have the confidence of the people of Northern Ireland. Therefore, the House ought to appreciate the frustration and, indeed, alienation felt by the majority of Ulster citizens in the face of that unrepresentative system of government. It should also appreciate the inherent dangers that lie in the path of denying democracy to the good, law-abiding people of Northern Ireland.

Not only is the present position ridiculous but it should be condemned. The people of the Province have no say over decisions that affect even the most elementary aspects of daily living. For example, civil servants order the citizens of our part of the United Kingdom as to where to build, how to build and what to build. The elected representatives of the people are often frowned upon as interfering busybodies who have little or no right to question such unfettered dictatorship.

No other part of the United Kingdom would accept that intolerable and deplorable system. I warn the House that such a system undermines respect for the democratic process and for Parliament. The people of Northern Ireland, through their elected representatives, have no effective say in the decision-making process for roads, sewerage, water, schools, health, planning and so on. As if that insult were not sufficient, the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland often receive lectures from certain Members of Parliament and others from across the world—every Tom, Dick and Harry who desires to be flown in. The Unionists are lectured that we must sell our Unionist principles and betray the trust of the people who elected us before we can have restored to us a say in the affairs of a part of the United Kingdom.

Many of that collection of what one could call political has-beens, nobodies and know-alls sold their soul out to republican propaganda. They care little about democracy or the rights of suffering people such as my constituents. Many of my constituents have suffered murder and slaughter simply because they happen to be members of Her Majesty's security forces or of a Protestant persuasion.

Our present system of government is an indignity and it should be changed forthwith. Our Prime Minister has often expressed his intention to fight to strengthen the union between England and Scotland, but is it not time that the Government came out fighting to strengthen the union between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland? Instead, the message that emanates from the Northern Ireland Office and from certain speeches of the Secretary of State is that the position of Northern Ireland as a part of the United Kingdom is qualified and conditional and may change. It is suggested that if the change came about, the Government would perhaps be delighted. The Government have no strategic interest in staying any longer within the Province.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The hon. Gentleman knows that I did not say that. He knows that that is untrue. He knows that that is a gross distortion of anything that I have said or could reasonably be supposed to have said. He does his case no good by saying that.

**Rev. William McCrea:** I am delighted to give way to the Secretary of State. I refer him to the tapes of the German speech, in which he made his views known.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** That is precisely what I had in mind and precisely why I intervened.

**Rev. William McCrea:** If the Secretary of State felt so strongly about it, he would not have mentioned that Northern Ireland costs the United Kingdom Exchequer £3 billion. He would not have thrown the cost of retaining Northern Ireland as a part of the United Kingdom in our teeth. Nevertheless, the Government no longer have any strategic interest in staying any longer. Indeed, those are

*[Rev. William McCrea]*

blunt words. They are a blunt way of saying, "Your ports were useful during the war while the Irish Republic showed Germany the path to bomb your cities. Your men were valuable to die in the fields of France in defence of freedom on the world stage. But now we feel all right, Jack. We are in a different international field, so you can go off to Dublin."

Let me make it abundantly clear to the House that the majority of Ulster citizens will not go to Dublin. If the Government at any time desire to rid themselves of Northern Ireland, the people of Northern Ireland still will not go south towards Dublin. Let it be abundantly clear that we in Northern Ireland have sacrificed too much blood to remain out of the Irish Republic. We would happily sacrifice whatever else needed to be taken from us to ensure that we did not go into the Irish Republic. So whatever Bench hon. Members sit on, and whatever lectures they give us, they will not change the view of the Unionist majority. Six will not go into 26.

**Mr. Mallon:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Rev. William McCrea:** No. I must continue because I have limited time and I understand that the hon. Gentleman intends to speak in the debate; otherwise, I would certainly be glad to give way. No one delights more in healthy exchange and debate than me.

During the debate last year, the House was reminded of the statement that emanated from the then Minister of State at the time of the by-election referendum on the Anglo-Irish Agreement. He said:

"It doesn't matter how you vote, it won't make any difference."

That did not come from a Member of Parliament. It was not a misquote. It was a direct statement to the people of Northern Ireland as they were expressing their view on their position within the United Kingdom and its diminution by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. That statement sums up the sort of democracy that we have endured under direct rule.

There are a few home truths which the House needs to hear. The majority Unionist community in Ulster is sick of betrayal. The Government are on the verge of pushing the majority community too far. The truth of the situation is this: the Government have moved towards alienating the vast majority of Northern Ireland. The ballot box decides that Dublin should have no say in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland—a part of the United Kingdom. Yet Dublin has been given more say in the affairs of Northern Ireland than the elected representatives of the people.

The Government have also decided that all political development in Northern Ireland will be halted until Unionists agree to some interference from Dublin. I appreciate the fact that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, the spokesman for Her Majesty's loyal Opposition, seemed to envisage a different measure of that interference.

The ballot box declares the will of the vast majority of Ulster people to be British, yet the Government seek through educational programming, economic strategy and so on to erode our Britishness and develop an Irish identity. The ballot box establishes the right of every citizen to be equal and to have equal status, yet the Government have decided that a vote for the Social Democratic and Labour party—it has been mentioned already—or other republican party is of more value than votes cast for the Unionist parties. The ballot box demands the upholding and strengthening of democracy, yet the Government have decided that Ulster can have only what is known in Ulster as a rigged democracy, without reference to British democratic principles.

We have to endure the Fair Employment Commission, which not only is guilty of discrimination against Protestants in its own employment but closes its eyes to blatant discrimination against the Protestant community, for example, in the Department of Health and Social Services. I say that not as one who believes that anyone should be discriminated against on the ground of religion. As the books will show, and as was confirmed by the Fair Employment Commission, the only time there was fair employment in Magherafelt district council was during the four years when I happened to be chairman, when people were employed equally. When the Social Democratic and Labour party controlled the council, it was found guilty of discriminating against Roman Catholics. That can be checked if Opposition Members do not believe it—the books shall open.

There was unfair distribution of Government jobs. SDLP constituencies were deliberately chosen for those jobs. Londonderry in the west of the Province was chosen, but what about Omagh, Cookstown, Magherafelt and all the other places—*[Interruption.]* I shall come to the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady).

I read in a paper the other day that jobs are to be removed from Belfast, Ballymena and Bangor and are to be sent to Londonderry and Downpatrick. Jobs were robbed from Belfast, Ballymena and Bangor. Where the jobs were to be shared around, why were Omagh and other major settlements in the Province not chosen? Was deliberate discrimination practised? Were constituencies represented by parties with certain political complexions chosen to receive grants? It is unbelievable that, in order to obtain a grant for a Northern Ireland Housing Executive house, one has to state one's religion—whether Catholic or Protestant. Whenever challenges were made, we were told that the policy was designed to show how many Protestants and how many Catholics were receiving grants for their properties. Following a recently introduced law, that is now the policy of the present Administration.

We have been left in a despicable position—Sinn Fein deliberately and defiantly support IRA murderers, but the Government give Sinn Fein the respectability of sitting in the council chambers. The elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland are supposed to conduct normal council business with those representatives of murderers.

There is unfair distribution of Government finances and Government agencies. I have received numerous letters from my constituents complaining about the imbalance of funding in Government finance programmes. Surely that cannot always happen by chance—some of the funding must be directed from specific sources. There is also a religious imbalance in Government-nominated posts. The list of acts of discrimination is endless. The failure to redress the balance will continue to alienate the Protestant and majority community, with monumental consequences.

**Mr. Roy Beggs** (Antrim, East): There was a recent decision to establish and fund the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools in Northern Ireland. Does the hon.

Gentleman agree that the majority community perceived that decision as if, for the first time, one section of the community in Northern Ireland were having special treatment and special support at the expense of the majority community?

**Rev. William McCrea:** I have been given the statistic that in, I think, 1991-92, 73 per cent. of all funding in the education programme was directed towards maintained schools and 23 per cent. towards controlled schools, which the vast majority of people support. The figures speak for themselves.

A few weeks ago, I was in the United States of America attempting to develop a cordial relationship with industrialists from the southern states to help my constituency. At the same time, the IRA was blasting the business centre of our town to pieces. Millions of pounds worth of damage was done, not only in Magherafelt, but in Portadown, Lurgan and Newry—I could continue with the list.

Recently, in my constituency, the people of the Protestant community of Pomeroy came under systematic attack and intimidation. The position has not changed, and it is due only to the courage of the dwindling Protestant community in Pomeroy that the area has not been wiped clear of that community. I am talking not about a border area where the Provos have been on the march for a number of years but about a region that is the centre of the Province—a part of the United Kingdom.

A young man in my constituency, Mr. Martin, showed the spirit of enterprise and resilience that is displayed by many of my suffering constituents, but that spirit cost him his life. He decided not to move out of Mid-Ulster. Others are being encouraged to move by the security forces as they cannot be protected. However, Mr. Martin decided to secure a better future for his family by purchasing further land essential for the development of his farming industry.

Mr. Martin was brutally murdered because he was a Protestant farmer who was not willing to be intimidated out of his heritage by a bunch of murdering IRA thugs. That may not impress many people in the House, but on my visits to that man's home, I did not see many Members of Parliament telling the family how much they grieved for the suffering that that community has endured down the years. Mr. Martin sealed his purchase with his youthful blood, and his sacrifice must not be in vain. Ulster needs a Government with the will to protect its citizens, irrespective of worldwide propaganda and public opinion. The Martin family face intolerable intimidation and death threats; our Government must effectively defend the innocent and destroy the evil.

As the local government elections approach, much play has been made in that community and throughout the Province of the fact that a large section of the community does not support the terrorists and their political mouthpiece, Sinn Fein. The election results proved that one out of two in that community voted for the gunmen. In the rest of my constituency, the gunmen's vote increased in support. That is how the people were repaid after all the pandering to terrorists and others of the republican community.

Suggestions have been made in the House today that the Irish Government should be inviting us to the table. The Irish Government never asked Unionists to the talks. The first strand of the talks had nothing to do with the Irish Government; they were internal talks for the internal parties of the United Kingdom. I say to the SDLP that, during the talks, it was made clear that there was no intention of having an internal settlement which was to be left on the sidelines to be used to exert pressure to encourage Unionists to sell out their Unionism. We will not sell out our Unionism for anyone. Our people have suffered and endured. Whether or not the House likes to hear it, I tell hon. Members that I shall not come to the House to put my hand to anything that sells out the future of my people.

6.7 pm

**Mr. Seamus Mallon** (Newry and Armagh): I shall first refer to the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates). I take no pleasure in anyone's political problems. I have dealt with the hon. Gentleman since 1973, and I wish him well and thank him for his interest in Northern Ireland. We seldom, if ever, agreed and we had many bruising encounters and fundamental disagreements, but I could never accuse him of indifference. I should like to put on record that I wish him well.

There is almost something pathetic about today's debate which, in many ways, ignores one of the fundamental realities. We are almost trying to grovel for a share of a cake which should be equally distributed. The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) spoke about this town getting that and another town not getting it, and about the way in which problems were divided up into Catholic or Protestant ones. Such comments do not help the political process.

I shall concentrate on two main points as I know that there is a time constraint. Normally in such debates, we have a perennial whipping boy—the political parties of Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State said in his opening statement that the responsibility lies principally with the people of Northern Ireland, but it does not. The problem we have in the north of Ireland was not created by the people of Northern Ireland; it was devised by two sovereign Governments—the British Government and the Government in the Republic of Ireland—as an artificial device to overcome the difficulties that they were facing at that time. That has left us with the problems that we have experienced for the past 72 years.

Let us not make the Northern Ireland political parties the whipping boys in this or any other debate. The situation is the result of a governmental decision. Having created something in such an artificial way that for 72 years it has been sustained only by artificial means—through immense security input, a remarkable amount of expenditure and bending the law as it has been bent by emergency legislation—the two Governments should be asking themselves what is so fundamentally wrong that we have had no solution or settlement in 72 years.

Is it the fault of people in the north of Ireland? Are we that bad that at times we have to endure such a patronising approach here? Let us not forget that the arrangement which created the problem was made at governmental level by two Governments. If we do not examine the fundamental artificiality and failure of that agreement, we ignore the core of the problem.

Of course we can talk and I congratulate the Secretary of State on a rather attractive travelogue about Northern Ireland, but that is not the place where I live. His speech was absolutely excellent from a presentational point of view, but it is not the Northern Ireland I know and it did

*[Mr. Seamus Mallon]*

not touch the core of the problem. Until we face the core of the problem, we will continue putting pieces of icing on the cake.

**Mr. Barry Field** (Isle of Wight): There is little doubt that some people who negotiated the treaty 72 years ago believed that it was artificial and that it would change within 10 years. However, 72 years might lead one to believe that the treaty was the end of a process and not the beginning of one. That is the reality and, apparently, some people simply will not accept it.

**Mr. Mallon:** If the hon. Gentleman were to refresh his memory and read the Government of Ireland Act 1920 and the comments of the then monarch in relation to that Act, he would recognise that it was then seen as an ad hoc arrangement that should inexorably lead to a permanent position. Let me probe further, as one seldom has the opportunity to probe the British Government's long-term position on the viability of partition as a solution.

What if I were to say on record:

"I do not agree that partition can be the basis for a settlement. My hon. Friend's underlying thought is perfectly right—there are two communities on the island and they must be given rights as two communities—but if there is to be a lasting settlement, it must be within the sovereignty of one Cypriot Government."?—[*Official Report*, 28 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 1006.]

Those are not the words of a Northern Ireland nationalist or republican; they are words of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the House on 28 October 1992. In those words, is the Secretary of State recognising the inherent instability and artificiality of partition on a small island such as Cyprus? If he is, I believe that he is looking realistically and courageously at the way in which problems can be solved, rather than putting them under the icing on the cake.

We say yes to good local government for its own purposes and its own good reasons, to good economic co-operation between the political parties for their own good reasons and to good community relations by all means for good reasons, but not to solve fundamental political problems. We are hearing such a patch-up today —that, if we put another blob of icing over what is underneath, everything will come together and solve the problem. I believe that it will not. It should happen as of right, because it is the right thing to do.

I return to the fundamental point where I started and again ask the same question. Is it not the business of the two sovereign Governments who created a mutual problem to solve it? It is not enough to say that the Irish Government have no role to play. The problem is on the island of Ireland and affects them daily. It costs £1 million a day to police the border. It is a problem that is not going to go away in the normal conventional way.

We must examine the central issue. What are the Governments doing? Where is the missionary zeal we were promised not just by the British Government but by the Irish Government? Has it been siphoned off into a new form of contemplative order, as was referred to in the debate on this subject last year? When has there been realistic debate in the Republic of Ireland about a problem which is the Republic's problem as well as ours, and which was created by an Irish Government? Why are we experiencing an almost Trappist silence from those who had remarkable missionary zeal? Have both Governments jointly decided that a vow of silence is right and that they should retreat into their own monastic settlements? Why are they contemplating how to solve a problem that they have had 72 years to solve? I believe that the question must be asked.

There is something fundamentally wrong with the political process if, with all the people dead, the price being paid and the instability it is causing, both Governments seem to have run to ground and are not giving it the attention that it deserves. I apply that criticism even-handedly because I believe that the responsibility lies with both Governments and not primarily with the political parties in the north of Ireland. That is one reason why so many peripheral issues start to become important.

Next week, when the inter-parliamentary body meets, wonder of wonders, we will be giving almost half a day's consideration to the Opsahl report. The inter-parliamentary body of representatives from this Parliament and from the Irish Government has experienced the problems in the north of Ireland; lo and behold, we will be giving the Opsahl report half a day's consideration. Is that facing reality? I am tempted to quote an observation made in one of the Sunday newspapers relating to the Opsahl report, although I cannot attribute it because I forget which newspaper it was in. It was a quote from the philosopher Nietzsche: "I sowed a dragon and I reaped a flea." The problems are more fundamental than that and have to be grasped.

One of our other recent distractions was a presidential visit. I do not know what the background to the visit was —I am not privy to that type of information. I wonder how much time during the meeting between the Prime Ministers of this country and of Ireland was spent discussing that visit, and how much was spent discussing a political resolution to our problems. I do not know and will never know. I suspect that it will be another in the litany of incidents that assume an importance that is remarkable given that the important things have not been addressed.

We have to face up to the fundamental realities of the problem. I am not speaking about creating a situation where Unionists cannot have parity with nationalists. I am asking a question that must be answered by both Governments: what is the long-term position in relation to a solution to the problem? Unless someone ultimately has the courage to say what that long-term position is, the fundamental problems will not be faced.

Are we to go on with the platitudes that we all utter when we are asked about the resumption of the talks? I do not think that anyone in the House believes that talks are to resume in the autumn. I am not sure that anyone in the British or Irish Governments believes it. Nobody in the political parties believes it, but one must conform and say that one believes that they will resume in the autumn. I do not think that they will, although I should like them to continue. I believe that the reason for that is that we have come to a watershed in the way in which the two sovereign Governments deal with the problem.

The matter could perhaps best be summarised in this way: is there an opportunity to start to solve the security problems, the policing problems, the justice problems and the problems of discrimination to which the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster referred? Is there to be a solution once and for all, or is there to be another Anglo-Irish agreement? I should perhaps remind the Unionists behind me that, when they talk about the Anglo-Irish Agreement, they are

referring to the most recent agreement. We must also remember the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1921, which has not been spectacularly successful.

We must make a distinction, because I believe that that will help the political process. Are we going for a solution to the problem? Or are we to get another cosy little arrangement that may last a while and struggle along artificially, and be propped up in every way—an arrangement whose members will be loonied by everyone of good will and which will ultimately collapse like all the other arrangements have collapsed? That is the position that the two Governments and the political parties are in.

I hope that we all have the courage to say that we are going for a solution. It is a path that will entail dangers and major compromises for everybody and will raise serious questions of all of us in this Parliament and in the north and south of Ireland. Are we to create for ourselves another little arrangement that will be as fundamentally flawed as the other little arrangements that have fallen before? That is the nub of the problem we face. Sooner or later, the Government will have to face that problem and answer the questions. Must we continue year after year with the classic failure of all Governments—that they never do the right thing until they have exhausted every other eventuality?

6.26 pm

**Sir James Kilfedder** (North Down): I am surprised that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) said that Northern Ireland was an artificial entity. The first people ever to land on the island of Ireland came across the narrow strip of water between Scotland and what the hon. Gentleman refers to as the north of Ireland. They were the first people to live in the island of Ireland, and most historians accept that as a fact.

I have the honour to represent a constituency which was a centre of learning long before Dublin city ever existed. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman talked about the bitterness that he seems to think has been generated from the creation of Northern Ireland more than 70 years ago. I have read a history of the ancient Irish Churches—I am not talking about King Billy or Henry VIII or anybody like that—in Norman times, about 700 years ago.

At that time, the Irish monks wrote to the Pope to complain about the arrogance of the English monks, and to say that they did not want them in Irish monasteries. The English monks in the Irish monasteries also wrote to the Pope to complain about the barbaric Irish monks. The dispute was running long before 1920, when Northern Ireland was created.

In North Down, we have witnessed IRA bombing atrocities, although nothing like the ethnic cleansing that has taken place in the border areas of Northern Ireland. On the last two occasions, the IRA tried to destroy the heart of Bangor in my constituency, and four brave police officers escaped death only by a miracle, although some sustained serious injuries. More recently, there was the sectarian killing of an innocent Roman Catholic man, which I utterly condemn. The loyalist paramilitaries, in committing that dastardly deed and other tit-for-tat murders, play into the hands of the IRA, which thrives on fear and hatred.

We are fortunate in North Down. We have no peace lines dividing one religion from another. We reject sectarian hatred, and our earnest hope is for reconciliation and political progress in Northern Ireland. Our prayers are directed to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and we hope that he will succeed in achieving political progress in the Province. That is why I support the talks, and why most people in Northern Ireland support them and hope that they succeed.

The previous Northern Ireland Assembly, of which I was Speaker, made a valuable contribution to democracy in Northern Ireland. I mention it because one of my hon. Friends referred to it and accepted afterwards that his remarks about that Northern Ireland Assembly were wrong. It was a useful Assembly, and from 1982 to 1986 the people of Northern Ireland, through their Assembly representatives, were able to play a positive role in the affairs of the Province. For that short period, direct rule was given a human face and a local input.

Sadly, having established the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Government then embarked—in secret—on another initiative, which led to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. That scuppered the Assembly, and scuppered any prospect of reaching a settlement based on an Assembly at Stormont. When I say that the initiative was embarked on in secret, I mean that the Government did not consult representatives of the majority community in any way.

Since 1986, Northern Ireland has been governed by Order in Council. Debate on such orders is normally limited to 90 minutes, and the orders cannot be amended. That is not democracy; it is a denial of democracy. The parliamentary democracy enjoyed throughout the rest of the United Kingdom is denied to the people of Northern Ireland, at a time when the population of Ulster are suffering appalling injuries and deaths at the hands of the terrorists. The campaign of terrorism has now lasted 25 years; we need more democracy, not less.

As I have often said before, that is why I support the call for a Select Committee to deal with Ulster's affairs, composed of all Northern Ireland Members. It could sit in Northern Ireland as well as in London; it would have the power to take evidence from expert witnesses, and to examine Ministers, civil servants and others. All the political representatives—representing most political hues in Northern Ireland—could then work together to resolve the problems that face people in Northern Ireland. Political slogans would no longer matter, or at any rate they would matter less. I believe that, in that way, a political rapprochement could be secured in Northern Ireland.

The history of Ireland is crammed with happenings that cause offence to loyalists as well as nationalists. I am a great believer in reading history, but there is no merit in constantly raking over the past and opening old wounds. Ireland's history is not unique; we are witnessing terrible slaughter in Bosnia and other parts of the world.

I commend the people of Ulster for the remarkable restraint that they have shown in the face of obscene slaughter, mutilations and bombings. The people of Ulster need not only political progress, but—first and foremost—the defeat of terrorism, whether it be Protestant, Catholic, republican or loyalist. I pay tribute to the courage of the security forces. I hope that the Government will now adopt a vigorous security policy.

I am disappointed by the Dublin Government's reaction. I think that they could do far more. I believe that, if all the people in Ireland, north and south—and all the people in Northern Ireland, including politicians who regard themselves as constitutional politicians—worked

*[Sir James Kilfedder]*

together against terrorism, we could unite the people against the evil and bring peace to Northern Ireland. With peace, we would bring hope and prosperity to our community.

6.33 pm

**Mr. David Trimble** (Upper Bann): In the past half hour or so, I have learnt that another of my constituents has been murdered by terrorists. It happened this afternoon. I understand that that constituent served the community in the Ulster Defence Regiment; for that, he has been murdered—presumably by Republican terrorists, although I know no more about the circumstances.

I think of that, and I think of what has also happened today: the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates), who was responsible for security in Northern Ireland, resigned this afternoon. I have heard some of the comments of hon. Members about his resignation, and about the work he did as a Minister. Hon. Members will understand that I do not feel able to echo the tributes paid to him, following yet another demonstration of the failure of the Government's security policy. Whoever succeeds him as Minister responsible for security should reflect on what happened in Lurgan this afternoon, and on the loss of yet another good man who served the community well and paid the price for doing so.

That event casts a shadow over what I had intended to say. I shall therefore leave the bulk of it for another occasion. No doubt the news and current affairs programmes are already discussing the circumstances which led to the resignation of the Minister responsible for security in Northern Ireland, but I wonder how much discussion there will be of the terrorist murder which took place this afternoon—I suspect that there will be very little.

Today has been very confused. The emergency debate prompted by events involving Rosyth, which will begin in 25 minutes' time, has led to the withdrawal of the debate on the draft Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1993. However, listening to the Secretary of State, I sometimes wondered whether in his home he had picked up the wrong speech as most of his speech referred to Government policy on the economy of Northern Ireland, or on aspects of the work of the Northern Ireland Departments. Such matters should be dealt with in debates on appropriation orders, not in debates on the renewal of direct rule.

The tail end of the Secretary of State's speech referred to what are described as inter-party talks. That, too, struck me as—strictly speaking—not relevant to a debate on the extension of direct rule. Direct rule means the rule exercised by Her Majesty's Government, and the legislative authority of the House in regard to Northern Ireland. It is right and proper that the House of Commons and Her Majesty's Government should rule Northern Ireland, because Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom. What should be observed in regard to the future of direct rule, however, is that it is a debased form of rule: we are not governed as we ought to be governed and as other parts of the kingdom are governed, but through a truncated legislative procedure—the Order in Council procedure—which is patently undemocratic.

We are governed without proper accountability. That is what the Secretary of State was trying to cover up. He went through the motions of rendering an account, but there is no proper accountability, and he knows it. If there were proper accountability, the Secretary of State—like every other Secretary of State—would be called to account through a Select Committee. The absence of that procedure illustrates the improper nature of direct rule. This debate should have focused on the absence of a Select Committee procedure and on the shortcomings of the Order in Council procedure that we are forced to suffer.

If I had the time, I would have quoted from the valuable report of the Hansard Society commission on the legislative process, which expresses the hope that the Government will handle Northern Ireland problems sympathetically and, in particular, that they will return to a proper form of legislation. I also hoped to quote from the recently published and equally valuable report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, which analyses the Order in Council procedure in a devastating manner and makes cogent proposals for reform—proposals that I endorse.

I will quote one sentence from the SACHR report—or, rather, from the appendix to it. It refers to the Government arguments for not legislating properly and summarises them by saying:

"This argument"—

that is, the argument that the Government advance with regard to not legislating properly—

"may be interpreted as an indirect way of stating that the power to make laws for Northern Ireland is not required to be exercised either fairly, or willingly and responsibly."

That is what the House will be saying tonight when it reviews the direct rule legislation; it will be saying that it does not consider that the Government are required to legislate fairly, or willingly and responsibly. That is what Government Front Bench Members have been saying and what the Opposition have been endorsing. It is not right, and it is getting extremely tiresome to have to sit here year after year listening to feeble attempts to justify what is unjustifiable and to divert attention from it.

Reference to the talks and suggestions that it is somehow the responsibility of the people of Northern Ireland to put an end to direct rule is a diversion, and I have just one comment to make on it. One has to acknowledge that last year's talks, which ended unsuccessfully and inconclusively in November, had a destabilising effect on the community. Fresh talks which also end inconclusively would only worsen that destabilisation. Any responsible party representing, as we do, a significant section of opinion in Northern Ireland has to be sure that there is a reasonable prospect of success in any further talks process, whatever form it may take, before embarking upon it. It would be grossly irresponsible to undertake something that would result only in greater uncertainty and greater destabilisation of the community, because destabilisation, instability and uncertainty are the root causes of the terrorism of which we have seen another example today.

6.42 pm

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East): I have to thank my own Front Bench Members for allowing me to come in at this stage and forgoing their own right to reply. I will try not to bite the hand that fed me on this occasion.

My position with regard to Northern Ireland is that we should be doing everything we can to try to establish peace and reconciliation, which involves an understanding of the

existence of different communities and the need for respect for the different traditions. At the same time, we must take as strong a stand as possible against terrorism and acts of abuse. Those positions do not seem to me to be in conflict; they are bound together, and there must not be any ambivalence on any side about objecting to acts of terrorism and abuse and organising to stand out against them.

I have been disappointed, however, with certain aspects of the debate so far. If we cannot have talks on the future of Northern Ireland elsewhere, at least opportunities such as today's should be taken to have our own talks about what we believe should be done.

Some of the debate that has taken place across the Floor between Northern Ireland Members has tended to reflect the difficulties in discussing the various positions. A good debate is one in which new ideas emerge and there is some sort of synthesis of the best points from the arguments on all sides. This is not always possible when the opposite sides are diametrically antagonistic.

I am sorry that certain things were not referred to by the Front Bench spokesmen. It was not until the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) spoke that we had any mention of the Opsahl Commission, and then it was only to condemn its findings. The commission's report should be examined seriously. It has 25 recommendations, and I for one will have great difficulty with a number of them. Nevertheless, the commission engaged in some 3,000 interviews in Northern Ireland, often with people within community groups. It had some good discussions with sixth forms, for instance.

A whole host of views and attitudes emerge in the report which are not necessarily part of the conclusions and recommendations, but they help hon. Members such as myself who are not from Northern Ireland to begin to gain some understanding of the situation there.

The points about direct rule in the report are very relevant to this debate. I do not have time to quote any of them, but I refer hon. Members to page 113. A number of points have been made about the inadequacies of the procedure in the House. I would have thought that the Secretary of State would at least have recognised the existence of the Opsahl Commission.

There are bodies of people in Northern Ireland which are not the major political parties, organisations or forces, but which work continuously for reconciliation and object very strongly to terrorism. Groups such as Families Against Intimidation and Terror are cross-community and adopt the same attitude to sectarian terror in their own communities. There is also the Peace Train organisation, and a body with which I am associated, called New Consensus, which has particular ideas about what should be done. Indeed, some of the best work is being done at community level, sometimes involving political parties, religious groups and others, and working on a cross-community basis.

I also believe that the debate should cover—the Secretary of State mentioned it—the economic and social elements of the problems of Northern Ireland, including those connected with direct rule. In this connection, I disagree with the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), who felt that this was irrelevant.

However, the Secretary of State said the wrong things about economic and social development. He stressed such things as electricity privatisation, on which a unanimous position was taken across the political parties, apart from the new Conservative party in Northern Ireland, which opposed that measure. When there is some unity in Northern Ireland on such a wide political issue, we should look very carefully at the situation. It may have been that the Government were playing a cautious role and trying to get everybody united against them in the interest of other forms of development, but I doubt whether there was that kind of subtlety. I believe that what happens is that the economic programme of the Cabinet and of the Government generally spills over on occasion to Northern Ireland, and almost runs counter to many of the other things that are being done.

The Northern Ireland Office will point to the valuable work that it does, the amount of money that is being spent in Northern Ireland and the encouragement of different forms of activity. Then it will come up with something that is in the ideological tradition of Thatcherism and apply it to Northern Ireland, although it is felt to be quite irrelevant by the organisations within Northern Ireland.

I feel that the appropriation debate offers a great opportunity. I hope that the timetabling of that debate will be re-examined and that it will not be just a one-and-a-half-hour affair. What opportunity do we have to discuss economic and social affairs in Northern Ireland? This is the nearest we come to a Northern Ireland budget. Because of the problems of Northern Ireland and because there is no proper local government structure, Northern Ireland Members are obliged to raise under this heading many issues that are local constituency concerns. They are matters that in another sphere would be dealt with in councils and other bodies. We cannot therefore get to grips with the economic and social issues. The political parties have not, it seems, analysed these issues and are not in a position to put forward an alternative.

Few Members attend Northern Ireland debates, apart from Northern Ireland Members of Parliament, the Front Bench spokesmen on both sides and those who support them. Only four Conservative Back Benchers and two Labour Back Benchers who have ah interest in Northern Ireland affairs are here at the moment. There are many reasons. One is that we are considering a statutory instrument that cannot be amended. The ability to table amendments is not available to us. If we could do so, we should be able to put forward our own ideas about the way forward, or ideas that we had picked up as a result of our studies and of our talks with members of the Hansard Society and others. The procedures of the House deny us the opportunity to discuss Northern Ireland matters properly.

There is an overwhelming case for setting up a Northern Ireland Select Committee. Such a Committee could discuss properly Northern Ireland concerns. Representatives of all the political parties in Northern Ireland would be able to serve upon it and publish reports that the House could consider.

It is a mistake that the Ulster Unionists decided not to be members of the British-Irish parliamentary group, which does valuable work. Its work would be even more valuable if a Northern Ireland Select Committee could be set up. Some members of the British-Irish parliamentary group would be keen to serve on that Committee, which might lead to a valuable exchange of ideas. The opportunity for discussion and argument is lacking at present, with the result that only individual views are put forward. Discussion and argument could lead to compromise and reconciliation and possibly to agreement.

*[Mr. Harry Barnes]*

As for privatisation in Northern Ireland, it would be interesting to know how much money was spent on advertising shares when the electricity industry was privatised, compared with the amount of money spent on the development of the political process in Northern Ireland. When I asked the Prime Minister how much money was spent on the registration of United Kingdom electors, I was given an answer for Great Britain, but I was told that support for advertising electoral registration in Northern Ireland is not provided. In 1990, £705,000 was spent on getting people from overseas to register so that they could vote in Great Britain, but there is no such expenditure in Northern Ireland, which is disturbing.

However, that issue is only part of what is needed in a democracy. Many people believe that the franchise does not matter all that much, for there is little that they can do with their vote to influence affairs in Northern Ireland.

6.54 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Michael Ancram):** May I begin by thanking those hon. Members who have paid tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates). I shall certainly ensure that their tributes are passed on to him. May I also pay tribute to my predecessor, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) who, I know, is very much respected by all Northern Ireland Members.

This has been a lively debate which has centred mostly on the political question. I realise that I have only a short time in which to reply to the debate. I hope, therefore, that hon. Members will forgive me if I do not answer all the points that were raised.

I listened carefully to the speech by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). This is the first time that I have attended one of these debates in an official capacity. His speech—I am told that this is not unusual—was strong on analysis but not very strong on answers. There were one or two inaccuracies in it that should be corrected.

The hon. Gentleman accused my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland of not backing the three-strand concept in the talks. My right hon. and learned Friend has always backed the three-strand concept and has made that clear on a number of recent occasions. It is right to put on record the fact that my right hon. and learned Friend has strong feelings about that matter.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to proposals and made the point that the British Government have left the Irish with no alternative but to go forward with their own proposals. It is right that I should make it clear that we have been formulating our proposals, which we hope may serve to give direction to the talks when they resume. We shall present our paper to all participants at that stage. In the meantime, we want to test and refine our ideas and judgment by means of dialogue with all of them. We are trying to carry out that process at the moment, through discussions with the party leaders and the Irish Government.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) made a helpful and constructive speech. I welcome what he said. We shall wish to consider his speech carefully. He said that the prospect of joint authority appearing over the horizon was a matter of some concern to him. I should stress that my right hon. and learned Friend is already on record as saying that the political talks will not conclude with Northern Ireland becoming subject to the joint political authority of the United Kingdom and Irish Governments. Apart from the question of practicality that such an arrangement would raise, my right hon. and learned Friend does not believe, nor do the Government, that such an outcome would be acceptable to public opinion in Northern Ireland. I want to stress that too.

I listened to the speech by the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) with great care. Most of his speech was addressed to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, but he asked us why there was a difference in the Government's attitude towards Scotland and towards Northern Ireland. There is no difference. The only circumstances in which Northern Ireland might leave the Union would be on the basis that that was the will of the majority of the people who live there. Equally, the Prime Minister has made it clear in respect of Scotland that no nation could be held irrevocably in the Union against its will.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) referred to what has occurred in his constituency today. I join him in his expessions of horror at that incident. He raised the question of security. The Government will not shirk their responsibility for dealing with terrorism. There is no acceptable level of violence. The Government are responsible for ensuring that the law effectively protects the rights of citizens, including the right to life. There is no compromise on that.

The Government have made it clear that we believe that at the end of the day there has to be dialogue if we are to find a solution to the problem. Many hon. Members have made it clear today that they find this debate distasteful because we are, in effect, debating the question of renewing direct rule. I can only reiterate the hope expressed by many hon. Members today and by my right hon. and learned Friend—a hope which I am sure has been expressed by many others over the years in such debates—that it will not be much longer before an end can be put to the present temporary arrangements for handling Northern Ireland affairs. That is what the process of political development is all about. If, in the coming months, we can come to a system of restoring the dialogue again—of trying to find that lasting accommodation—I hope that these debates will, in the near future, become a thing of the past.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the draft Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period Extension) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 26th May, be approved.

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish, first, to welcome the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) to his office. We did not have an opportunity earlier in the debate to do that. I wish him every success in his new job.

When replying to the debate, he referred to the question of dialogue. I appeal to the Government to try in future, when arranging business affecting Northern Ireland, especially in relation to renewing emergency provisions legislation, to try to provide time for adequate dialogue across the Floor of the House so that we may better explore and expose the issues.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Member knows that that is not a point of order for me, but I have no doubt that it will have been heard by those on the Treasury Bench.

## Trident Refit (Scottish Economy)

7 pm

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I beg to move, That this House do now adjourn.

*Leave having been given this day under Standing Order No. 20 to discuss:*

The decision by the Cabinet on the Trident refit and its effect on the Scottish economy.

I wish at the outset to thank you, Madam Speaker, for granting this emergency debate, which represents a recognition, at least by the Chair, of the gravity of the Government's announcement today, particularly as it affects Scotland.

Today's announcement represents a vague promise made on the back of a broken promise. The Government have had to promise a programme of work to Rosyth because previous promises to Rosyth about the Trident contract have been shamefully and completely broken. One cannot disguise the extent to which the workers of Rosyth have been let down by a Conservative Government.

It is not simply I who am saying that. Unfortunately, the only Conservative Scottish Members here today are lickspittle Scottish Members. I wish that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) had been in his place today because——

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson** (Aberdeen, South): He is ill.

**Mr. Foulkes:** I know he is ill, but he can still speak to the press. He speaks forcibly to the press and he speaks for Scotland far more than his hon. Friends on the Government Benches speak for Scotland. He is reported by today's Glasgow *Evening Times* as having said:

"I have no faith in a Government which has behaved in such a diseased way."

That is the voice of a real Scots Tory with guts.

The promises that the Government made to Rosyth were unequivocal. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces said in November 1984 that the Government had settled where the Trident refits would be carried out, and he said that they would be at Rosyth. That position was repeated by Ministers from the Dispatch Box month after month, year after year, throughout the 1980s.

By the time the Government eventually reneged on that promise, over £100 million had been spent on a purpose-built facility for Trident. That money has now been poured down the drain. The taxpayers in the south-west of England and in Scotland will not be rejoicing at that waste of their money.

Lord Younger, Secretary of State when the commitments were given, wrote in his famous letter to *The Times* that

"a matter of good faith is involved here."

He made it clear in that letter that he had given his word, on behalf of the Cabinet and the Government, to the people of Scotland that the submarine refit would go to Rosyth. He is now aware that his word of honour has been abused by the Government in backtracking on the clear pledges that were given.

As hon. Members pointed out earlier in the day, the present Secretary of State for Defence was then Secretary of State for Scotland and was party to the decision. Perhaps we shall have the spectre in five or 10 years' time

*[Mr. Foulkes]*

of Lord Rifkind writing to *The Times* complaining that the pledges that he has made today to Rosyth have been cast aside in another display of bad faith.

The future of Rosyth as the largest industrial concern is vital to the future of much of industry in Scotland. It is therefore vital that the Government fulfil their obligation to Rosyth, and get the figures right. In that connection, why is there not a consultative document before the House? When we have one, will it contain the full figures rather than the global figures that the Secretary of State gave in his statement?

I also remind the House that the existence of the naval base at Rosyth is inextricably linked to the future of the dockyard. The overall effect of the closure of Rosyth dockyard—were that to take place—would be the loss of up to 18,000 jobs in an area of already high unemployment. Hundreds of companies throughout Scotland are involved in work for the dockyard. Will the Secretary of State now do what he would not do earlier and estimate how much it would cost the taxpayer if all those jobs were lost?

**Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** (Amber Valley): Does the hon. Gentleman not have a little shame in standing at the Opposition Dispatch Box complaining about job losses, when for many years Labour spokesmen called for the cancellation of Trident and for massive cuts in defence spending? Is he aware that, if those demands had been met, there would have been many more job losses at Rosyth and elsewhere?

**Mr. Foulkes:** I feel no shame whatever. The hon. Gentleman should feel shame as the PPS to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who will be imposing many cuts on the people of Britain, not just on people of Scotland.

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind):** The hon. Gentleman did not answer the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) asked him. In 1987, the hon. Gentleman signed an early-day motion calling for the cancellation of Trident. He knows that, if his proposals and that motion had been accepted, there would be no jobs at Rosyth or Faslane for Scotland or for any other part of the United Kingdom. Does he regret signing that early-day motion? If not, how does he reconcile it with his protest today?

**Mr. Foulkes:** I am flattered that the Secretary of State pays so much attention to my signature on early-day motions—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] It is clear that the Government gave a commitment—*[Interruption.]*—that Scotland, having the Faslane base on the west coast of Scotland, should have the benefit of the refitting on the east coast of Scotland.

**Mr. Rifkind** *rose*——

**Mr. Foulkes:** The right hon. and learned Gentleman will have an opportunity to make his own speech, when perhaps he will answer some of the other questions that I am putting to him.

The defence arguments for the survival of Rosyth are also pressing. It is common sense that all the nation's ship refitting facilities should not be located at one yard. The same argument applies to retaining a nuclear submarine refitting capability at one yard.

For those strategic reasons, the Opposition have consistently campaigned for both yards to be kept open. Remember, submarines and their missiles are designed to be used in time of war, and at such times it is not inconceivable that refitting facilities would be targets. Having only one centre would leave us extremely vulnerable.

The pledges given in the past to Rosyth, including those by the recently deposed Chancellor when he was Minister for Defence Procurement, about the purpose-built facilities, are not irrelevant today. Are we to believe today's promises any more than we should have believed the false promises that were given in the 1980s? One need only examine the Tory election manifesto to find further evidence of promises made and broken—on taxes, benefits and tax cuts—in the past 12 months.

Until we have the real, full details of the announcement from the Secretary of State, we, the people of Rosyth and the people of Scotland will remain highly sceptical. When will the consultative document be published? Why is it not ready today? What sort of consultation will be carried out, and how long will it go on? Can we believe that it will be any different from the other consultations which the Ministry of Defence has had recently and which have turned out to be nothing more than rubber-stamping exercises, whether they were about Royal Naval stores, the Defence Research Agency or the Portland base? We need to know a lot more before this vague promise can be accepted as a copper-bottomed guarantee.

As I said earlier, the strong feeling in Scotland is that 18 ships is not enough. That is tiny compared with the 79 surface ships refitted at Rosyth over the past 10 years. The Secretary of State said in reply to my earlier questions that some of those 79 were smaller ships, unlike the 18 large ships. Will he tell us what guarantees there are of those smaller ships in the future?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am happy to. The hon. Gentleman asked about the minor warships. There are 49 minor warships due to be refitted over the next few years, and all 49 will be refitted at Rosyth. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Foulkes:** No one can be ungrateful for what the Secretary of State has said, but I will come to the reality.

**Mr. David Harris** (St. Ives): But leaving that aside.

**Mr. Foulkes:** I am not leaving anything aside. I will deal with it in detail. We need detailed figures.

The Secretary of State is surely aware that, given the Government's record, the workers at Rosyth will not be satisfied with blanket assurances and any overall total. If the Government have worked out a 12-year plan so exactly as to present it to the House, they should be able to set out a more exact timetable.

What ships will be refitted and when? What will be the level of work, under this so-called guaranteed programme of work, each year for the next 12 years? I hope that the Secretary of State will be able to tell us that in his speech.

Will the Secretary of State tell us how he arrived at the total number of job losses at Rosyth and Devonport? Is he aware that the management at Rosyth are saying that the best case scenario will lead to 700 job losses, not the 450 that the Secretary of State claimed. That best case scenario assumes the refitting of one type 42, one type 23 and one type 22 every 18 months in addition to three aircraft carriers and 10 Hunt class mine warfare vessels. Can the

Secretary of State tell us precisely whether that is the level of work that will be offered to Rosyth? I am happy to give way to the Secretary of State.

**Mr. Rifkind:** If the hon. Gentleman inquires further of the management at Rosyth, he will find that the figure of 700 includes jobs involved in non-Ministry of Defence work. The hon. Gentleman should recall that in my statement I referred to 18 major warships in addition to the 49 minor vessels that I mentioned just now.

**Mr. Foulkes:** The Secretary of State is wrong. I did check. There are 2,700 jobs at Rosyth on Ministry of Defence work. The management at Rosyth said that they will be able to sustain a maximum of 2,000 on the best case scenario, which, as I have said, is the refitting of one type 42, one type 23 and one type 22 every 18 months, in addition to three aircraft carriers, and 10 Hunt class mine warfare vessels. That is the very least guarantee we need, and I hope that the Secretary of State can give it tonight.

What will be the minimum total value of contracts placed with each yard over the 12-year period that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has specified? That will give us an idea of the balance of work for Rosyth compared with that for Devonport.

Given the state of defence planning and the monthly abandonment of commitments by the Government, how much credence can we give to today's announcement? How can we take seriously the promise of a fixed number of ship refits from a Government who are not only running down the size of the surface fleet but refuse to give an exact number for the size of the frigate destroyer fleet? As one of my hon. Friends said to me earlier, allocated work does not mean guaranteed work. Other yards which have had refitting will testify to that.

After today's announcement, we must ask what will happen to Rosyth after the year 2000, as its programme of work is run down over five years. There is the question of what will happen to the shipbuilding yards in the commercial sector which may have expected some of the surface refitting work to be allocated to Rosyth.

Has the Secretary of State made an estimate of what will happen to those shipyards? How many job losses will there be in those yards over the next 12 years, as the size of the surface fleet continues to reduce? The Secretary of State may remember that Lord Chalfont, chairman of Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd., said on "Panorama" in March that, if Government policy continues as it is at present, the seven private yards could be as few as one or two by the end of the century.

**Mr. Ian Bruce** (South Dorset): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Foulkes:** If the hon. Gentleman catches your eye, Madam Speaker, he will have a chance to speak. I said that I would be as brief as possible, because many of my colleagues wish to speak.

The Secretary of State has acknowledged in a very——

**Mr. Bruce:** The hon. Gentleman will know that there is good liaison on the shipyards between the south-west and Scotland, and I pay tribute to Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen for the help that I often receive from them. However, if the announcement today had been that the refitting contract was going to Rosyth, will he tell the workers at Devonport whether there would have been an emergency debate? Are not those on the Opposition Front Bench having their strings pulled by the Opposition Members sitting around them?

**Mr. Foulkes:** The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that I did not receive a copy of the Secretary of State's statement until 3 o'clock this afternoon. My request for an emergency debate went in before noon.

The Secretary of State has acknowledged in a limited way the importance of planning. He sought to assure the House that strategy for Rosyth will be set out and guaranteed for the next 12 years. Leaving aside the doubts that I have expressed, which are felt by all Opposition Members, over the validity of guarantees from the Secretary of State, will he concede the value of such strategic planning? His defence policy completely lacks such strategic planning.

The suspicion is that this is not really the admission of planning into defence policy, but a manoeuvre brought about by political expediency. The concessions announced by the Secretary of State today—this is probably the most important thing I shall say—have come about as a result of the dedicated campaigning and pressure brought to bear by those at Rosyth.

That view was underlined today by the comments of Alan Smith of Babcock Thorn, who expressed thanks for the efforts of employees, trade unions and local councils. I pay tribute to those efforts, and to those of my hon. Friends the Members for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire), who campaigned so well. We all wish my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West a speedy recovery. We would not have had the guarantees from the Government without that campaign.

We will keep up the pressure to ensure that the Government fulfil in hard contracts the promises made today. The real test of this announcement is whether they are cheering at Rosyth today. They are not. Instead, cries of anguish are echoing across the Forth. Those are the people for whom we speak.

I hope that, in voting for the Adjournment motion, Opposition Members will show their support for a two-dockyard solution, for a strategic plan for the defence requirements of this country, and for the economic needs of this country into the next century.

7.18 pm

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind):** This evening, Babcock Thorn, the management of Rosyth dockyard, issued a statement saying that its objective is to become the premier yard in the United Kingdom for surface ship refitting. The management have identified an important and valuable role for Rosyth. I believe that the statement that I made earlier, which indicates that in addition to the 18 major warships there will be 49 other vessels to be refitted at Rosyth over the next 12 years, means that Babcock Thorn and its work force and the community in Rosyth can look forward to a large amount of work. That work will require thousands of people carrying out dedicated work in Rosyth in the interests of the Royal Navy and that will continue for many years to come.

**Mr. John Home Robertson** (East Lothian): Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I will give way in a moment. I must be allowed to begin my remarks.

I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and noticed that, as is the tradition with the Labour party at the present time, a number of things were set aside. He not only set aside the call that he made some years ago for Trident to be scrapped, but he refused to answer the direct question whether he regretted that call and, if not, whether he could now reconcile it with his passionate case for Trident work going to Rosyth. I am happy to give way now if he wants to answer.

**Mr. Tony Worthington** (Clydebank and Milngavie) *rose——*

**Dr. Norman A. Godman** (Greenock and Port Glasgow) *rose——*

**Mr. Home Robertson** *rose——*

**Mr. Rifkind:** Three Labour Members want to answer that question, but the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley remains silent. That is probably a wise decision.

That is not all that is being set aside. A few days ago, the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley called for a solution that involved two dockyards with a future and not one. Today's announcement ensures two dockyards with a future. Two days ago, he called for an allocated work programme to the non-nuclear yard of 10 years. Today, we announced one of 12 years. Why cannot the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that his request has been more than met?

**Mr. Home Robertson:** The Secretary of State said that Rosyth was to be the surface ship refit yard. Will he comment on the four submarines that are currently at Rosyth—Churchill, Dreadnought, Swiftsure and Revenge? If we cannot have refit work on the Forth, we certainly do not want scrapped nuclear hulks there. They should be down the Forth on the next tide.

**Mr. Rifkind:** We want to discuss the decommissioned submarines with Rosyth. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. There are no technical reasons why the submarines have to be at Rosyth rather than another port. That can be discussed and I am sure that we shall reach an amicable decision, which will meet the interests of the Royal Navy and reflect the current situation.

We shall shortly publish a consultative document. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley got into a lather about why it was not published today. He knows perfectly well that the matters were concluded and endorsed by the Cabinet only this morning and it takes a little time thereafter to produce the document. It will be published and the consultative period will start from the date of publication. I believe that it is appropriate that we should offer those directly concerned the opportunity to offer views on what we have announced. The purpose of the consultative period is to ensure that we have missed nothing in taking our decision. At the same time, I must make it clear that we have not made today's announcement lightly and I would be surprised if anything new came out of that consultation period.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley made much of statements made in the 1980s about the future of nuclear refitting. Those statements were made in good faith as, no doubt, was the hon. Gentleman's repudiation of Trident. The statements were entirely proper in the international situation that then faced us. When we made our plans for the future of nuclear refitting, who could have foreseen the end of the cold war, the end of the Soviet Union and the cataclysmic changes that have taken place and have resulted in a significantly smaller Royal Navy and additional capacity at Devonport and Rosyth? Those changes, which are highly welcome at the end of the cold war, have affected many aspects of our defence planning and have required us to rethink our plans in a number of areas, of which nuclear refitting is just one.

When it became apparent, for reasons that no one foresaw, that we would have more refit capacity and did not therefore have to rely on a new purpose-built facility, it would have been unforgiveable not to take advantage of the opportunities that that provided. That decision was not taken today or in the past few months—it was initiated two years ago. Some of the comments that we have heard today suggested that it had come as a total surprise that there had been a competition between Devonport and Rosyth for nuclear work, but in fact it was initiated in July 1991. Hon. Members knew that, and it was known at the time of the last general election. We did not go into the general election promising the Trident work to one yard rather than another. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley must control himself rather than make such claims.

The reduction in the size of the fleet, and the consequent reduction in our refit requirements, made it possible to carry out nuclear refitting in upgraded existing docks. That lay behind today's statement. Taking that approach allowed us to save the Royal Navy and the taxpayer more than £250 million. I am sure that no one seriously suggests that we should have done otherwise.

I was asked earlier about the use of consultants. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) raised that matter when he saw my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. A range of specialist consultants have given advice: in particular, Coopers and Lybrand and, under contract to it, Allott and Lomax, which provided civil engineering advice, and AEA Technology, which provided advice on nuclear safety. They assessed the aspects of the proposals from the two contractors which fell within their area of expertise. It is quite proper so to use consultants, and that is what we would normally be expected to do. Their advice to us, quite properly, included much commercially sensitive information as well as classified material. It will obviously be published, so far as that is possible, and I can assure the House that the consultative document will be a full and free-standing explanation of the decision that we announced today.

My statement today was on the future of both yards. The future of Devonport will be based around the nuclear refitting work. The future of Rosyth will depend on its transition to a yard which can compete effectively for surface ship work. As I explained, that is not an easy transition, nor one that can be accomplished overnight. That is why, to help Rosyth accomplish the transition, we have set out an allocated programme, longer than the Opposition called for, which provides maximum opportunities.

**Mr. Foulkes:** The crux is the difference between allocated and guaranteed. I called for a guaranteed programme. The Secretary of State has given an allocated

programme, and he said a few minutes ago that Rosyth will be able to compete. That means that there is no guarantee whatsoever.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman is getting carried away and not thinking before he speaks. I said that more than half the surface ship programme was allocated to Rosyth. The competition will be for the other half of the surface ship programme. It is quite possible that Rosyth, Devonport and the shipbuilders will be able to compete for that work, and I very much hope that Rosyth will win a proportion of it.

**Dr. John Reid** (Motherwell, North): I am glad of that clarification, although it was not necessary as we already understood that. *[Interruption.]* I assure Conservative Members that we all did. We would like clarification of the first half. Is a guarantee being given to the people of Rosyth that the first half—unqualified allocations—will go to Rosyth, with no tendering, no negotiations, nothing to do with price and nothing to do with conditions? *[Interruption.]* Ah! Or are we talking about the intention to give it, subject to price and subject to negotiation? In other words, is the first half subject to no guarantee whatsoever, as we have been saying?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman can do better than that. We have said that in the next 12 years 18 major warships and all the minor warships will go to Rosyth. Allocated programmes are not new. We have had allocated programmes for Rosyth and Devonport for a number of years. Of course we hold discussions with the yard about price. We cannot simply say, "Whatever you charge we will automatically pay." The hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) knows that that was a silly remark. I know that he did not mean it and that he certainly will not repeat it when he has thought about it.

We discuss with the allocated yard the price to be paid for a project to ensure that the taxpayer is not ripped off. That has been true of the way in which allocated programmes have been handled for Rosyth and Devonport. There is no change in the way in which allocated programmes are used. They have provided work for Rosyth and Devonport in the past, and that is what will happen in the future. It will be the same with Devonport. Devonport, in effect, has an allocated programme of the nuclear work. That does not mean that we shall give it the programme, whatever it charges. We shall discuss the price to be paid with Devonport.

**Dr. Godman:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I should like to continue. The hon. Member will have a chance to comment later.

The allocated programme builds on Rosyth's substantial experience of surface ship refitting. Many comments have been made in the past few weeks and months suggesting that Rosyth has no experience of surface ships. That is absolute nonsense. Rosyth has dealt with more than 79 surface ships, including frigates and destroyers, in the past few years. That is a very heavy programme.

The phasing will be organised in a way consistent with the practical management of the refit programme and ensuring a smooth transition from a mix of nuclear and non-nuclear work to refitting on surface ships only. The full allocation will include some of the Royal Navy's newest, largest and most advanced vessels, including aircraft carriers such as Ark Royal and Invincible, neither of which has been dealt with at Rosyth in the past. Both will be available for refit at Rosyth.

Refitting an aircraft carrier is a major industrial task. It is perhaps not appreciated that it involves 65,000 man weeks of work and takes two years to complete. That is very similar to the length of time required for a Trident submarine refit. I have indicated that Ark Royal and Invincible will be available for work not at Devonport but at Rosyth as a result of the announcements today. It is a huge technical project requiring a wide range of engineering skills of the highest order. At the peak of refitting an aircraft carrier, 1,000 persons will be on the site on that vessel alone, quite apart from any others.

**Mr. James Wallace** (Orkney and Shetland): It has been reported this evening that the right hon. and learned Gentleman's right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland used the words "guaranteed programme of work". The Secretary of State for Defence has not so far used the word "guaranteed". Can he now tell us that there will be a guaranteed programme of work?

**Mr. Rifkind:** That is the distinction between guaranteed and allocated. I have indicated quite categorically and unequivocally the number of ships that will go to Rosyth, and their classes.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Rifkind:** Many hon. Members want to speak in this short debate, and a long speech from me would not be fair to them.

These refits present considerable engineering challenges, but we are satisfied that Rosyth will be fully capable of meeting them and, indeed, will use this work as a springboard to bid for non-allocated work.

I am pleased at the response to my statement this afternoon from the chairman of Babcock Thorn, who said that he would direct all his efforts to ensuring that the programme of work was delivered and maximised. He said —I can do no better than repeat his words—that he believed that he could undertake the work and face competition with confidence and success. That is important. We know perfectly well how, until today, both yards maintained that that would not be possible if they did not win the nuclear work. Now that that matter has been resolved, it is good that Rosyth is facing the new opportunity in such a positive way. I welcome that attitude, and I am sure that the chairman's optimism will be justified.

With regard to employment, as in the past we expect both companies to continue to improve their productivity and hence their competitiveness. It is to be hoped that the increased competitiveness will enable the companies concerned at both yards to increase their workloads and hence their profitability. In that way, it should be possible to increase both productivity and efficiency and at the same time maintain or, indeed, increase employment levels. As at present, we expect the companies concerned at the two dockyards to continue to seek and to obtain commercial work to augment that provided by the Ministry of Defence. Such work tends to be of a general engineering nature, of which recent examples have included the refitting of railway carriages, refurbishing engines and other projects, both at Devonport and at Rosyth.

*[Mr. Rifkind]*

As I indicated this afternoon, however, the total Ministry of Defence workload is planned to decline towards the end of this decade. On the basis of the number of employees currently assessed as being necessary to fulfil Ministry of Defence work, there will be reductions of the order that I indicated earlier today. I acknowledge that, while 450 jobs at Rosyth or, for that matter, 350 at Devonport appear relatively few in terms of the total work force, it is regrettable that there should be any losses at all. We hope very much that both Rosyth and Devonport will be able to develop new areas of activity, thereby reducing the number of necessary job losses.

Our calculation of the employment consequences of the Government's proposals are based on detailed discussions with the two companies about their future business plans. Obviously the details of those discussions are confidential between us and the dockyard companies, but I can say that both companies put forward proposals both for nuclear refitting and for surface work only. The plans were discussed with the companies and with our specialist advisers. Thus, we have had from both yards information as to what a surface work programme might consist of.

I am conscious of the fact that this is a short debate. Having given way on a number of occasions, I intend now to come to a conclusion. Before doing so, however, I should say that I do not hide from the House or from anyone else the fact that this has been a difficult and painful decision. I am well aware of the aspirations at both Rosyth and Devonport, but I do not intend to take from Opposition Members—most of whom did not want Trident in Scotland in the first place—complaints about the outcome. That goes for the nationalist party in particular, which continues to hold that view. That did not make our decision any easier. What did make it easier, however, was the knowledge that the Royal Navy requires two dockyards, not one.

Over the past few months we have seen how the competition on the nuclear work has been of enormous benefit in saving the Royal Navy more than £250 million. That would not have happened had only one dockyard been in existence. The same principles apply to the surface ship programme, which consists of very many large warships. Therefore, I believe that those who, for very understandable reasons, will continue to be concerned about the future can take very considerable comfort from the fact that having two dockyards will not simply be beneficial in employment terms or helpful in resolving a difficult problem but will also provide major benefits for the Royal Navy. As a consequence, I believe that they can command confidence and support.

**Madam Speaker:** This is a very brief debate, and I seek the co-operation of hon. Members. I hope that speeches will be short so that as many hon. Members as possible may be called.

7.35 pm

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (Fife, North-East): The decision that was announced today may have consequences for the next 30 years. It is therefore extremely important that we should examine with some care the precise use of language that we heard in the statement delivered earlier and in the speech that has just been made. It is important also that we should remind ourselves precisely what Lord Younger felt compelled to write to *The Times* about a fortnight ago. In his letter, which has been quoted partly but not in its entirety, he says that he understands that the Government will soon be making a decision as to whether to maintain their intention to refit our nuclear submarines at Rosyth. He says:

> "I believe that the financial and operational case for doing so is now clear, as is the strong case for concentrating our refitting of surface warships at Devonport."

Thus, in the opinion of Lord Younger, a two-yard solution, with Rosyth taking the nuclear submarines and Devonport concentrating on surface warships, is the preferred conclusion. The noble Lord says:

> "There is now, therefore, a clear opportunity to confirm a long-term role for both Rosyth and Devonport which will serve the Royal Navy well and safeguard thousands of jobs in both locations.
>
> Before a final decision is taken, I feel I must remind all concerned"—

no doubt he had Ministers in mind when he said that—

> "of a matter of good faith which is involved here."

The next paragraph refers to the noble Lord's efforts to persuade public opinion in Scotland to accept Faslane. He goes on to say:

> "One of the most powerful arguments which I deployed was there would obviously be many jobs for Scotland associated with operating and maintaining the submarines. I know that many in Scotland would therefore feel badly let down if a major part of these jobs were now to be removed from Scotland.
>
> I hope it will be understood that I would find it impossible to support such a move as my good faith would clearly be called into question."

One could hardly have a clearer statement from a former Secretary of State for Defence who was previously Secretary of State for Scotland. That clearly shows the extent to which he believed that a commitment had been given.

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang):** The hon. and learned Gentleman may like to know that I spoke to Lord Younger today, who declared himself well satisfied with the arrangements announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

**Mr. Campbell:** I had a small side bet with myself that, at some stage in the debate, there would be an intervention of that kind. We shall wait to see whether, in two days' time, *The Times* carries a letter telling us that the earlier one has been withdrawn, that the former Secretary of State for Defence no longer feels that his good faith has been impugned by the decision that the Government announced today. I shall wait for that letter before I make a judgment on the extent to which Lord Younger may have changed his mind.

**Mr. Patrick Nicholls** (Teignbridge): Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that he is saying exactly what he said on the "Today" programme yesterday—that it is Liberal defence policy that the submarine refit should go to Rosyth? If he and the Liberal party believe that the work should go to Rosyth and not to Devonport, why have his colleagues in the west country been saying that it is Liberal policy to support the bid by Devonport?

**Mr. Campbell:** I have addressed several meetings of workers from both dockyards, and I do not recall the hon. Gentleman being there. During the past 12 months, I have made it clear that a two-yard solution was appropriate, with the submarine work going to Rosyth and the surface

work to Devonport. That solution lends itself to the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) and the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). If the hon. Gentleman is trying to claim that every party has a universal view on the matter, he is grossly mistaken. Liberal Democrat Members of Parliament who represent constituencies in the south-west have campaigned on behalf of their constituencies; who would have expected them to do anything other than that? They have campaigned on behalf of their constituents, which I regard as entirely right and proper.

**Mr. Nicholls** *rose*——

**Mr. Campbell:** I shall not give way. When it comes to wisdom, I think that I can do rather better than the hon. Gentleman.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Hon. Members will resume their seats.

**Mr. Campbell:** As my party's defence spokesman, I have made my position clear over the past 12 months. If the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) has only just woken up to it, that suggests that he has not followed the issue with much concentration.

I want to deal with the words used in the Secretary of State's statement. He told us that work was to be "allocated". "Allocated" means nothing more than "assigned", and work which is allocated can be reallocated. A moment ago, in response to an intervention, the Secretary of State tried to say that the position of Devonport was the same as that of Rosyth. He should read his own statement. He said:

> "I am therefore announcing today our conclusion that, subject to satisfactory contractual negotiations, we shall proceed with the Devonport nuclear refitting facility proposals."

There is to be a contractual relationship in respect of the nuclear submarine refitting, but we are not told that there will be a contractual relationship for 12 years for the allocation of work to Rosyth.

The language of today's statement carries the same emphasis and has the same substance as that which Lord Younger used many times when arguing the case on behalf of Rosyth. If the language used by Lord Younger can now be departed from, the same could apply to that used by the Secretary of State.

**Mr. Harris:** The hon. and learned Gentleman rightly emphasises the importance of language. Will he explain something to the House and, in particular, to the voters in the south-west? In a BBC interview yesterday and again today, he said that he was speaking in his capacity as the defence spokesman for the Liberal party. Were the Liberal Members of Parliament from the south-west and the candidates in the county council elections in Cornwall and Devon saying something completely different? Is the hon. and learned Gentleman saying that they were not presenting Liberal party policy, or is it simply a case of the hon. and learned Gentleman saying one thing to some audiences, especially in Scotland, while his party, true to form, is saying something completely different in the south-west?

**Mr. Campbell:** If I am trying to conceal my position, going on the "Today" programme and telling the world what it is is a pretty rum way of doing so. Those who argued for Devonport did so on a constituency basis, just as some Conservative Members argued against the hon. Member for Tayside, North and the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross. Is the hon. Gentleman denying the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross the right to express his opinion? Is the hon. and learned Gentleman not to be allowed to express his opinion because it might be contrary to the views of Conservative Members from the west country? *[Interruption.]* We appear to be taking part in the first round of what one might describe as Operation Christchurch. There is more emphasis on that than on the merits of the argument with which we are concerned.

When Lord Younger made his commitment, the present Secretary of State for Defence was the Secretary of State for Scotland. The commitment was made publicly and repeatedly, and I do not think it is unreasonable to infer that it was also the commitment of the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), the present Secretary of State for Defence. If Lord Younger thinks that it is a question of good faith, is it unreasonable to ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he believes a question of good faith is now raised by his support for what he has announced today? It is a serious question to which we are entitled to an answer.

One of the things that is forgotten is that the nuclear refitting work will be guaranteed. That will make a contribution to the fixed costs of Devonport, which will enable Devonport, quite legitimately, to offer the most competitive prices for surface work. Which hon. Member of any party believes that in five years the Treasury will say that, because it had been stated on an evening in June in 1993 that the work would be allocated to Rosyth, it must abide by that statement and that it cannot explore the possibility of obtaining cheaper prices by going to Devonport? I cannot believe that anyone considers that a reasonable proposition.

**Mr. Martin O'Neill** (Clackmannan): Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the workers of Swan Hunter would endorse that point? They were promised the Royal Fleet Auxiliary work which was then taken from them and given to the people who built the Trident boats, which are now to be refitted at Devonport. They can make a sufficiently low bid because their overheads have been carried by the Trident programme.

**Mr. Campbell:** Precisely. The cost of this type of operation is as dependent on fixed costs as on revenue costs, so the advantage that Devonport will enjoy, quite legitimately, will give it a pre-eminent position in competition. Who believes that the Government will say that there can be no competition because, on an evening in June, they had said that they had allocated work to Rosyth?

**Dr. Godman:** As a lawyer, is the hon. and learned Gentleman completely satisfied that the allocation of commercial contracts for the refitting of warships to a commercially managed facility does not in any way infringe European Community directives on competition and public procurement?

**Mr. Campbell:** If the word "allocated" is used, it does not. If another form of language were used, which implied a contractual obligation, there might be a contravention.

*[Mr. Campbell]*

The word "allocated" has clearly been used advisedly for, among others, the reason suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

It was notable that the words "strategic" and "operational" did not appear in the Secretary of State's statement, although Lord Younger clearly believed that operational matters in respect of nuclear submarines would best be served by a solution involving that work being allocated to Rosyth.

The cold war has finished. One does not wish to be too apocalyptic, but there have been substantial developments in missile technology. Which member of the Government will tell us that within the next 30 years no unfriendly country will have available to it missile technology that might enable it, if it were so minded, to target what may turn out to be the sole refitting yard in the United Kingdom? It is not sensible to create circumstances in which, through the operation of the marketplace, all refitting work is concentrated in one location. Equally, is it not sensible to take account of the fact—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) has something to say, no doubt he will try to catch your eye later, Madam Speaker, rather than making inaudible observations from a sedentary position.

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** I am sorry, but I was having great difficulty in following the hon. and learned Gentleman's argument, because he started his speech by saying that all the refitting of nuclear submarines should be concentrated at Rosyth, but now he is saying that we should not concentrate the work in one place because of the threat from nuclear missiles. Can he explain that to the House?

**Mr. Campbell:** That is not what I said, and if the hon. Gentleman reads *Hansard* he will realise that. I said that we should not concentrate all our refitting work, submarine and surface, in one place. That would not make strategic sense.

There is also an operational reason for putting nuclear submarine refitting work at Rosyth. It is a gentle two hours by car from Faslane, where the submarines will be based. If ready access to information and equipment is needed, how better to obtain it than in two locations only two hours apart?

I look forward with interest to hearing the request from the work force at Devonport that they should now take the four decommissioned nuclear submarines sitting at Rosyth. The Secretary of State said that there would be negotiation about that, but I fancy that the negotiation may be rather one-sided, with the management of Rosyth saying, "Take them away; we do not want them." Where will they go? Will they be towed to Devonport? The people of Devonport may have something to say about that.

In a letter that must have been written in full knowledge of the changed circumstances on which the Secretary of State for Defence sought to rely in his speech, Lord Younger continued to advance the view that a two-yard solution was not only possible but desirable. The Government have failed to heed that advice, and in that respect I believe that they have failed in their responsibility.

7.51 pm

**Mr. Phil Gallie** (Ayr): I welcome this short debate, which follows a long period of doubt and argument. For me the past 24 hours have been the worst in many months. I really began to feel that Rosyth's argument for the maintenance of the submarine refit programme was about to disappear. The importance of the programme was the monopoly effect, and the long-term guarantee of work for people within the successful dockyard for many years to come.

The nuclear deterrence programme is a platform on which Scottish Tory Members of Parliament have long stood. We have argued the case with vigour, and in Scotland we used to be told that we were on a most unpopular platform. All the Opposition parties spoke against us. We welcomed the nuclear deterrent submarine fleet to Scotland, both to Faslane, where the operations were based, and to Rosyth, where we maintained the Polaris fleet successfully for many years. I must express my regret that the long tradition established over that period is about to disappear.

I stood for election in Dunfermline, West in 1987. I was a former dockyard apprentice, and I believed that I was arguing for the dockyard and for common sense dockyard policies. It did not do me a lot of good, I must admit, although the Labour party and the Scottish National party both opposed Trident. At that time the Labour party was prepared to decimate defence spending, so the result of the election defied belief.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) referred to my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Younger. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that times change, and that the ending of the cold war has brought a major change. When Lord Younger was Secretary of State for Defence, defence spending was rising year by year. And year by year Opposition spokesmen said, "Cut that expenditure. It is disgraceful. We should spend the money elsewhere." Now defence spending is falling, and we must examine the realities of the financial arguments. We must get the best deal possible for the money that the MOD spends on land, at sea and in the air. We must seek the best value.

On that basis our requirements had to be re-examined. I am sad to say that the re-examination was not at any time to Rosyth's advantage. I regret the need; I regret that that had to happen. In December and January things looked gloomy for Rosyth. But I am delighted to say that the Secretary of State for Scotland appeared to step in and to use a heck of a lot of influence to ensure that there was a rethink, and the Government pulled back from what seemed an inevitable decision in favour of Devonport. My right hon. Friend ensured that there was a level playing field, and Rosyth was given a chance to submit a fresh bid.

At that time the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley criticised the Government in the House for the delay, just as he criticised the Government yesterday for having taken so long to come to a decision. But I should say that it was in the interests of Rosyth and of Scotland that the Government took such a long time. We had to ensure that the final decision was based soundly on both economic and strategic sense. The time that has been taken suggests to me that the decisions have been reached on a logical basis.

**Dr. Godman** *rose*——

**Mr. Gallie:** I give way to my——

**Dr. Godman:** I thought for a moment that the hon. Gentleman was going to call me his hon. Friend. There is a good deal of sense in what he says about times changing, but some things remain constant, and one of those is ministerial bad faith. It was Lord Younger who, as Mr. George Younger, sold Scott Lithgow down the river despite his promises to support that yard's submarine-building capability. He reneged on those promises, and that is my fear with that odd-job lot on the Government Front Bench. I do not share the hon. Gentleman's confidence in them.

**Mr. Gallie:** Clearly the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and I differ about some things. On occasion we share common views, but certainly not on this issue. I identify with his recent comments on law and order, but those are not the subject of the debate tonight.

Over recent months a heck of a lot of hypocrisy has been in evidence. I have been delighted to work with Members of all shades of political opinion from all parts of Scotland to try to project the Rosyth argument. I believe that we had a good argument. Yet I hear that I have been criticised. I believe that I was called a "lickspittle" tonight by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley. That is shameful. I stick to my principles, not like the hon. Gentleman who changes from side to side. One day he believes in CND; the next day he wants Trident at Rosyth. What nonsense. If he is talking about lickspittles, he should at least put his credentials to the test and stick to his principles.

Recently, the Fife regional council became a nuclear-free zone. However, it wanted the Trident contract to remain at Rosyth. I must pay the people in the Fife region a compliment—they put up a good fight. It is a pity that they did not think about some of the things that they were saying before they were forced into the battleground.

When I look at hon. Members from the Scottish National party—I must say this with a bit of humour—I remember recently watching families from Rosyth coming ashore at Westminster pier from a pleasure cruise. One member of the SNP was standing with a placard in one hand and a child in the other. What did the placard say? It said: "Rosyth is home for Trident". That is hypocrisy.

**Dr. Godman:** What did the child say?

**Mr. Gallie:** The child believed what the placard said because her family fortunes had been tied up for many years in the maintenance of the nuclear programme.

We must examine the strategic reasons why Devonport has been selected. There is a 90-day period in which we must examine the credentials. Rosyth's strongest argument was its link with Faslane. I believe that that important aspect was considered but I would like further confirmation. From the figures presented, there is little doubt that Devonport's argument was fairly won. Once again, the figures must be presented and scrutinised. They will be carefully analysed over the next few weeks.

The dismal feelings that I had yesterday were based on a belief that we were faced with many thousands of job losses in either Devonport or Rosyth. I am pleased that the figures announced by the Secretary of State for Defence do not justify our worst fears. Having said that, the loss of 450 jobs at Rosyth is something that I do not welcome. Indeed, I regret it.

Rosyth has the competence to maintain the surface fleet in the next 10 years. The work force will build their skills and achieve a level of excellence that will ensure that they can compete with any other yard in the land in the years ahead. Rosyth will have a future based on the skills, enthusiasm and drive of its excellent work force. I welcome the words of the management at Rosyth today who stressed that their aim was to become the premium yard in the United Kingdom for surface ship refitting. They have a premium work force and will achieve that aim.

Over the next 90 days, I seek an assurance from my right hon. and learned Friend on the issue of the allocated vessels. At Rosyth, a level of skills has been built up in the nuclear health physics field, but those skills will not be able to be used fully in the coming years. Rosyth and Devonport have maintained traditional links over the years. I would like to think that there will be a place for some of the workers at Rosyth to undertake the nuclear work at Devonport in the years ahead. One aspect that I must not ignore is the fact that 3,000 jobs are still tied up at Faslane. Faslane is important to the Scottish economy and we must not forget that.

In conclusion, I simply record my thanks to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who met the Scottish Conservative Back-Benchers. He listened attentively and seemed to have a good grasp of all the issues. I thank the Secretary of State for Defence, who had an open door for us, and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who listened to us yesterday when there was a late bid from Rosyth. Above all, I thank the Secretary of State for Scotland. I share his disappointment tonight. His enthusiasm and determination for a prosperous Scotland and a prosperous Rosyth for the future will be ongoing.

8.6 pm

**Mr. Henry McLeish** (Fife, Central): We do not need any lectures on principles from Conservative Members. The hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) made a distinguished and excellent presentation at one of our joint parliamentary press conferences. The difference between that presentation and his speech tonight is marked. One issue that annoys the Scots intently is that Conservative Members speak with one tongue in Scotland, speak with another voice on joint platforms and say something else again in the Chamber. That is hypocrisy. Essentially, that is at the heart of the problem.

The key political issue that the Government have tried to avoid is the betrayal over the question of Trident coming to Rosyth. It does not matter how we dress up the alternative—we have simply ignored the issue of why, after so many promises, Trident has gone to Devonport and the surface fleet has gone to Rosyth.

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. McLeish:** I will not give way.

In my constituency this evening, there is concern about the statement. There are three parts to that concern. Between now and the year 2000, we will have allocations but no guarantees. Between the year 2000 and 2005, we will have fewer allocations and simply no guarantees. What will happen beyond 2005? There is no 30-year

*[Mr. McLeish]*

guarantee for the apprentices and those who have made a commitment to the defence of the United Kingdom. We simply have a three-phase campaign which could result in a significant diminution of employment in Fife and Rosyth.

The question that my constituents want answered is, when does an allocation become a guarantee? In a programme on Friday 18 June, John Foster, a member of the Scottish lobby, asked Lord Younger an important question about the future. I quote:

"'Mr. Rifkind, the Defence Secretary, has always decreed that there will be two dockyards', he said. It has been suggested anyway that Rosyth, if it did not get the nuclear refitting, would get some guaranteed surface refitting work possibly for a period of years."

The general view expressed in Scotland is that it is difficult to believe that there would be an effective solution for Rosyth because, presumably, the work would be competitive and there would have to be a level playing field. Anything less than a full-term guarantee that Rosyth will be written into surface refitting for the foreseeable future would not be good news.

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. McLeish:** No.

The essential core political issue, which has not been addressed despite opportunities to do so, is the difference between an allocation and a guarantee. It is simply that the Government have no long-term intention of sticking to the commitment made to give the surface work to Rosyth. I challenge the Minister to translate the question of allocations into a specific guarantee.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) got to the nub of the matter by suggesting that an allocation was not a guarantee. My constituents cannot pay mortgages or work on the basis of glib allocations, especially given the track record of the Conservative Government over the past decade. That major core issue has not been addressed.

We have examined the figures given in the statement today. Our anlaysis differs greatly from that of the Secretary of State for Defence. No one believes that there will be only 450 job losses at Rosyth. The figure could be 1,000 or much higher. So the first question is, when will the Government come clean? I hope that the next 90 days will not masquerade as consultation but will give us the truth about the political package which the Government present as a business issue.

What about the 12 years of work? I have already raised the point and I do not want to dwell on it. However, hon. Members have made the point that the largest number of allocations of work will not substitute for copper-bottomed guarantees to the work force, their families, Fife people and people throughout Scotland.

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. George Kynoch** (Kincardine and Deeside): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. McLeish:** No. I will not give way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley made it clear that the allocations of work could become complex if there were a problem of price or scheduling of work. One is dealing with a reasonably small number of ships over a long period and with substantial technical work. My belief, which is shared by my constituents, is that the arrangement gives the Government an opportunity to duck their commitments, as they have done in previous years.

We shall probe the Government on many outstanding issues. The main task of Labour Members is to secure the largest number of jobs for Rosyth. The statement today will not do so. That is why my hon. Friends have expressed anxieties about it.

I have heard much hypocrisy from the Conservative Benches, but also from the Scottish National party. I wish to remind the House of a recommendation made by an SNP health council to a district council in Scotland on 25 November 1992. There was a debate about the future of Rosyth. The recommendation was that the district council "totally oppose the deployment of Trident to Rosyth Dockyard".

The Conservatives then said the opposite. They wanted Rosyth to get the Trident refit. My friends in the party on that council moved that, in order to reach an agreed resolution that would satisfy all involved, the council should invite the management and work force to come to the council to make their case. The vote was 12:11. All the SNP members voted against inviting the management and work force to make their case. That is hypocrisy. I await with interest the comments this evening of any SNP Member.

Scots know the guilty party in the betrayal of the promise of the Trident refit for Rosyth. They will not accept the overtures from the SNP, which did nothing to assist the campaign to help the work force to secure that contract. Scots will admire honesty and hard work on their behalf, but they will not accept the treachery of both the SNP and the Conservative party on this vital, strategic, industrial, employment and economic issue. That is the agenda. We shall continue our campaign.

8.13 pm

**Mr. Gary Streeter** (Plymouth, Sutton): I am pleased to make a brief speech in this important debate. Naturally, the news that Devonport has won the Trident contract has been well received in Plymouth tonight. It has been a long and fierce battle. However, there is an affinity between Devonport and Rosyth dockyards. Of course, there will be an understanding in Devonport tonight of how the workers at Rosyth feel. There will be pleasure that the Government package announced this afternoon was a substantial package of jobs, hope and future for Rosyth. That news is also well received in Devonport and Plymouth tonight. It is what we want and we welcome it.

We have heard a great deal about Rosyth in the debate tonight. That is right, but it is important for a few minutes to point some of the background of the case for Devonport. I begin by thanking my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and his colleagues in the Government for the way in which they have handled this difficult process of the contract race. My constituents understand what a difficult decision it has been and they respect the way in which my right hon. and hon. Friends have conducted themselves throughout.

I wish to explain why the issue is so important to Devonport and paint the economic backdrop. All the traditional industries in the west country—agriculture, fishing, defence-related industries, tourism and so on—are

in decline for a range of reasons. Many Members of Parliament regard the west country as a pleasant place to go on holiday. So it is, but the backdrop to the region is economic decline. We have high unemployment and the economic trends are going against us.

Our dockyard has a fine history. Devonport exists because of the dockyard. It has been there for 300 years. It is the reason why we are there. Since 1983, when the private management of the dockyard took over, we have lost 7,500 jobs through scaling down our defence needs. We have paid our part of the peace dividend. All of us in Plymouth know families who have lost jobs in the dockyard in the past seven years. We have taken our fair share of the pain, believe me.

In addition to that backdrop, Plymouth is peripheral. As it is so far from other large cities, inward investment has not come our way very easily. That is not the case for the centre of Scotland. Plymouth is the engine room for the west country and the dockyard is the dynamo for that engine. That is why the issue is so important to us in Devonport. That is why we fought so hard.

What was our case? It is perfectly true that some years ago there was no question but that the nuclear submarine would be maintained at the RDH7 project at Rosyth; that was everyone's assumption. It would cost the taxpayer more than £450 million. But two years ago, the management at Devonport, headed by Mike Lance and Peter Whitehouse, realised that all the skills, equipment and facilities necessary to maintain the Trident submarine were found at Devonport. The dockyard could have a part of that work.

The dockyard put forward a scheme to the Ministry of Defence. It was painstakingly put together. It drew on the experience that Devonport had of refitting nuclear submarines. It drew on the skills of our work force in Plymouth. It was substantially cheaper than the RDH7 project. It would save the taxpayer more than £150 million. The bid had to be taken seriously. No responsible Government could have turned their back on that bid.

Suddenly, there were two possible options for maintaining the Trident submarine. Rosyth rightly realised that the RDH7 project was too expensive. It bravely made a bid based on upgrading its existing docks. The Government had to decide between the bids. The Devonport bid put its capital cost at £250 million. Its operational costs were lower than those at Rosyth. It met the safety requirements. The two bids had to be taken seriously.

Collocated with the dockyard at Plymouth is the Navy base. That is another reason why the dockyard is there. As it was so important to maintain the dockyard in Plymouth, the whole community swung behind the bid of Devonport Management Ltd., including the local authority under both Conservative and Labour control, the trade unions, the county council, the chamber of commerce and local Members of Parliament. They did so because it was vital to our community.

It is perfectly true that we pressed the case. During the election campaign in April last year, the bid was the biggest issue that faced Plymouth, probably Devon and Cornwall and perhaps even the whole of the west country. In the election campaign, we saw the grotesque spectacle of the Labour defence spokesman coming to Plymouth and shouting for Devonport, then going up to Scotland and saying that the work must go to Rosyth.

**Mr. O'Neill:** That is not true.

**Mr. Streeter:** That is what the west country had to put up with all those years. I am bound to say——

**Mr. O'Neill:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As I am the person to whom the hon. Gentleman is referring, I would wish him clear, I did not do that — in a pair not cast. If he looks at the press clippings from both parts of the United Kingdom, he will see that what he said may be in a Tory party brief, but it is not the truth.

**Madam Speaker:** That is not a point of order for me. The hon. Gentleman might have sought to intervene—which he seems to have done.

**Mr. Streeter:** I am grateful for that intervention point of order. I encourage the hon. Gentleman to look at the press clippings again and at the leaflets distributed by the Labour party in the general election because its will say a different story. He is directly quoted as saying for Devonport.

For all the reasons that I have outlined, the community of Plymouth got behind the Devonport bid. We were fighting for our lives, for our city and for jobs for our young people. That was why there has been such a fierce debate and such a fiercely fought competition. I pay tribute to the management and work force of Devonport Management Ltd. which made the running in the contract race, and handled itself skilfully. I pay tribute to its tenacity and professionalism. Those are the reasons why its bid was successful.

Why did we win the contract race? It was simply because our bid complied with the specifications of the Ministry of Defence. It was £66 million cheaper than the Rosyth bid in terms of capital and operational costs. What choice would any responsible Government have in those circumstances? The Navy was happy with the Devonport bid and clearly there was little choice for the Government but to accept it.

The competition process has thrown up one successful result: the taxpayer has gained enormously—to the tune of about £250 million. No responsible Government could turn their back on that. No wonder the Conservative party espouses competitive tendering and market testing as an essential part of government—it is the best thing for the taxpayer. The Devonport bid was cheaper than the Rosyth bid, which is why we won and why the west country is enough grateful to [illegible] for the way in which it conducted itself.

It is also recognised in the west country, however, that only a Conservative Government would have delivered Trident to the west country. That fact is now abundantly clear—the Labour Front Bench were too stuck in position-clear. Despite the burdens on the taxpayer and the costs, the Labour Front Bench were unable have turned their heads in the sand and given the contract to Rosyth. There is more to this, but what has dwarfed the people of the west country is the revelation that the Liberals' official party policy—despite what the party was saying locally—was to give the contract to Rosyth. That has devastated people in the west country, who will not forget or forgive that.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** When did we hon. Gentlemen first learn that that was our policy?

**Mr. Streeter:** I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for his intervention because I have in my hand a statement that he made yesterday when he spoke on Radio 4. It was a shock because we in the west country have been bamboozled by the Liberals, who gave us the impression that they were fighting for Devonport as that was their official party policy. However, that is not so; yesterday, the hon. and learned Gentleman said:

"Well, I have made a judgment in my capacity as the Defence Spokesman for my Party . . . I believe that the two yard solution which the Secretary of State has argued for can best be exemplified by sending the nuclear submarines to Rosyth and the surface ones to Devonport."

That statement has gone down like a lead balloon in the west country. The Liberal Democrats tried to pull the wool over our eyes; they have been exposed for what they are—a party that has turned its back on the west country.

The outcome of the important contract race is that Devonport has won because it offered the best value for money for the taxpayer. We have seen that competitive tendering works—it has saved money for the Navy and the taxpayer. The Government have clearly committed themselves to a two-yard solution. They have proved that that is their intention; they have given assurances and provided the people of Rosyth with a package of compensation of work and hope which the people of the west country support.

8.24 pm

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): If nothing else, the speech of the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) has confirmed that today's decision was not a financial or strategic but a political decision. The hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton chose to interpret it in that light.

If hon. Members had any doubt about the winners and losers of today's events, they needed only to look at the south coast Members of Parliament who were celebrating opposite the House of Commons earlier today. No doubt the Secretary of State for Scotland would use the phrase that he used in a Scottish newspaper this morning—a phrase that I would never use—and describe them as the "bloody English". I think that they are merely politicians celebrating a victory. The Secretary of State for Scotland should be present now to explain why he was defeated.

We are trying to find a guaranteed future for Rosyth. Various parties will have different ways of finding that future. The question before us today is whether the announcement from the Secretary of State for Defence will provide that guaranteed future. The information that we have received and our experience of Government guarantees and commitments show that the answer must be no.

As has been said, there is a difference between allocated work and guaranteed work, although—given the loose words that he used on television earlier this evening—that difference seems to have escaped the Secretary of State for Scotland. Even on the basis of the allocated work, I suggest that the reduction in personnel at Rosyth will be much greater than the estimate of 450 that we have been given.

The Secretary of State for Defence gave us some new figures this evening. He said that, over and above the 18 major surface ships that he had mentioned this afternoon, a further 49 surface ships would be allocated. A quick calculation suggests that 67 surface ships in the next 13 years will be allocated, which is fewer than the 79 that the Secretary of State for Defence mentioned in his statement this afternoon.

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson** *rose*——

**Mr. Salmond:** If the hon. Gentleman sits down, I might be generous to him later in my speech, which is more than can be said for the Secretary of State for Defence who refused to give way to me earlier.

As I was saying—if the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) would care to listen—those figures would result in a total of 67 surface ships in the next 13 years being allocated—fewer than the 79 which have been turned around by Rosyth in the past 10 years. In addition, there are the five nuclear refits that Rosyth completed in the same period, using the huge dedicated work force that it has for this purpose. That seems to show that the estimated 450 job losses on such a programme—even if we accept that the allocated programme will go to Rosyth—is a serious underestimate.

What is the competitive position that Rosyth will face? As the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said—he has most successfully made the point—Devonport will still be in a position to compete for the unallocated surface work. Due to the overheads which Devonport will be able to carry on a range of activities, the price that it submits will inevitably be lower than that of any other shipyard or dockyard. The chances are that its tender price will become the prevailing price which Rosyth will be expected to meet for the allocated work. That will place Rosyth at an unfair disadvantage to Devonport in a competitive market.

**Dr. Godman:** The fate that the hon. Gentleman is spelling out for Rosyth is precisely the fate suffered by the employees of Scott Lithgow. At the time the then Mr. George Younger made all sorts of promises, but there was no way in which Scott Lithgow could compete with Vickers of Barrow-in-Furness in terms of submarine building. That sent Scott Lithgow down the Clyde.

**Mr. Salmond:** The hon. Gentleman's point is well made. In an interview in *The Herald* yesterday, Mr. Alan Smith said:

"If they get the submarines, they will be strong enough to do us down . . . Yes, they will be in a position to knock us for six, fighting vigorously to get the surface ships as well. It would spell the beginning of the end for Rosyth."

Rosyth will face unfair competition over the unallocated sections of the surface work, which will affect the prevailing price even of the allocated section. It comes ill from the Secretary of State for Defence to claim the benefits of competition for the nuclear refit when his announcement this afternoon ends such competition.

What guarantees were given by Lord Younger in his statement in *The Times* earlier this month? Once again the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East put his finger on it when he pointed out that the Secretary of State for Defence was reduced to partially quoting the man who was his predecessor as the Secretary of State for Scotland. The context of the letter makes quite clear the extent of the breach of faith that Lord Younger was fearful of—he campaigned and sold nuclear bases to Scotland on the argument that the refitting work would come to Rosyth. Clearly that is a substantial breach of faith.

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Salmond:** I shall let the hon. Gentleman intervene later in my speech if he has a little patience.

However the extent of bad faith went further than that. The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) quoted what Lord Younger said in the "Scottish Lobby" programme broadcast on 19 June and pointed out that Lord Younger had already anticipated exactly the solution that was announced and defended by the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Defence this afternoon, and said that it would be inadequate and would not guarantee the future of Rosyth.

Later in the same interview in "Scottish Lobby", he was asked whether it was just a personal breach of faith, a personal commitment that he made in the mid 1980s when he had responsibility, or whether he interpreted it as a breach of faith by the entire Government. The interviewer said:

"So it seemed then a terrible breach of faith—I mean you yourself have talked about the concern that you personally would feel about this. But it would be a terrible breach of faith by the government wouldn't it?"

The answer from Lord Younger was:

"Well, I think it would. If you take it we were persuaded in Scotland that there were the jobs and we therefore agreed to go along with all the other bits of it. I think to let it be fixed up in Scotland and then take away some of the jobs is something you should only do with a very very overwhelmingly good reason".

Perhaps Lord Younger found his overwhelmingly good reason when the Secretary of State for Scotland phoned him up earlier today and said, "I am in the most incredible political fix. I cannot persuade my Cabinet colleagues, but can I rely on you to keep quiet and pretend that the breach of faith is not as extensive as you have indicated in your letter in *The Times*?"

It was a breach of faith by the Government and not just by Lord Younger. That is why it is incredible that the Secretary of State for Scotland should be heralding his announcement as an extraordinary victory for his lobbying power in Parliament. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to intervene now because I am about to deal with the point that I am sure he is going to make.

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** The hon. Gentleman is talking about guarantees and allocations. What guarantees could he give the people of Rosyth on the basis of the first paragraph of his own party's defence manifesto which said:

"The SNP is committed to a non-nuclear Scotland. An independent Scotland will immediately withdraw from the UK's Trident programme and will order nuclear weapons and installations off our soil. There will be no place for scandalously expensive, impractical and ultimately useless nuclear weapons."?

What guarantee could the hon. Gentleman give the people of Rosyth when that was his manifesto?

**Mr. Salmond:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that free publicity for the Scottish National party manifesto. I was coming to exactly that point.

Rosyth in an independent Scottish context would be a non-nuclear first-line base. An independent Scotland—*[Interruption.]* Believe it or not, Denmark, which is a similar maritime country to Scotland, has naval bases and dockyards. The difference between Rosyth in a British context and a Scottish context is that in a Scottish context it now is the No. 1 nuclear base and dockyard on the east coast of Scotland whereas in a British context it is a second division, B-league base and is now subject to a very uncertain future indeed.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Salmond:** If the hon. Gentleman cares to examine the budget proposals that we put forward for an independent Scotland, he will see that, because of the distortion and concentration of defence expenditure in the south and south-west of England, it is possible to reduce the overall defence budget in Scotland and still maintain around the current expenditure on procurement because Scotland lost out so badly in the last United Kingdom defence budget.

Turning to the point I was about to make on the general election campaign, the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), the then Secretary of State for Defence, was arguing with me in a radio interview. "Where would Rosyth be," said the right hon. Gentleman, "if it were not able to bid and compete for nuclear refitting work in an independent have a guaranteed future in an independent Scotland.

What there surely should be agreement on tonight is that there is no guaranteed future for Rosyth in a British context. So next time we hear Conservative and Labour politicians arguing in general election campaigns in Scotland that the only way to secure the future of defence bases in Scotland is to maintain the union it will get the horse laugh from the Scottish people that it richly deserves after this afternoon's betrayal.

In conclusion, the Secretary of State for Defence said earlier today that he will find——

**Mr. Home Robertson:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Salmond:** The hon. Gentleman has heard me say that I am not giving way, so perhaps he will resume his seat.

The Secretary of State for Defence told us earlier this afternoon that there would be an amicable solution to the question of whether the rotting nuclear hulks would be left at Rosyth or exported down south. The only amicable solution to that question is that these nuclear hulks should be removed immediately because no one in Scotland will accept a future for Rosyth as an elephants graveyard for nuclear submarines.

8.36 pm

**Miss Emma Nicholson** (Torridge and Devon, West): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me a few moments in this valuable Adjournment debate. I claim a right to two or three minutes on behalf of my constituents who provide perhaps 15 per cent. of the work force of Devonport dockyard. May I say how wonderful it is that we have won the contract on merit. The quality of the work in Devon is superb and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) who represents the constituency next to mine has pointed out, there is no question but that the best dockyard has won the contract.

Of course it must be very difficult to have lost and perhaps that is why the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson), in whose constituency the Devonport dockyard resides, is not in the Chamber and

*[Miss Emma Nicholson]*

has not spoken. The reason is that he is in direct conflict with his right hon. and hon. Friends on the Labour Front Bench. Winning must be a somewhat bitter pill for him, just as the debate tonight is a bitter pill for Liberal Democrat Members, who have said such different things in the west country from the public pronouncements of their defence spokesman tonight and yesterday.

I should like to thank the Secretary of State for Defence on behalf of my constituents in Bere Alston, Bere Ferrows, Were Quay and the Yelverton area, who provide such a high proportion of the work force in the Devonport dockyard. I should also like to thank the Secretary of State for Defence on behalf of those at the Appledore shipyard in the northern part of my constituency who also assist in the repair work at the dockyard, and to whom other work is sometimes given.

We have a fine sea-going and shipbuilding tradition, as hon. Members with whom we have been linked in Scotland know, and I want to make it clear it gives me no pleasure or happiness to learn of the unhappiness at Rosyth. It is sad when one cannot win everything. But it is not a case of winner takes all, because the Secretary of State for Defence has managed such an equitable division with only 450 job losses in Rosyth. That is remarkable. Many months ago, a trades union leader from Rosyth told me that he was expecting at least 2,000 or 3,000 over the next four years. Now a Conservative Secretary of State has managed to prove him wrong, and I for one rejoice in that.

This was a wonderful decision by the Secretary of State. On behalf of my constituents who work in Devonport I want to pay tribute to every west country Conservative colleague, regardless of whether he or she had a direct involvement. They have all banded together and fought for this superb decision.

I extend my good wishes to Rosyth; I am delighted that only 450 job losses are forecast and that a full programme of work lies ahead for that magnificent yard.

8.39 pm

**Mr. John McFall** (Dumbarton): The guilty man is the Secretary of State for Scotland. Throughout the 1980s, we had nothing but promises, promises, promises, but where have those promises led us? Between 1980 and 1993, promises were freely made every year. I remind the House of the promise in 1984 given by the Minister responsible for the armed services, the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley):

"I should like to take this opportunity to announce that we have now settled where the refitting of the Trident submarines will be carried out; it will be at Rosyth."—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1984; Vol. 68, c. 1122.]

The former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), said, as reported in *The Herald* on 10 December 1985:

"Commercial management of the Royal Dockyards offers the prospect of attracting even more work than there is at present, and it is the Government's intention to push ahead with this advancement. There is a brighter future for Rosyth."

The right hon. Gentleman should tell that to the workers of Rosyth and of Scotland on this day.

Rosyth has been betrayed—a fact of which I was clearly reminded when I received a phone call on Monday morning from the press to tell me that there had been a full nuclear alert on Sunday at the Faslane nuclear base. We were reminded of the consequences of having such bases in our constituencies. There is a price to be paid—a certain tension in the air. We have to live with those consequences.

At my surgery a couple of weeks ago, someone who works at the base came to tell me that he had leukaemia. I do not for a minute say that the base is responsible, but health and safety issues in a nuclear environment have to be faced by those of us who represent areas such as Faslane. If we bear such responsibilities, surely we should also have the benefits of the maintenance of Trident. This simple argument has been put to me and my fellow Members time and again.

As for the strategic considerations, as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) pointed out, Rosyth is but a gentle two-hour drive from Faslane. On strategic grounds alone, therefore, the nuclear submarine refitting should be located at Rosyth.

I keep in regular touch with the workers at the base. Many of them tell me that they might prefer not to be working there, but it is at least a job: it keeps body and soul together. It keeps families intact. This decision, therefore, is taking effect against a background of the employment black spots in our constituencies. Rosyth will become an employment black hole after this.

In his short and eloquent speech, the Secretary of State talked about Rosyth but did not mention jobs or training. The defence industries are being run down, and we will lose jobs. In Coulport, a total of 800 jobs have been and are being lost. This is a continuing problem, yet the Secretary of State made no mention of alternative employment possibilities or of arms conversion possibly providing other jobs. The Government have simply failed to tackle that—a severe omission.

Rosyth trains half the engineering apprentices in Scotland; in other words, it provides the skills base for Scotland. People gain a fine training and in Faslane, whose apprentices I also know. This whole skills base is to be lost as a result of the loss of Rosyth, and the Government have nothing to offer us——

**Mr. George Kynoch** (Kincardine and Deeside) *rose*——

**Mr. McFall:** The Government have trumpeted the idea that competition prevails, although there is surely also a strategic dimension. In a letter to *The Times* on 11 June, the Earl of Perth said that, by giving the work to Devonport, we are putting all our eggs in one basket, and that makes no strategic sense. Competition alone will not serve the primary strategic interest.

As for the Navy's own preference, I believe that a number of dirty tricks have been played. It is claimed that the Navy prefers Devonport, but I spoke to senior naval ratings only a few weeks ago in my constituency. They described the differences, as they saw them, between the south of England, with its urban chaos, and Scotland, with its free open spaces and cleaner environment—much better to live in, in short. Hon. Members should not believe the stories about the Navy wanting Devonport. Dirty tricks have been played in this campaign.

One of the dirtiest tricks was the sleazy remark of the Secretary of State for Scotland, who sidled up to the Dispatch Box earlier. He has been mute on this issue all day, but he is the one who should resign. He claims that, in a covert conversation that cannot be corroborated, Lord Younger agreed with the Government's decision today. Let us remind ourselves what Lord Younger said:

"One of the most powerful arguments deployed is that there would be many jobs for Scotland associated with operating and maintaining submarines."

Translated, that means that the submarines are operated from Faslane; the maintenance of the submarines is undertaken at Rosyth. Lord Younger cannot go back on those words. They hang like a millstone around his neck and around the neck of the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The message of today's exercise is: never trust a Tory. A Tory promise is a broken promise, and it causes heartbreak for thousands of people in Scotland. That is the message of this despicable exercise. The Secretary of State for Scotland should be ashamed of himself for his lack of spunk. He should remove himself immediately from the Cabinet.

8.48 pm

**Mr. Patrick Nicholls** (Teignbridge): Coming as I do from the west country, I too welcome today's decision. It was the longest, most sustained campaign in which I have ever been involved. In it, we put to the Government the position that seemed to me from the outset militarily and economically right and in every way unanswerable.

But one can take nothing for granted in this life, and it was clear that political considerations might have impinged on the Government to make them, as some thought, turn their face away from what they would otherwise have done. I never thought for a moment that that was likely. I am sure that the Government have been greatly aided in coming to their conclusions by the sustained support of Conservative Members who had carefully considered the problem, and who believed that this option was military and economically right, and right for the west country.

The last thing that I would want to do on such an occasion is meddle in other people's grief. If I represented Rosyth, I too would be disappointed. I assure Opposition Members that I will not meddle in their grief—except perhaps to mention that there is something faintly ludicrous about a party which has for so long espoused the unilateralist cause, a party in which so many members once trumpeted their membership of CND, now queuing up to call for the maintenance of nuclear weapons in nuclear-free zones. It is bizarre.

However, I will give them this much credit: at least they were prepared to engage in bare-faced, brazen cheek with a straight face. Coming as I do from the west country, I know beyond doubt that no one in the west country ever thought that a Labour Government would safeguard their position in regard to defence; no one looks to a Labour Government to support them in that regard.

If people do not look to a Labour Government for the defence of their country, they perhaps believe—in a misguided way—that the Liberal Democrats can be entrusted with it, and that they are sound when it comes to the maintenance of Trident. In assessing that view—even before the "Today" programme yesterday, with which I shall deal shortly—they might just have wanted to consider the record. Liberal Democrat Members told people in the west country that they too were doing all they could to ensure that the Tories did not backslide on their commitments to Devonport.

As long ago as 1983, the right hon. Members for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) and for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) appeared on a CND platform in Hyde Park. The right hon. Member for Yeovil said:

"Let us be clear . . . this country does not need Cruise, and NATO does not need Cruise."

Just a year later, he featured in a CND launch in the *Morning Star*, along with the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock), who was then the parliamentary Labour CND chairman, and the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang). The occasion was a CND campaign against Trident, which the three declared to be an £11 billion white elephant.

Just to make his position clear, the right hon. Member for Yeovil described Trident as

"a monstrous folly which we should divest ourselves of as soon as possible".

In 1988, when asked in the context of his own election campaign for the leadership of his party, "What about Trident then, Paddy?", he replied:

"No! For Polaris at the last election, read Trident at the next".

Let me bring the House right up to date—although there is never anything really up to date about the Liberal Democrats. Anyone who has ever tried to canvass in a road after a Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate has gone up it knows that they do not just change their policies from year to year, from election to election or from constituency to constituency; they change their policies from house to house. It is a case of "What do you want to hear? What would you like us to promise? We will promise it to you."

Only two years ago—for the Liberal Democrats, that is a very long time—they drew up a policy document entitled "Reshaping Europe". It was produced in 1990. It stated:

"Last year, we called for 'a gradual reduction in spending as a proportion of national wealth'. In the changed circumstances of today we propose a bolder objective. *We call for a reduction of at least 50 per cent. in real terms in UK defence expenditure, phased in over the remainder of the century*'".

It went on to explain those proposals, just in case people could not understand. It stated that its proposals envisaged

"'reductions in the size of the army from 160,000 to 73,000 . . . and in the Royal Navy of around half of its present size (to 24 frigates, 13 attack submarines and 2 aircraft carriers)'"—

and just for good measure,

"the RAF being cut 'by 12 from the present 31 combat aircraft squadrons'."

The idea that a party that could propose such a programme and policy would be capable of throwing its weight meaningfully behind a proper option for Trident is ludicrous; but, understandably, people can be beguiled. In recent weeks, in the west country, the Liberal Democrats made the same point time and again, particularly in the council elections. It would be almost incredible, were it not true. They said that the Tories were a bit soft on Trident, and were not putting their back into the campaign. They were saying that that last push to give the Trident contract to Devonport needed Liberal Democrat support—as the rope supports the hanging man, I suppose.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) and the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie)—who came to a press conference last week and told the people assembled there that the Trident contract would definitely go to Rosyth—did what they were entitled to do, and exercised their right to campaign on behalf of constituency interests?

*[Mr. Menzies Campbell]*

If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about the official position of the Liberal Democrats, let me tell him that I have checked my diary and discovered that, on 25 February, I went to a meeting in the office of the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, who will wind up the debate. I was one of a number of Members of Parliament campaigning for the two-yard option—that is, for nuclear submarines at Rosyth and surface work at Devonport. All the hon. Gentleman had to do was ask his hon. Friend about our policy, if he was in any doubt.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The hon. and learned Gentleman cuts such a ludicrous figure that I would like to think that, when I am campaigning in Teignbridge at the next election, he will speak on my platform. All I fear is his support. I do not know what his social diary may include; I do not know at what times he meets my hon. Friends. I am talking about the lies, lies, lies and more lies told by the Liberal Democrats during the county council elections, about how we would be soft on Trident and they would make the final push.

**Mr. Harris:** Was the information given by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) conveyed by the Liberal Democrats in Cornwall and Devon during the county council elections? I did not observe any such information; I suspect that they sang a very different tune.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The tune is the one that I have mentioned. Yesterday, the cat was finally let out of the bag. Under some stiff questioning on the "Today" programme, the hon. and learned Gentleman spoke; perhaps he was so cynical by then that he did not need stiff questioning to produce the information, but I shall do him the credit of believing that it was stiff questioning.

He said:

"Well, I have made a judgement in my capacity as the Defence spokesman for my Party . . . I believe that the two yard solution . . . can best be exemplified by sending the nuclear submarines to Rosyth and the surface ones to Devonport".

In an earlier intervention, the hon. and learned Gentleman said that he was just arguing a constituency point.

**Mr. Campbell:** No.

**Mr. Nicholls:** It is not just that the impression has changed from one house to another; it has changed in the course of a debate. I could understand if the hon. and learned Gentleman was campaigning because Rosyth was in his own electoral yard, but he was saying that it was the official policy of his party to behave in this way. He was throwing the weight of his party behind an option that would have deprived the west country of what it needs.

The one thing that comes out of this business is that the Liberal Democrats have betrayed the people they claimed to champion. In all the celebrations tonight, the one thing that the Navy in Plymouth and the west country needs to know is that, when it came down to it, it was betrayed by the one party that pretended that it could be relied upon. I use this term in an entirely parliamentary way: it is utterly contemptible, and the people of the west country will not forget.

9 pm

**Mrs. Irene Adams** (Paisley, North): I am grateful for a few minutes to speak in the debate tonight; I know how many hon. Members are waiting to get in.

Rosyth is not in or adjacent to my constituency; it is a good few miles from it. However, such is the nature of the work at Rosyth that many jobs throughout Scotland are dependent on it.

Today, when this announcement was made, I asked the Secretary of State if he could tell us how he had come up with the figure of 450 redundancies at Rosyth. It never fails to surprise me how glibly the Government roll a figure of 450 job losses off their tongues. They seem to forget that the families of 450 people have seen their future go down the river tonight. That does not seem to mean a great deal to them.

If, when they were looking at Rosyth, they had given some thought to defence diversification, we might not be concerned about the jobs at Rosyth, but might be looking at putting jobs and training in other places.

My constituency will lose jobs because of the announcement today. I did not get an answer when I asked what the ancillary job loss would be. However, since it is estimated that 18,500 jobs in Scotland are dependent upon Rosyth, and therefore that there are five times as many jobs outside as inside the dockyard, I can only assume that there will be five times as many job losses throughout Scotland as there will be in the dockyard itself. That will mean a job loss of almost 2,500 in Scotland, not 450—and 450 is a very conservative estimate in anybody's book. It is estimated that of those 18,500 jobs there are probably about 1,800 in the vicinity of my constituency.

I have to tell the House once again that, since the Conservatives came to power in 1979, my constituency has lost an unbelievable 89 per cent. of its manufacturing base. I know that that is difficult for the House to believe, and it is a sorry situation. It will certainly not be helped by the announcement that was made today, as Babcock Thorn, the major employer at Rosyth, is also the major employer in my constituency. Therefore, we will undoubtedly be affected once more by the job losses announced today.

The Government made no mention of training when they mentioned the redundancies. Again, Rosyth is the biggest trainer of apprentices in Scotland, and training jobs have gone completely down the river as well.

I recently visited Rolls-Royce in my constituency. It, too, is a major employer, and it has announced 450 job losses in my constituency in the last few weeks. Rolls-Royce tells me that in the last five years it has trained 36 apprentices. The last six will complete their training this year, after which the company has no plans to train any further apprentices. I have to assume that, if 450 jobs are going at Rosyth, there are a good number of apprenticeships going as well.

I can see no hope for my constituency in the announcement today for manufacturing jobs. All we have had in their place have been very low-paid service jobs, where people are working for between £1·20 and £2·40 an hour, with no future.

I am not greatly impressed by the promises that the Government have made today, because they have made promises in the past. We heard about Lord Younger's promise to keep Rosyth going for Scotland. In 1979, the same Lord Younger, when he was Secretary of State for Scotland, promised, when the first major job losses came

in the west of Scotland at the Talbot car plant at Linwood, in the constituency of Renfrew, West and Inverclyde, that he would see what he could do to make sure that manufacturing stayed in that area.

He promised that, even if we had to make rubber ducks, manufacturing would continue at Linwood. Not even a rubber duck is made at Linwood now. On that vast site, where once 5,000 people were employed, there are a few retail jobs and a few service jobs, but absolutely no manufacturing jobs.

I can only assume that the same would be the case at Rosyth. Once more, we have empty promises, with nothing to back them up. It will be death by strangulation, as it has been in my constituency.

We have not suffered a major job loss in one blow; we have suffered death by a thousand cuts. That is exactly what is going to happen at Rosyth. We have not had the guarantees that we require from the Government. They continually tell us that we will get the job allocations, but I would be most grateful if, in winding up, the Minister will tell us that he guarantees that there will be only 450 job losses at Rosyth.

**Dr. Godman:** May I point out to my hon. Friend that, at the time of Scott Lithgow being pushed out of submarine building, similar promises were made by the same Ministers—Lord Younger and his then right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont). Those promises were utterly worthless. I share my hon. Friend's deep concern about the real number of jobs that will be lost.

**Mrs. Adams:** The promises have been worthless. They were worthless at Linwood and for the coal industry. They are worthless at Rosyth, too. I should be grateful if the Minister could point to promises that were not worthless.

I ask the Government again about the number of redundancies—450—which I still question. What consultations have the Government had, and what estimates have they made of the ancillary job losses, both in the west of Scotland and throughout Scotland?

9.5 pm

**Mr. Ian Bruce** (South Dorset): I intend to deal specifically with the calumny that has been put about by Opposition Members that in some way the Government have attempted to treat Rosyth unfairly. It is absolutely clear that the Government have bent over backwards to look after Rosyth and the Scottish defence industry.

It is interesting to speculate about what would have happened if the Opposition had become the party of Government at the last general election and if one of their shipyards, as it would have been then, had come to them and said, "We can save £250 million on the refitting of the Trident submarines by using an existing dock rather than building a new one." I am sure that they, as the party of Government, would have checked the figures for both Devonport and Rosyth. If Opposition Members believe that they would have thrown away £64 million of savings by awarding the contract to Rosyth rather than to Devonport, they should say so clearly.

What is the Government's record? At every stage, once Devonport began to bid for the contract, Devonport won against Rosyth. Did the Government immediately say, "Right, we'll go to Devonport and close the door on Rosyth."? No, they kept going back to Rosyth and saying, "Look at the figures again." Even when it became clear that Devonport would win the contract, I am absolutely certain that my right hon. and hon. Friends made every effort to ensure that work would go to Rosyth, so as to keep the two-base option that the Opposition talk about. However, they did not listen to what was said about that in today's statement.

I shall give a small example, for the benefit of those who are going on BBC television at Rosyth at the moment regarding their belief that this is a political fix on behalf of Conservative Members with constituencies in the south-west. What we said clearly to the Government was, "You can't ask for fair competition between Devonport and Rosyth and then, when Devonport wins, turn to the Scottish Office and say, 'We understand the difficulties that the Conservative party faces in Scotland, so we'll take the work away from Devonport and give it to Rosyth.'"

Hon. Members will recall that time and again before the last general election the Royal Navy told the Government that it felt that it could close one of the Royal Navy bases —not one of the dockyards but one of the bases. The Royal Navy costed that out and found that there were real savings to be made by closing the Royal Navy base at Rosyth. The same costings showed that it was not cost-effective to close Portland. The Government acted to preserve jobs at Rosyth and to maintain the Royal Navy base there.

In order to keep to its long-term costings, the Royal Navy had to do a half closure of Portland, leaving the helicopters where they were, and save money at Portland. My constituents have paid the price of trying to look after the best interests of people in Rosyth. One has to remember that any money that is saved is saved for Scottish taxpayers as well as for English, Welsh and Northern Ireland taxpayers.

**Mr. Salmond:** Does the hon. Gentleman know what percentage of United Kingdom defence procurement is spent in Scotland? Does it surprise him to hear that it is well under the population's share?

**Mr. Bruce:** Considerable defence spending occurs in, for example, Fife and Faslane. The hon. Gentleman likes to chop the United Kingdom into parts and to speak separately of Scotland and England and so on. It is illogical to do that in this context because in parts of the country, such as in the south-west of England, enormous numbers of people are employed in the defence industries.

I invite the hon. Gentleman to spend his holidays in Dorset. He will discover how many Scottish accents can be heard among those living in Weymouth and Portland. Those Scots have come to work there. Indeed, I have a useful name when canvassing. All the people who live there are part and parcel of the nation's defence industries.

The Government's proposals go to the heart of attempting to help Rosyth. The whingeing Jocks who have been sent here—not the Jocks who are back home, who are not the whingers—and who constantly try to put it about that the Government are not looking after the Scottish economy are a complete calumny and should be shown to be that.

9.11 pm

**Mr. Martin O'Neill** (Clackmannan): We can do without the sort of Scottish-English nonsense that we just heard from the hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr.

*[Mr. Martin O'Neill]*

Bruce). Some of us, for one reason or another, have been involved with the dockyards question for a long time. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown)—who must be elsewhere for this part of the debate—and I were involved in the contractorisation measure, about which we had grave misgivings.

At that time we worked equally with the work force in Devonport and Rosyth. Whenever I went to Devonport I received an extremely warm welcome. Such was the welcome for us and other Labour candidates when we visited the area that Labour won the seat. The same happened in Barrow, where the submarines about which we are talking are still being constructed.

My constituency is not part of Fife, though it adjoins Fife region. I pay tribute to the efforts of that region and all involved there for the work that they have done in the defence of their dockyard. About 350 people in my constituency are employed there. As my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) said, innumerable places across the central belt of Scotland will be affected by the Government's decision. It is not a question of 350 or so jobs. Far more than that number of people will be involved. Hi-tech jobs in Fife were created specifically because of the character of the work carried out at the dockyard.

We are told that there will be an allocated programme, but the Secretary of State has been silent on the issue. He is not the most shrinking of violets in normal circumstances. He is not the sort of person—typical of advocates—to use one word when 10 will do. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is always prepared to define and refashion what he says. But tonight his silence is deafening.

His coyness is an admission that the Government do not know what the size of the surface fleet will be. I recall in the 1980s hapless civil servants going before the Select Committee on Defence and being asked about the size of the fleet. The conventional wisdom, according to the defence White Papers of the time, was that it was about 50. A controversy was caused when the man replied, "It is probably 42 at the moment." He was called back the following week and the figure was 38. It then came down to 32 and now it is 35 to 40. Perhaps the Minister will give us the revised standard version of that figure. I make that point because we cannot believe any of the forecasts about the size of the fleet.

Since contractorisation, problems have been created for Rosyth and Devonport because of the changes in the profile of the fleet. There have not just been changes in the profile of the surface fleet. Half of this debate would not have been necessary had it not been for the decision of previous members of the Defence team to stop ordering SSN—strategic submarine nuclear—leaving a gap in the nuclear-powered fleet. For the benefit of the neanderthals on the Conservative Benches, there are nuclear submarines that do not carry nuclear weapons. That is what we are talking about.

I would not be unhappy if there had been a justification for the failure to continue ordering and it had been put in an appropriate defence context. We have yet to hear that. We no longer need the SSNs. We no longer need ships sitting in the north Atlantic listening for the Soviet fleet coming from its northern haunts. Therefore, for us to talk with any degree of certainty about the Rosyth dockyard is very dangerous.

My next point has been alluded to, but it is worth repeating. The part of the work that is not allocated and will be up for competition may involve competition between Rosyth and Devonport. We know that Devonport has extensive wharf areas that could be used for doing bits and pieces of work. In fact, Devonport Management Ltd. is always complaining about its overheads because of the size and scale of the yard. The important point about Rosyth is that it is modern and compact and is using its space effectively. That enables the work force to move about easily when work needs to be done.

My point is not just that DML will have an advantage. We must realise that the people at VSEL at Barrow, where the submarines are constructed, will not turn their backs on them. At the moment, they are desperate for any work that they can get. That is why they were able to get the work on the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. Best of luck to them—if there is competitive tendering, to the victor the spoils. We must not kid ourselves that those companies will be standing idly by. We must not forget that Yarrow on the Clyde will be looking for work as well.

The assurances that have been given—if we can dignify the words by that description—are worthless. In the absence of any clear strategic justification for what is happening, everything that the Government say could be subject to change tomorrow.

This is the product of an extensive budgetary exercise. There are now savings. However, we find that there will be a saving of about £12 million on the capital budget out of a possible budget of about £240 million. The difference is 5 per cent. In revenue terms it is about £80 million out of a total budget of £3 billion. It has to be a close-run thing. Other considerations will have to be brought to bear. If there is to be only one centre for the maintenance of nuclear submarines, it seems sensible for it to be near the base from which the vessels operate. If that is the case, it must be Rosyth. There is a synergy for Devonport in these reduced circumstances. It is correct that the surface fleet can operate easily out of the southern waters. It can get into the Atlantic and to virtually any part of the globe that it wants. It is exceedingly difficult to ensure that such flexibility is available in Rosyth.

I argued at one stage that, if the size of the nuclear fleet were big enough, we should have two bases and two sets of facilities. That was perhaps gold plating—an allegation with which people who get close to defence arguments are sometimes tarnished, and I might have been wrong. I certainly would have been prepared to advance effective, strategic arguments and enter into a proper debate. We have yet to achieve that tonight, and I look to the Minister to provide it in his reply.

Will the Minister also state specifically what will be the size of the surface fleet of frigates and destroyers? We are not considering the small ships, which are important to Rosyth, but which could be easily dealt with in a number of other places—Yarrow, as I have mentioned, is just one such place. Plastic-bottom boats could go to Yarrow without any difficulty. Let us secure the big jobs for Rosyth to keep people in employment and guarantee its future.

I remember the last threat to Rosyth, when many of us said that its loss to Scotland would be equivalent to the

loss of Ravenscraig. The numbers and the spin-off technologies are the same, and the assurances were given by the same people. They let us down last time and I do not doubt that they will do so again.

9.21 pm

**Mrs. Angela Browning** (Tiverton): As a Member representing a Devon constituency, I join my colleagues in welcoming today's decision in favour of Devonport. My constituency is almost 50 miles from Devonport, but despite that my constituents work in the yard.

I wish to mention another element which has not been mentioned but which is critical to Devonport and Rosyth —the importance of the dockyards as purchasers within the local economy. For example, in Devon and Cornwall, 600 companies which employ 30,000 people are suppliers to the Devonport dockyard, so today's decision is equally important to the small business community in the south-west, who primarily supply the dockyard. They and the chambers of commerce will greatly welcome today's decision.

In my capacity as a spokesman for the Small Business Bureau and Women into Business, I have been invited many times to speak to the small business community in Scotland. I therefore know that small businesses play an equally important role in the Rosyth area.

We warmly welcomed today's statement about programmes for surface ships at Rosyth. Many Conservative Members, myself included, will pressure Ministers to maintain a credible and modern surface fleet, which we believe to be critical to Britain's capability as an island nation and to our integral role within NATO. I say to Opposition Members that Conservative Members will certainly welcome Ministers' efforts to ensure that Rosyth plays its full part in the commissioning of new ships for the surface fleet.

Opposition Members have used much strong language about today's decision. I shall not challenge each of their speeches, but it is important to challenge some of the comments that have been made. The word "strategic" has been used. Although I am not a military expert, my grandfather and brother were submariners so I am aware of the importance of the statement that my right hon. and learned Friend made this afternoon. My right hon. and learned Friend said:

"But, more important, we are not able to accept any proposal which would deprive the Trident submarines of a dedicated emergency docking facility for significant periods; which would mean that the single nuclear refuelling facility was used for all our submarines, so exposing us to unacceptable risks in the event of an incident or other difficulty; and which, indeed, is untested from a technical and safety point of view."

It is extremely important that in peacetime, following an incident at sea involving a submarine, especially a nuclear submarine, we can deal effectively in dock with such problems. Having heard a first-hand account of a fire in a submarine, I am only too well aware of the way in which such incidents affect submariners.

I want to express support for the remarks of my hon. Friends, especially my hon. Friends the Members for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) and for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls). During the 1980s—before I became a Member of Parliament—I spoke for Peace through NATO. I spent many a long evening in many a village hall up and down the country and abroad debating the case for the NATO alliance. I argued for the nuclear deterrent on behalf of NATO. I spoke in support of the independent deterrent, which the Conservative party has protected.

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** Where were the Opposition Members then?

**Mrs. Browning:** They were sitting on the other side of the platform, arguing the unilateralists' case, along with friends who are perhaps better known nationally for their association with Greenham Common.

It is a bit rich to hear now from Opposition Members a long argument about how defence industry jobs will be lost. We are all concerned about that matter. It is understandable that hon. Members whose constituents are affected should make their representations. However, it must be remembered that, had matters been left to Labour Members or, as has been pointed out, to Liberal Democrat Members, there would be no nuclear submarines in this country. Having a nuclear deterrent was totally against their policies.

We have heard much cant about how this decision was taken by the Government. Why has there been such a sudden change of heart on the part of Labour and Liberal Democrat Members? Why have they suddenly embraced the nuclear deterrent? It is not because they share the conviction of Conservative Members about the stability of our role in NATO; it is for party political, opportunist reasons only.

My hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge quoted the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). I have no need to quote the right hon. Gentleman, as indelibly printed on my memory is an occasion in the winter of 1983, just after the right hon. Gentleman became a Member of Parliament. He sat on one side of the platform of a village hall, arguing the unilateralists' case, while my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam, (Lady Olga Maitland) —I regret that my hon. Friend is not present in the House —sat with me arguing the NATO case. Having been a Member of Parliament for only a year, I regard it as really quite something to hear such cant and hypocrisy.

9.27 pm

**Mr. Michael Connarty** (Falkirk, East): I should like to take up the challenge that was thrown down by the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) and by several others, including the Secretary of State for Defence, when they asked how we could defend the case for refitting Trident, a nuclear submarine with nuclear weapons, at Rosyth although we did not support Trident. The fact that I shall not do so at this stage—no doubt another opportunity will arise—is based not on any fear but on respect for my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), who will undoubtedly deliver a resounding winding-up speech on our behalf.

Let me get to the substance of the question about where the Trident submarine should be maintained. I did not seek out Lords who had moved from ministerial positions to high directorships in banks for the purpose of finding out what people thought about this decision and of assessing the statement of the Secretary of State for Defence; I took the trouble to phone people who work in Rosyth and who live in my constituency of Falkirk, East.

The naval base trade unions have put out a statement in which they

"deplore the loss of work taken from Rosyth to try to secure the future employment of some Tory MPs."

*[Mr. Michael Connarty]*

Union representatives met the base commander, Captain York, at 3.30 pm today and were amazed to find out that they would have to wait two weeks or more to see in print the logic of the Secretary of State for Defence and the Cabinet. They are shocked at the fact that they cannot debate immediately the facts that brought about the demise of some of the work that they would have had. They spoke to me in particular about the likely impact on the resources base of the naval yard.

The naval base currently supplies Babcock Thorn with support equipment for submarine refits. Rosyth naval yard is a minor war vessel operating base, I am told. There is concern that that may not continue. I do not know whether it was a joke or a straight statement, but the union representatives said that they thought that there was a danger that the Secretary of State would turn it into a mini-minor war vessel operating base. I think that the word "mini" is used in the sense of "much shrunken" rather than as a reference to the old car.

The support service at the naval base must be safeguarded. Today, we heard only about the 450 jobs that are to go immediately because of today's decision, but the existing naval yard rundown plan already means the loss of 1,500 jobs in the next four to five years. We were still told that today's statement implied no other Ministry of Defence job losses. The rundown will leave only 1,400 jobs at the base, and I believe that they should be guaranteed —a word that seems to frighten the Secretary of State for Defence so much at the moment. Will the Minister of State for Defence Procurement guarantee that the 1,400 jobs will still exist at the end of the planned rundown?

Alternatively, will the support equipments that are presently sourced at Rosyth for Babcock Thorn be sourced at Devonport in future? If they are to be sourced at Devonport, will further jobs be transferred there from Rosyth? The workers have not been told; perhaps the Secretary of State forgot to mention it.

Mike Gardiner, who lives at Bo'ness in my constituency, is the staff spokesman at Rosyth naval yard. He is also the vice-chair of the Whitley council for the employees. Like Mike and his members, I hold no brief for the anger levelled at the work force or the community of the Devonport area. This is not a nationalist question; it is about Conservative incompetence and lack of feeling for the people who have given their lives to the naval yards in both areas.

The workers and the House know who betrayed the people of Rosyth, and there is no doubt that it is a betrayal. The Secretaries of State for Scotland the right hon. Member for Galloway (Mr. Lang) and for Defence the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) perpetrated what is a betrayal, given the promises made by previous Administrations. The Secretaries of State were supported by what I would call the bleating of the hon. Members for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) and for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch). I have labelled them the "Scottish Tory Members' own job club"—hear no evil, see no evil and speak no evil.

I have every confidence that the work force at Rosyth will join the management in fighting for the yard's future. In the 100-day consultation period, I am sure that we shall fight alongside them. Even after the consultation period, regardless of the outcome, the work force and management will fight on the ground to try to win orders and secure their futures, but with no thanks to the Conservative Government.

I remind the House that we have not yet reached 1994. The Government originally guaranteed the workers at Ravenscraig that the plant would survive at least until then. Scottish voters will remember that betrayal and this betrayal. I suggest that the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Defence give Lord Younger a ring to see whether there are any jobs left in the City.

9.32 pm

**Mr. Richard Ottaway** (Croydon, South): The House may be wondering why a Member representing a London suburb is intervening in the heavy gunfire between Scotland and the west country. I do so because I had the privilege to serve in the Royal Navy for nine years, between 1961 and 1970. I was primarily a Devonport man but I visited all the nation's ports, including Rosyth.

I hope that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) will not take it as a sign of disrespect if I say that I did not find Rosyth an especially attractive place, although we were always well received there after a hard exercise in the North sea. I had many good times there, and we were always pleased to arrive. Our favourite trick was to hold a sweepstake on the ship's bridge to see what time we would go under the Forth bridge; the captain always seemed to win. We were always made welcome at Rosyth, and the ships always got fixed.

The Navy found that Devonport was, by and large, a more agreeable place. It had better weather, for a start, and was more popular among those on the lower deck and in the wardroom. I had the misfortune to be on board HMS Eagle when she ran aground in Plymouth sound in 1969. I was impressed by the ability of Devonport dockyard to dock the ship promptly and undertake repairs.

As users of Devonport's services, we also experienced the frustration of the dockyard's unionisation and its demarcation disputes. The overmanning led to the Labour Government reducing the dockyard's manpower by 4,000 between 1965 and 1969 and announcing a review in 1969 which resulted in a further 5,000 job losses. That puts today's announcement into perspective. I do not envy my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State the difficult decision that he has had to make. I consider that, in the changing circumstances, he is not bound by any announcement made in 1984.

The decision is right for two fundamental reasons. The first is the location of Devonport in the western approaches, which gives it a central place in history. It is the port from which Drake set sail against the armada, and it is unthinkable for the Royal Navy to have any other strategic centre. Secondly, the decision is right on commercial grounds. Devonport was chosen because it represents the best value, and savings for the taxpayer, whom I represent. Yet we can still keep Rosyth open with a loss of only 450 jobs.

I listened to the speech by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), and I have never in my life heard more hostages being given to fortune. First, he said that the announcement was divisive. If holding such a competition is divisive, so be it—let us have more divisiveness. The hon. Gentleman implied that

he would not have held a competition, so the savings of £250 million that have been found would not have been realised. The hon. Gentleman said that simply because he opposes competition and the benefits that it brings.

The hon. Gentleman also said that the position of the Secretary of State for Scotland, as a Scottish Member, was untenable. It would have been a darn sight more untenable if my right hon. Friend, as a Scottish Member, had favoured Rosyth and ignored the relative merits. Finally, the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley said that the Government were putting political dogma before the security of the nation. Coming as it does from the party that opposed the deployment of cruise missiles at the height of the cold war, that is nothing but cant, humbug and hypocrisy. I urge the House to support the Government.

9.36 pm

**Dr. John Reid** (Motherwell, North): I must tell the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) that we would have considered it untenable if the decision had been made purely on the basis of the nationality or the constituency interest of the Secretary of State, whether he had favoured Scotland or England, Rosyth or Devonport. The decision should have been based on strategic issues. It certainly should not have been based on the criterion used by the hon. Member for Croydon, South, with his naval experience—the fact that the climate in Devon is warmer. On that basis, we should have given the refitting work to the Bahamas. But the hon. Gentleman's argument was typical of the sort of speech that we have heard tonight.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing us this emergency debate. It is the first since 13 April 1988, and the first that you have granted in your illustrious capacity as Speaker. We recognise that you granted the debate not for any parochial or regional reason, nor for any narrow political reason, but because of the importance of the issue.

Lest there be any doubt in anyone's mind, let me make it plain both personally and on behalf of the Labour party that we pay tribute to the workers, management and representatives of both yards. I bear no ill will towards the workers of Devonport, any more than we did towards the workers of Swan Hunter when we had half a day's debate on that subject less than a month ago. We bear no ill will towards any workers fighting against the decline and decay of their manufacturing industries. We blame no group of workers anywhere in Britain for trying to secure their future and that of their families. That is one reason why we argued for a two-yard solution.

However, I bear ill will towards a Government who make what should be a strategic defence decision by turning community against community in this country, when all our communities are suffering the decline and decay of our traditional industries. One of the local Members of Parliament, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), made that decline clear in his speech —and what a commentary that was on the miserable failure of the Government's economic and industrial policies. The Government's attempt to achieve vital strategic defence decisions purely on the basis of the cost-cutting mentality of the bazaar has led to the dereliction of their duty as strategically oriented defence Ministers on behalf of the United Kingdom. The accusation tonight is not of parochialism or nationalism —it is that the Secretary of State for Defence is guilty of a lack of strategic defence analysis, a misunderstanding of the competitive policy that he said he wishes to foster, months of dithering and delay which have led to distress for all parties in this competitive procedure, and years of deception.

Our position was made clear at least a year before the Government discovered what they now call the two-yard solution. We made it clear that, as long as the Trident system is a vital part of our security posture, it is simply crazy to have only one facility in Great Britain where it can be refitted, repaired and serviced. Therefore, both Rosyth and Devonport should have been kept open to retain the capacity to handle Trident in addition to nuclear-powered submarines and conventional ones. The decision is another example of a Treasury-driven policy.

**Mr. Rifkind** *rose*——

**Dr. Reid:** I have only 10 minutes, so I will not give way unless the Secretary of State withdraws the wrong but presumably not malicious allegation that he made against me earlier.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I accept that the hon. Gentleman called for the cancellation of one of the Trident boats, which would have had major implications. The reason why I wanted to intervene is that he said that the Labour party believed that both Rosyth and Devonport should be provided with facilities for the refitting of Trident submarines. Has he worked out what the cost of that would be? Is he suggesting that a Labour Government would find hundreds of millions of pounds to ensure that the second yard had the expensive Trident refitting requirements?

**Dr. Reid:** The Secretary of State managed to make two mistakes in his intervention. First, I did not call for the cancellation of the fourth Trident. Secondly, I did not say "facilities"—I said "capability". *[Interruption.]* He should check that in *Hansard*. It is an important distinction.

If the Secretary of State wants me to answer the question whether it is sometimes in the interests of the strategic defence of the country to subsidise a project, rather than always taking a decision on the cost-cutting basis of the bazaar, the answer is yes. Indeed, in his relatively short time in the Ministry of Defence he may not have found that the £20 billion that is spent every year is a subsidy because it is direct expenditure from the public purse and by the taxpayer. That is our complaint.

The Secretary of State told us that he gave us guarantees at some stage. What is the guarantee that the same thing will not happen to Rosyth as happened to the guarantees over Ravenscraig? What is the guarantee that the same will not happen to the frigate fleet of about 50, which became about 40 and is now about 30? Indeed, the Secretary of State, who is engrossed in briefing his colleague, did not use the word "guarantee". He is a Queen's Counsel and is praised as one of the brightest minds at the Scottish Bar. Yet he told us that he does not see any difference between "allocation" and "guarantee". If he does not understand the difference in plain English between allocating work and giving a guarantee that the work will eventually end up in a yard, he should not be at the Scottish Bar or in charge of the Ministry of Defence because he will end up giving a guarantee of everything to everyone.

*[Dr. Reid]*

I will not refer to the promises that have been made tonight because other hon. Members have already referred to them. When we talk about those promises, let me make it clear that the Secretary of State cannot distance himself from the statements that have been made and the pledges given by the Government to the Rosyth workers over the past eight years. If those promises and pledges had been given to the workers at Devonport by his predecessors in the name of Her Majesty's Government, we would be taking the Government to task in exactly the same way. It is one long record.

While I am talking about promises and changing of minds, it comes difficult for us to hear the previous Secretary of State for Scotland accusing people in the Chamber of changing their minds on steel, Trident or anything else. He is the man who pledged his undying commitment to Scottish devolution and sold out for 30 pieces of Cabinet silver and his first foot up the greasy pole. None of us will take lectures from the Secretary of State about changing our minds.

The Secretary of State treated us to a bizarre spectacle tonight. He cannot hide behind the Ministry of Defence or the chiefs of staff. He cannot huddle in his bunker in the Ministry of Defence because the man who was sitting in the Scottish Office as Secretary of State for Scotland was the very man who stood before us tonight and broke every one of the pledges made by the former Secretary of State for Defence and other Ministers to people in Rosyth and Scotland. He acquiesced in their statements. Indeed, he revelled in the assurances given to the workers of Rosyth. Today he has led the way in the betrayal of every one of those promises. For that, he will not be forgotten in Scotland.

I finish not with Scotland but with Devonport. Tonight I warn the workers at Devonport in the same way as we warned the workers at Swan Hunter and others warned workers throughout the country, including Ravenscraig. They should not take a simple opportunistic decision based on short-term political criteria from a Tory Government as a guarantee of their future. It will be as shaky in the long run as the promises that have been made tonight to the workers at Rosyth.

Especially in defence policy, the Government have no strategic analysis. They have no commitment to promises given. They have no friends. They have one aim, and it is not the defence of Britain—it is the survival of those who sit on the Government Front Bench. We shall not forget that, and in the long run the workers at Devonport will not forget it either.

9.46 pm

**The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken):** Madam Speaker, we welcome your decision to grant the debate tonight. *[Interruption.]* We welcome it even more now that we have heard the Opposition's case. It is to spend more taxpayers' money, to give away the whole Trident submarine programme according to all the policies that the Labour party has outlined for years, and to produce a piece of complete rubbish as an argument and a case tonight.

We must begin by emphasising that we are debating a truly national issue. The issue is the right location for our submarine refitting. One would not have thought that we were discussing a national issue from listening to the case that the Opposition deployed tonight.

It is astonishing how conspicuous by their absence have been the Opposition Members who for months have come to my office and to the Chamber arguing for the nuclear refitting facility to be placed at Devonport. For example, where is the leader of the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown)? Where are the other Liberal Members who campaigned throughout the west country in the county council elections such as the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor)? On the Labour Benches, where are such characters as the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson)? It seems that they have all been sent home for supper. [HON. MEMBERS: "He is here."] The hon. Member for Devonport is conspicuous by his silence.

Tonight we have been treated to a parochial Scottish wake which was not justified. The lugubrious pessimism, breast beating and lamentations have not proved justified. The Opposition have not given credit to my right hon. and learned Friend for battling for and winning a 12-year allocated programme for surface ship refits for Rosyth. It will result in 18 major warships and 49 minor war vessels being refitted at Rosyth, including, we hope, the Ark Royal and the carriers, which will be available to Rosyth for the allocated programme.

**Mr. Robert Hughes** (Aberdeen, North): Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Aitken:** No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman as he has not participated in the debate.

What we have heard from the Opposition is the stunning argument that——

**Mr. Foulkes:** The Minister of State for Defence Procurement is in retreat—earlier, at least we were given "allocate", although we did not get "guarantee". Now all that we are receiving is hope. Let us have a guarantee.

**Mr. Aitken:** The hon. Gentleman must not play silly semantic games. I am coming to the bizarre proposition about guarantees and allocations. I shall now relate my remarks to the hon. Gentleman's speech, as he opened the debate. We heard sound, fury and synthetic indignation signifying nothing. Leaving to one side—in the immortal phrase of the Leader of the Opposition—the fact that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) was one of the principal signatories of the 1987 early-day motion urging the Government to cancel Trident in the light of the changing international climate, leaving aside the fact that only three days ago he moved an amendment in the defence debate in the House to negotiate away our Trident submarines as part of disarmament negotiations, and leaving aside the fact that only two days ago he was calling for a ten-year allocated programme for Rosyth, the hon. Gentleman has given no credit to the fact that the Government have given it a 12-year allocated programme.

I shall now turn to the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) who speaks for one part of the Liberal party—the part that was not campaigning in the west country at the county council elections. He said, with an old-fashioned Gladstonian air, as if God had put an ace up his sleeve, that what Lord

Younger had said was a crucial factor in the debate. I thought that the hon. and learned Gentleman was well answered by two salvoes from the Conservative Benches.

One salvo came from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, who had spoken to Lord Younger earlier in the day and had received the clear impression that he was well satisfied by the fact that a 12-year allocated programme has gone to Rosyth. The second salvo came from my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) who made it clear that times had changed since then. That is true—times have changed with the ending of the cold war, the collapse of the Berlin wall and the dissolving of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact. Naturally, we now require fewer nuclear submarines.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** The Minister knows that Lord Younger wrote his letter to *The Times* less than a fortnight ago. Is the Minister saying that Lord Younger's position, as represented by the Secretary of State for Scotland, entirely contradicts what he wrote in *The Times?*

**Mr. Aitken:** We shall see what Lord Younger has to say. I am confident that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland was correct.

I shall now turn to the great semantic argument on "contractual", "allocated" and "guaranteed"—the conjuring trick that the Opposition have tried to perpetrate tonight. I shall steer them through the semantic fog. I shall first explain the contractual relationship that we expect to establish with DML in Devonport. We intend to place a contract at Devonport for the construction of the upgraded nuclear facilities. The word "contract" applies to that construction programme, not to individual refits in that instance.

We shall handle refits in the allocated programme at both dockyards by inviting a single tender for each refit against a Ministry of Defence specification. On the basis of that tender, we shall negotiate a fixed and fair price. That applies both to the surface ship refits at Rosyth and the nuclear refits at Devonport. The allocated programme means that no other yard is invited to tender. It is wrong for the Opposition to cast doubt on the genuineness of our proposal to allocate work to Rosyth. As my right hon. Friend said, we have many years' experience of running allocated programmes and an "allocation" means just that —work is allocated in advance to a dockyard and is not available to be done elsewhere.

**Mr. O'Neill:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Aitken:** No, I shall not.

Of course we have to ensure that the system is not abused and that we do not give the dockyard a blank cheque. That is what the hon. Gentleman is arguing for, but we have some concern for value for the taxpayers' money.

**Dr. Reid:** We are not talking about the price; we are talking about the numbers. The reality is that the core group has been cut over the past decade. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that? It is an entirely different matter from the price.

**Mr. Aitken:** The hon. Gentleman cannot have been listening to my right hon. Friend's statement. He said that 18 major war vessels and 49 minor war vessels will be in the programme.

In the past, Rosyth has always been satisfied with its allocated programme. We believe that it will be even more satisfied with its larger allocated programme over the next 12 years.

I now turn to some of the other speeches. I owe it to the House to pick up the speech of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), the leader of the Scottish National party. I have never heard a more hypocritical performance. He was arguing for the refit facility to go to Rosyth, but what does the Scottish National party manifesto say? It says:

"The SNP is committed to a non-nuclear Scotland. An independent Scotland will immediately withdraw from the United Kingdom's Trident Programme and will order nuclear weapons and installations off our soil.".

**Mr. Welsh:** Has the Minister secretly joined CND? He has near enough created a nuclear-free Fife by this decision. He is taking more nuclear weapons from Scotland than Labour ever did. He has taken the money down to England and left Scotland with the unemployment.

**Mr. Aitken:** If that was supposed to be a clarification of the Scottish National party policy, the hon. Gentleman is welcome to it.

One or two serious points were made in the debate. The hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) asked about the operational reasons for keeping refitting at Rosyth because of its proximity to the Clyde submarine base. Of course we considered this, but the operational considerations had to be balanced by the fact that some £64 million of taxpayers' money could be saved by the Devonport decision, and that was the reason which tipped the balance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) savaged the Liberal party in his admirable speech and made it clear that time and again the Liberals have said one thing in one part of the country and something else in another.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) gave the Government considerable credit for striving to help Rosyth. The Government have made great strides in trying to soften the blow of not winning the Trident refitting contract—a 12-year refitting programme keeping redundancies down to 450.

**Mr. Connarty:** I am willing to rescue the Minister who is obviously sinking fast. Will he consider the question that was asked through me by the convener of the naval yard staff union? What guarantees are given for the 1,400 jobs and the supply of equipment for some of the refits, even if they go to Devonport? They now come from Rosyth to Babcock Thorn.

**Mr. Aitken:** No Minister can give guarantees from the Dispatch Box. We are making our best estimates on the redundancy figures. What we believe, based on the business plans of the companies themselves, is that we have made a credible estimate and all over the country people who had been predicting many thousands of redundancies have been proved quite wrong by the potential redundancies that are likely to be suffered.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) also asked about the Rosyth naval base. I can tell him that there is no connection between jobs in the royal dockyard and in the naval base at Rosyth.

*[Mr. Aitken]*

In conclusion, it was inevitable that the Government's decision on where to locate the refitting of Britain's nuclear submarines would be difficult and tough and inevitably would be unpopular in whichever region did not get the Trident contract. The communities in Rosyth and Devonport had a great deal at stake and the dockyard management companies fought their corners hard in many representations to Ministers and in a great many Adjournment debates in recent months.

The Government's view was that our duty was clear. It was to rise above the local and regional lobbies, and to make a decision that was strategically right in the interests of the defence of the realm, operationally right for the Royal Navy, economically right in the interests of the taxpayer—I remind the House that about £64 million has been saved by the decision—and, above all, right in the national interest. We believe that we have got the decision right, and we commend it to the House.

*Question put,* That this House do now adjourn.—

*The House divided:* Ayes 289, Noes 281.

**Division No. 307]** [10 pm

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Amger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N. (N'c'le upon Tyne E)
Burden, Richard
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim (Cov'y SE)
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, Stechford)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Sheff'ld, H)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jowell, Tessa
Kaan, Alan
Kennedy, Charles (Ross C&S)
Kennedy, Jane (Liverpool Broad Green)
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil (Islwyn)
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Ellyn
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Manderson, Peter
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (G Grimsby)
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'shawe)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael (N W'shire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Parkley, Ray (Ion
Patchett, Terry
Prescott, John

Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Ms Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Shaerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Rt Hon John (N'ton H)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Williams, Alan W. (Carmarthen)
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Allason, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baker, Nicholas (North Dorset)
Batiey, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Bates, Michael
Batiock, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry

Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (E'ham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter

## Waste Incinerator (Gateshead)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10.14 pm

**Ms Joyce Quin** (Gateshead, East): I am glad to have this opportunity—*[Interruption.]*—to raise a matter that is of great concern to my constituents—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. Will those hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber leave quietly please?

**Ms Quin:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I wish to raise a matter that is of great concern to my constituents in Gateshead, East and also to constituents in neighbouring constituencies, including that of my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) who is listening to the debate. It concerns the approval that was given recently by the previous Secretary of State for the Environment, who is now the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for the building of a clinical waste incinerator in Wardley in my constituency.

I should make it clear from the outset that what has particularly angered my constituents is the fact that the Secretary of State overruled the recommendations of his own inspector, who after a long, detailed and full public inquiry recommended that the proposed incinerator should not be allowed to go ahead. Astonishingly, the Secretary of State for the Environment decided that he knew better than his own inspector and went ahead and recommended approval of the project—a decision that has outraged public opinion not only in Gateshead, East but, I believe, throughout the north-east of England.

While giving the background to the debate, I ought to point out that there are many reasons why public opinion in Gateshead, East is opposed to the building of any incinerator. First, and perhaps most emotively, a previous incinerator in the town was linked with the emergence during the 1980s of a child leukaemia cancer cluster, based on the Gateshead area. There were between 10 and 20 times the number of cases of childhood leukaemia than one would expect in an area with a population the size of Gateshead.

Secondly, there have been other sources of pollution in the Gateshead area, which have led to people being very worried indeed about the possibility of this incinerator being built. Another incinerator gave rise to problems in the past. There were also other sources of pollution, such as the Monkton coke works in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow, and the coal crushing plant at Wardley, which is very close to the site of the proposed incinerator.

The people of Gateshead, East were looking forward to a cleaner, brighter future. The last thing they wanted was yet another source of pollution to be planted on their doorstep in the way that is threatened with this incinerator.

There is a third reason why the siting of this incinerator causes such worry to my constituents: that the health of people in Gateshead is already, on average, worse than the health of our citizens nationally. If the Minister has had time to look at the annual report of the Gateshead public health inspector, he will see, for example, that perinatal mortality rates in Gateshead are significantly higher than the national average. There is also a lower life expectancy for most categories of people in the constituency.

For all those reasons, the latest incinerator proposal has caused widespread public alarm. Indeed, about 16,000 people registered their opposition to this incinerator—a staggering figure.

The Gateshead metropolitan borough council, in tune with its residents, refused planning permission. That is why the matter then went to the Department of the Environment and the Secretary of State. I salute the efforts of the local council, the council leader, Councillor George Gill, and the local councillors who represent the wards most immediately affected by the proposal.

Both I, my parliamentary colleagues, the Member of the European Parliament for the area and the local newspapers, which have played an important role in this affair, have added their weight to the campaign against the incinerator. We find the Secretary of State's decision astonishing on several grounds.

First, it is astonishing that the Secretary of State should have decided in this case to overrule the recommendations of his inspector. I accept that that is unusual rather than unheard of. I have examined information that the Department sent me of cases where the Secretary of State has overruled the planning recommendations of inspectors. I have not found one example of a clinical waste incinerator being dealt with in that way. I am amazed that the Secretary of State should think that he has more technical expertise than his inspector, in having the confidence to overrule his inspector's recommendations in a full and detailed report.

We find the Secretary of State's decision astonishing, because he dismisses our fears about other forms of economic development being deterred by the existence of the incinerator. During the inquiry, the Food and Drink Federation stated:

> "The siting of a clinical waste incinerator at Follingsby Lane would render the proposed industrial site completely unsuitable for any operation in respect of food and drink, whether processing, distribution or storage, because of the perceived risks to the safety of food."

Anything that undermines confidence from the point of view of economic development is worrying in an area such as Gateshead, and in Tyneside generally. Throughout the 1980s, the northern region had the highest level of unemployment in mainland Britain. Tyneside's situation has been, and continues to be, very bad, particularly bearing in mind recent events at Swan Hunter. All such factors must be taken into account by the Minister.

We also feel that the Secretary of State has not examined the full situation, and has an incomplete grasp of the facts. In his reasons for overruling the inspector, the Secretary of State referred to the regional nature of the clinical waste incinerator. He went on to recognise that I had sent him a letter stating that the Northern regional health authority favoured a number of smaller incinerators rather than one big one. But to my astonishment, he said that, while that might be the case, it did not alter his opinion.

Surely he should have checked on precisely what the situation was in relation to the Northern regional health authority, rather than simply look at a press clipping that I sent to him. He should have conducted a thorough investigation, involving the Northern regional health authority and the region as a whole, in the context of

clinical waste. He would then have been in a better position to reach a full decision. It seems from an examination of that part of the Secretary of State's report that he has not acted reasonably—a point that I hope will be taken on board in any appeal that may be launched against the decision. It is an aspect which worries us greatly.

We accept that incineration is necessary, but the building of what is supposed to be a regional facility should be approved only after a proper regional assessment and a democratic decision has been taken in the region. It is depressing to think that the Secretary of State has ignored the advice of the Select Committee that looked into the whole issue of the disposal of toxic and clinical waste. It said that a proper regional strategy should be worked out for each region before decisions were made.

The only reason why the site in Gateshead has been chosen is that the company that wants to build the facility owns the site. That cannot be a sufficient reason to allow such a proposal to go ahead, and I hope that the Minister will address that point in his reply tonight.

When a similar incinerator was to be built in Alberta in Canada, there was a full democratic process, at the end of which local authorities in parts of the state expressed a desire to house the incinerator. The area chosen was away from high-density population.

The Minister may say that Canada has vast open spaces that we in the north-east of England do not have. Even so, the Alberta example was reinforced by the chair of the European Parliament Environment Committee, who said in evidence that he thought that such a facility should be sited in a wooded area away from high-density human and animal population, and distant from arable land. There are such sites in the north-east, and we believe that the Secretary of State for the Environment and his colleagues have done nothing to try to identify suitable sites that would have the support of the general public.

We are worried that the Secretary of State seems to be glib about the emissions from this incinerating facility. We want Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to adopt the highest standards possible in such an area, but we are worried that, despite supposedly strict controls, emission problems are only discovered afterwards, as with the Bolsover incinerator. The television programme "World in Action" did an exposé on the problems in Bolsover and brought them to the attention of the public. Only after that were tighter controls put in place. Given the history of incineration, I am sure that the Minister will understand how concerned we are in Gateshead about the possibility of dangerous emissions being released into a densely populated area.

We are outraged that the Secretary of State has failed to understand the extent of public hostility to the scheme. The Government say that they are a listening Government, but they have failed to listen to 16,000 people in the Gateshead area, never mind the Members of Parliament, the Member of the European Parliament, the council, residents associations and the local press. They have turned a deaf ear to all who have objected to the scheme. Is it any wonder that people in Gateshead feel bitter as a result?

One of our local newspapers, the *Evening Chronicle*, said:

"The Government ruling seems to turn logic on its head and now we have a Government Minister flying in the face of a planning inspector's decision in a move which has stunned many people on Tyneside. Would the Environment Secretary have come to the same controversial conclusion if the incinerator plan had been in a Tory area in the south of England?"

The Minister will not be surprised that people have reacted in that way.

People are also suspicious of the fact that the Government seem to have more in common with the privatised management of Northumbrian Water than with the people of Gateshead. We believe that the Government should be listening to the people and not to vested interests which might want to build a facility simply because they own the land.

For all those reasons, we feel strongly that the Department of the Environment should look again at this issue and, perhaps at the end of an appeal process, decide that the people have right on their side and that their case should be supported.

I believe that the Department of the Environment should commit itself to undertaking a study of incineration and how it should be dealt with in the north of England. It should then embark on a genuine consultation procedure to carry the people with it, rather than work against them. I implore the Minister to think again about this highly damaging and possibly dangerous proposal and realise that what has happened so far has caused public outrage, not only in Gateshead, East but throughout the north-east of England.

10.28 pm

**Mr. Don Dixon** (Jarrow): I congratulate and support my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) on the fight that she has put up for her constituents. This incinerator is on the border of her constituency and my constituency at Wardley. The people in that area have already had to live with the pollution emitted by the Monkton coking works, and now that the coking works has closed, they have emissions from this incinerator thrust upon them.

The previous Secretary of State for the Environment, now the Home Secretary, made this decision. He decided to ignore Gateshead council and South Tyneside council who objected to the planning permission, and he decided to ignore his own inspector and the people in the area. It is disgraceful that, in spite of all the objections, the Government continue to go along with this plan.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) is here; he has a particular interest because of Gateshead authority and because the proposed incinerator would be close to his constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) is also present because of his interest in the region's problems.

I implore the Minister to ask the new Secretary of State for the Environment to reconsider the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East made. We were promised consultation, and an inquiry, and were told that an area examination of incinerators would be conducted before a decision was made. I implore the Minister to take this back to the new Secretary of State and let him reconsider this planning permission.

10.30 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry):** The hon. Members for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) and for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon)

*[Mr. Tony Baldry]*

have raised issues of understandable concern to their constituents and I welcome the opportunity to respond. Some of the hon. Lady's comments were a little wide of the mark, and I shall deal with them in detail.

The debate brings together policy on waste, planning policies and the specific planning decision that is the cause of the hon. Lady's concern. May I deal with our policy on waste? We are a complex society. We produce much waste at home, at work and from industry. Some of the waste that we produce requires specialist treatment, such as waste from hospitals. Overall, our waste management policies seek, wherever possible, to ensure the reduction, re-use or recycling of household and commercial waste.

Large quantities of waste that we produce from our homes, businesses and industry are capable of being reused or recycled. We recognise, though, that, however successful we are in promoting recycling, we will not eradicate waste. What we will do is to reduce the proportion of waste that has to be disposed of. As a society, we shall continue to produce large quantities of waste, for which some form of final disposal, either landfill or incineration, will be the only economic and environmentally friendly option.

The vast bulk of waste for final disposal in this country goes to landfill. Some 150 million tonnes of household, commercial and industrial waste is generated each year, about 85 per cent. of which goes to the 3,000 or so licensed landfill sites throughout the country. Incineration currently accounts for about 4 per cent. of our controlled waste, which is dealt with at about 200 existing licensed incinerators around the country. Incinerators are used to deal with a variety of waste ranging from household waste and sewage sludge to chemical and, as in this instance, clinical waste.

I appreciate that plans to site a waste incineration plant can lead to considerable concerns among local residents. It is wholly understandable that local people should want to be reassured about the impact of such a plant on their neighbourhood. Alas, concerns about incineration plants are often founded more on perceptions of the less efficient operations of the past than on the high technology of the present, with extremely tight regulatory standards firmly endorsed by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, an independent body of experts including many leading academics, recently published a report dealing with the incineration of waste and, because of public concerns about some older plants incinerating chemical wastes, it reviewed evidence about the possible health effects of such plants before they were either closed or modified.

The commission concluded that not one of the independent studies found any significant effects on people's health. It concluded that, although there are some uncertainties about some older plants, they are not relevant to the future use of incineration because emission levels in some older plants were far higher than will ever be allowed in the future. All the evidence shows that incinerators make only small contributions to national emissions of most pollutants. Far larger quantities of pollutants are emitted by industry and transport. I appreciate that there are concerns about incineration. The royal commission points out, however, that incineration is particularly suitable for disposal of clinical waste.

Landfill and incineration are both vital components of our nation's waste management strategy. The stringent standards introduced by the Environmental Protection Act 1990 will ensure that neither landfill nor incineration should lead to pollution of our environment or harm to our health. Clearly, in a complex society such as ours, contentious and controversial planning proposals are bound to arise from time to time. Planning decisions should not be arbitrary; they should be considered against objective criteria. Development plans provide the basis for such objective consideration.

**Mr. John McWilliam** (Blaydon): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is desirable to keep the concentrations of chlorofluorocarbons down, as these are extremely dangerous? That is what my hon. Friend was arguing about.

**Mr. Baldry:** Two years ago, we amended the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to require planning decisions to accord with the development plan unless material considerations indicated otherwise. This has been widely welcomed as giving greater guidance and certainty for local authorities and local people. As I shall explain in a moment, they have to come up with a waste development plan.

A plan-led system can work effectively only if the development plans are both comprehensive and up-to-date. We expect most local authorities to have up-to-date local plans by 1996. Gateshead borough council is among those local authorities that we expect to adopt their development plans well before that date.

Provision for waste disposal facilities should also be planned at a strategic level. That is why waste regulation authorities are required, under the Environmental Protection Act, to draw up separate waste disposal plans which consider the need for waste facilities within their areas and the technical aspects of possible methods of treatment and disposal.

In metropolitan areas such as Gateshead, such waste disposal plans will need to be prepared jointly by the joint committee or authority which carries out the waste regulation function on behalf of the districts, so that the needs of the whole area can be considered. In this instance, that is the Tyne and Wear waste regulation authority. These arrangements, taken together, provide the local and strategic contexts within which planning decisions for waste facilities can be taken.

As we learn more about our environment and the balance that needs to be maintained between our activities and the earth's ecosystem, we recognise the need to maintain at the highest level the environmental and health standards to be achieved by our industries. This applies to the waste management industry as much as to any other industry. We are in the process of setting in place an enhanced waste management licensing system under the Environmental Protection Act. This will enable waste regulation authorities more effectively to control waste disposal operations, from the point at which they are no more than a gleam in the eye to the point at which they are no longer considered to have the potential to cause pollution or harm. We are determined that there shall be tough standards for landfill and tough standards for incineration.

Incineration standards are stringent, as are those for landfill. The new system of integrated pollution control

introduced under the Environmental Protection Act covers larger incineration plants of all types. The incineration of specific types of waste and all incinerators rated at 1 tonne an hour or more are controlled by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—HMIP.

Operators of incinerators are required to obtain, in addition to planning permission, an HMIP authorisation which lays down conditions for the operation of the plant, including limits on emissions. The conditions are designed to ensure the use of the best available techniques not entailing excessive cost, to prevent the release of prescribed substances, or, where 100 per cent. prevention is not practicable, to minimise any possible releases and render harmless any substances that might be released. Those incinerators that are much smaller and not controlled by HMIP are almost all controlled by local authorities.

District councils have broadly the same powers as the inspectorate. The waste regulation authorities are responsible for controlling other aspects of the incineration operation.

The usual means of disposing of waste from hospitals and other care premises has for many years been incinerators located within many of our hospitals. Substantial investment is needed to improve the performance of many of these incinerators to meet regulatory standards.

This is leading to further consideration being given to other methods of treatment, including autoclaving and microwaving, which are capable of rendering safe some types of infectious hospital waste. For many types of waste, however, incineration will remain the most appropriate disposal method. The high standards required for incinerators generally apply equally to incinerators burning clinical waste.

The National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 removed Crown immunity from all NHS hospitals from 1 April 1991. The operators of NHS incinerators have been given a limited period to determine whether it is cost effective to make the additional improvements needed to bring those incinerators up to acceptable standards.

We have issued statutory guidance to the effect that only in exceptional circumstances can this upgrading of existing plant be completed after 1 October 1995. In practice, many old hospital incinerators will not be upgraded to the full standards. They are being improved simply to meet basic and interim standards and will be closed by October 1995.

With the removal of Crown immunity and the closure of many old hospital incinerators, many hospitals are having to consider the most appropriate means of disposal for the considerable quantities of clinical waste that are produced. All these incinerators will be required to meet the stringent standards currently in force under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which are rigorously enforced by HMIP.

That leads me on to the specific planning application. As the hon. Lady has explained, my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 25 May that he had decided to allow an appeal by Northumbrian Water plc for a clinical waste incinerator at the former Felling sewage treatment works at Wardley.

The appeal raised a number of complex issues relating to the planning and pollution control systems as a whole, as well as concerns about the environmental impact of the plant. My right hon. and learned Friend's decision was contrary to the recommendations of the inquiry inspector. The case is effectively still sub judice, being within the six-week statutory challenge period. The House will appreciate, therefore, that I am limited in what I am able to say about the specific decision.

The hon. Lady suggested that the clinical incinerator is not wanted by the Northern regional health authority. Let us be clear—if the Northern regional health authority would rather have a number of smaller incinerators instead of a single incinerator for clinical waste, that is a decision for the authority. It does not affect the Secretary of State's view that the appeal proposal is a possible solution to the disposal of clinical waste in the region, and the Secretary of State does not consider that it is premature for him to determine this appeal at the present time.

My right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State explained his reasons for allowing the appeal in his decision letter. That decision letter is, of course, a public document. In that decision, it is made clear that the Secretary of State believes that the pollution control issues associated with this proposal are capable of being satisfactorily addressed through the authorisation process operated by HMIP.

The Secretary of State agreed with the inquiry inspector that, as an industrial development, the incinerator would not conflict with development plan policies for the area. He also considered it in the light of specific criteria in the plan for special industry, and concluded that it satisfied those criteria and was in accordance with the plan.

The permission sets out no fewer than 24 stringent planning conditions that will have to be met. I do not have time now to set them out but I shall ensure that a copy is placed in the Library.

The hon. Lady drew attention to evidence published in research studies in the late 1980s and presented to the inquiry which suggested that Gateshead was the centre of a cluster of childhood leukaemia. I understand this has been linked, anecdotally, to a number of operations—coke works, a municipal incinerator, a hospital incinerator and a power station—all of which have now closed. The evidence presented to the inquiry on leukaemia clusters was fully considered by the inspector and the Secretary of State before it was concluded that an appropriate plant could be built to meet the standards which would be required by HMIP.

Having received outline planning permission——

*The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour,* MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

*Adjourned at sixteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Friday 25 June 1993*

*The House met at half-past Nine o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PETITIONS

## Channel Tunnel

9.34 am

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): I have the honour to present a number of petitions to the House concerning the construction of the channel tunnel rail link which runs through Islington to the proposed new terminal at St. Pancras station. It obviously has a considerable effect upon my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). Together, we are presenting eight petitions. The first reads:

> The humble petition of the residents of Grosvenor avenue, London, N5, sheweth:
>
> That, if the route of the Channel Tunnel High Speed Rail Link follows that of the existing North London Line it will cause severe damage to the environment, particularly housing, businesses and roads as it will bring excessive vibrations, noise pollution and further loss of open space.
>
> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable house abandon any further plans to site the Rail Link through Islington because of the damage that will be caused to property, the environment and the general well-being of the residents.
>
> And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

The second petition is from a neighbouring area, known as Newington Green, London, N1. It reads:

> The humble petition of the residents of Newington Green, London, N1, sheweth:
>
> That we wish to register strong protest at the Government proposal to route the Channel Tunnel high speed rail link along the route of the North London line. We believe this will result in unnecessary and unacceptable noise to the residents and that the increased vibration will cause damage to our homes.
>
> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable house urge the Government to abandon all plans to route the Channel Tunnel high speed rail link along the route of the North London line.
>
> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The third petition is from a neighbouring area which is very seriously affected by the proposals, in that the road, Mildmay grove, is on either side of the north London line. The railway is in the centre of the grove. The petition reads:

> The humble petition of the residents of Mildmay Grove, London, N1, sheweth
>
> that we wish to object to the proposals to route Channel Tunnel and freight traffic along the North London Line. We believe this will increase the already unacceptable level of noise and vibration causing damage to our homes and the local environment.
>
> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable house urge British Railways to abandon all plans to route Channel Tunnel passenger and freight traffic along the North London line.
>
> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The first two petitions are supported by 122 people and 114 people. The third, the Mildmay grove petition, is supported by 125 people. Another very large petition is supported by 2,700 people. This petition, from constituents in Islington, is signed by people who live throughout the borough and in the neighbouring boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets. It reads:

> The humble petition of the constituents of Islington sheweth:
>
> that we wish to register strong protest at the Government's proposal to route a Channel Tunnel high-speed Rail Link through east London via Stratford to King's Cross/St. Pancras and the siting of Channel Tunnel facilities at Stratford. We believe such facilities at Stratford and the routing of a high speed Rail link across Islington will result in unnecessary and unacceptable damage to our environment and local economy.
>
> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable house instruct Union Railways to abandon all plans to route a Channel Tunnel high speed Rail link across the Borough of Islington.
>
> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

I am pleased to present these petitions. They have the full support of many more people throughout the community, as well as my support and that of many local councillors. We hope that the Secretary of State for Transport will take seriously the environmental concerns of people who live in a densely built-up urban area, in just the same way as we should like the concerns regarding the environment of people who live in Kent and other areas that are affected by the channel tunnel to be taken on board.

*To lie upon the Table.*

## Ordination of Women

9.38 am

**Mr. Patrick Cormack** (Staffordshire, South): You will be glad, Madam Speaker, to hear that I have only one petition rather than eight to present. It is signed by 2,219 Church of England clergymen who are opposed to the ordination of women to the priesthood. More than 1,500 of these petitioners are incumbents. The others include chaplains, archdeacons, deans of cathedrals and others. I have been asked to stress that there are many thousands of lay men and women who share their unease.

These are not people who in any sense question the equality, still less the ability, of women. For them, it is simply a question of deeply held belief and a firm religious conviction that the move is contrary to the teachings and traditions of the Church of England, which claims to be catholic and apostolic. The petition reads:

> That the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England in November 1992 and now before the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament, withholds from future Bishops of Dioceses, not being supporters of the ordination of women as Priests, the power to order their Dioceses according to their Beliefs and Consciences and the Doctrine and Order of the established Church of England hitherto.
>
> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will refuse its assent to the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure in the form in which the General Synod passed it in November 1992.
>
> *And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.*

The petition is signed by Roger Beckwith, warden of Latimer House, Oxford, and, as I have already said, by 2,218 other clergymen.

*To lie upon the Table.*

## Channel Tunnel Rail Link

9.40 am

**Mr. Chris Smith** (Islington, South and Finsbury): I beg to present three petitions from my constituents that express much the same sentiments as those presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn): that we do not wish to become the environmental victims of the Government, choosing a cut-price option for the high-speed channel tunnel link.

The first of the petitions is from parents, teachers and associates of Canonbury school. It reads:

> that the Channel Tunnel Rail Link running overground through Islington and the lengthy building work involved in constructing it would cause unacceptable damage to our environment and adversely affect the lives of the people of the area and in particular the children of Canonbury School.
>
> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House urge the Secretary of State for Transport to instruct the Union Railways to abandon the plans to run the Channel Tunnel Rail Link through Islington via the North London line and Highbury Corner. And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

That is signed by 131 people associated with Canonbury school.

Another petition is from the Islington Protection Group. It says:

> We object to the Channel Tunnel Railway Link surfacing in Islington rather than in tunnel as it was originally proposed and is indeed proposed for the rest of London and the County of Kent. A surface railway will result in noise and vibration damaging properties and threaten the health of residents from pollution and noise.
>
> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House reject Union Railways' proposal to construct a surface Channel Tunnel Rail Link. Such a Link will entail relentless rail traffic twenty four hours a day. Before this, several years of construction work will blight the area, impair the mental health of residents and destroy the green corridor now present in this environmentally sensitive part of North London.

The final petition is from Islington Against the Channel Tunnel Link. It reads:

> We object to the construction of a high-speed link along the route of the North London line because it will cause unacceptable levels of noise, vibration, pollution and damage to the environment and our homes.
>
> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House request Union Railways to abandon plans to route a Channel Tunnel high speed rail link overground through Islington on the grounds that the construction of such a railway will mean a possible 150 extra trains every 24 hours day and night destroying the lives of residents and destruction of a green railway corridor which is an important environmental asset for London.

I entirely endorse the sentiments of these three important petitions.

*To lie upon the Table.*

## Children

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

9.43 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis):** After the overture that we heard this morning from the Church of England and the railways, I should perhaps begin with a quick rendition of "Thomas the Tank Engine", which is the nearest link that I can think of between them and the subject of this debate. After the Thunder and Lightning Polka that you, Madam Speaker, have endured in the past week, perhaps the House can move today to slightly softer music as we consider the children of our nation.

I should like to begin by paying tribute to my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo). As I go round finding my way into the subject of community care and children in particular, I find that he has left behind a reputation for dedication, caring and understanding that will stand me in good stead. We owe him a debt for his work at the Department of Health.

I had two items in my diary last week that, in some ways, sum up this debate. I visited Canterbury, and I took part in a discussion on "Woman's Hour". In their different ways, those two items summed up the good and ugly parameters of this debate on children.

In Canterbury, I visited the Mary Sheridan centre to celebrate 21 years of pioneering partnership between the professions of health and social services and the families of children with multiple disabilities. I heard from parents how alone they had felt when they first realised that their baby was not acting or reacting as other babies—the sadness that comes from the realisation that their child has a debilitating physical, mental, aural or visual condition, and the weariness that they experienced from hours of continuous caring for sometimes messy, unpredictable or unresponsive behaviour.

I saw and heard for myself the progress that those children of 18 months to five years had made, and were making, thanks to the multidisciplinary approach of doctors, nurses, therapists, teachers, social workers and, above all, parents working together with their respective but interdependent skills. That approach is at the heart of our policies. The needs of the individual child were being assessed, barriers between agencies were being broken down, parents were involved at every stage and, whenever possible, children were able to join mainstream schools for at least part of the year ahead.

Children enabled to achieve: that is my ambition, and that, I believe, is the aim of the House and of all those who plan and implement policy in our health service and local government departments.

The "Woman's Hour" discussion was not so happy. We were talking about international adoption rackets. The background was children who are the victims of sordid and squalid organisations and individuals, of pressures on natural parents to give up their child on the false pretences of a semi-legal but immoral trade in young lives. Too often, mothers were being misled into thinking that their children were just being loaned until they could cope better or better afford to have them back. Often, the receiving adoptive parents are not aware of the health background or cultural needs of a child and are unprepared for difficulties, which then become problems.

But it is the traders and middle men in these cases who are evil. If the House often shouts about man's inhumanity to man, how much more right it is to cry out against man's inhumanity to a child. That is why the Government have worked so hard to achieve the text of, and signatures to, the Hague convention on inter-country adoption. I hope that, before long, we shall see the nations of the world ratifying and enforcing it.

Justice requires that a child who leaves his parents leaves with their full understanding of the permanent steps that they are taking, and justice requires that such children go with certainty to a good home and adoptive parents who are fit and proper people to take on the responsibility. Children should not be considered for foreign lands unless their own country cannot adequately find a home or a carer. If they are old enough, the child's own wishes must be taken into account.

Those, after all, are two of the key rights of the child in the United Nations convention of 1991. Decisions must be geared, first, to the interests of the child, and the child, whenever possible, must have a right to be heard.

It is on that convention that we base our policies on when and where a child may be locked up, how he or she should be treated in such circumstances, and when a child can or should be separated from his or her parents, which perhaps is the most difficult of all decisions. I shall return to this a little later, but first let me dwell on the health of our children.

There are few better spheres than child health for revealing the progress that the national health service has made in improving the health of the nation. Today, children are living longer, growing taller and catching fewer infectious diseases than ever before. If one is looking for evidence of improved child health, the first and most basic indicator is the figure for infant mortality. For the fifth year running, infant mortality has fallen to a new low for England and Wales.

A century ago, 132 children per 1,000 died before their first birthday. Fifty years ago, the recorded figure was 51, but, during the past 14 years, we have halved the figure, from 13·1 per 1,000 to 6·6 per 1,000. We are well into single figures, which is a tremendous achievement, and to the credit of modern medical science and the teams of doctors, nurses and midwives who make up our health service. Pregnancy, birth and the early months of life are now safer than ever before.

Most recently, we have been able to announce the dramatic success of the Back to Sleep Campaign.

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): Although everyone is delighted by the rapid reduction in the infant mortality rate figures which, in many cases, meant avoidable deaths, will the Minister reflect on the fact that, in urban constituencies such as mine, the infant mortality rate and the mortality rate before the age of one are considerably higher than in the wealthier suburban or rural parts of the country? Does he think that there is a problem associated with feeding, the health of the parents and the quality of housing, which is reflected in the infant mortality rates?

**Mr. Bowis:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is right to say that there are differences between the different parts of the country, and differences in inner-city areas such as those that he and I represent. Some of the differences are the result of people coming to this country from overseas. I am sure that he is right, and we are also right to reflect such concern in the way we allocate resources—whether through the standard spending assessment to deal with a locality's needs or through specific grants that my Department can make. Nevertheless, I think that he will agree that, overall, it is good news that the infant mortality rate is declining.

**Mr. David Hinchliffe** (Wakefield): One of the things that worry the Opposition is the fact that the decline in the infant mortality rate has been slower in this country than in comparable European countries. Would the Minister care to comment on the fact that Britain now has one of the highest infant mortality rates of any European country?

**Mr. Bowis:** The figures that I am giving show that our success in bringing down the infant mortality rate. As I said, the rate has fallen from 13·1 per 1,000 14 years ago to 6·6 per 1,000. We are not yet satisfied; complacency does not enter our language, but we have nevertheless made remarkable progress, for which we can thank medical science and the people in the health service who care for children.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** (Eltham): Analysis will prove that the rate of reduction in this country has been greater than that, in other European countries, and needed to be. The reduction has been greater among the lower socio-economic groups and needs to continue to improve because there is still a discrepancy. We should perhaps concentrate most on the fact that two thirds of the deaths are still among the 10 per cent. of low-birth-weight babies. That reinforces the point made by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn)—that we need to go in for various types of pre-conception care.

**Mr. Bowis:** I entirely accept my hon. Friend's point, which serves to reinforce my argument. We are determined to ensure that the progress continues. As I was about to say, one sphere in which progress has been made is that of dealing with the tragedy of cot deaths.

The tragedy of a cot death—the sudden, unexpected, unexplained, death of an infant—has long been a matter of deep concern to us all. Until recently in England and Wales, more than 1,000 infants a year succumbed to cot deaths. In 1991, there was a growing scientific consensus that the sleeping position of an infant was a major risk factor.

An expert group, reporting to the chief medical officer, examined the evidence and advised that infants should not be laid to sleep on their fronts, except in particular circumstances on medical advice, and that the great majority of infants should sleep and be nursed on their backs. A publicity campaign was mounted to put across this advice to families with new babies and, in 1992, there was a reduction of 50 per cent. in the number of sudden infant deaths.

Childhood immunisation and its part in reducing, and sometimes eliminating, a number of terrible diseases, which most of us can remember, is another of the most heartening successes in our preventive health programme. There are now four main programmes. The first deals with diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis—whooping cough—for which the combined vaccine DTP is available. I am pleased to say that cases of whooping cough have decreased by 90 per cent. since the late 1970s.

*[Mr. Bowis]*

The second programme covers measles, mumps and rubella. The notification of cases of measles has also decreased by more than 90 per cent. since the epidemic years of the mid-1970s. The third deals with polio. For more than a decade, there has been no wild polio virus in the United Kingdom. Fourthly, since October last year, we have had a new vaccine for haemophilus influenzae B, or HIB as it is known, which is the main cause of bacterial meningitis in young children.

The success of our programmes can be attributed in part to the introduction of targets for immunisations in the general practitioners' contract. Childhood diseases have dropped to their lowest ever levels. Indigenous diphteria and neonatal tetanus no longer occur, and measles and whooping cough are now rarities in GPs' surgeries. No child in England and Wales has died from acute measles-related illness in the past four years. We are also close to completing the evidence which will enable the World Health Organisation to declare the United Kingdom free of indigenous polio. They are achievements of which we, our scientists and our practitioners can be proud.

There will, of course, always be children who require hospital treatment. We have sought to ensure that this treatment is of the highest quality and meets the needs of children and their families. In July 1991, we issued a good practice guide entitled "The Welfare of Children and Young People in Hospital", which had been the subject of widespread consultation with the professions and special interest groups. It has been widely welcomed as setting the standards for which health authorities should aim in placing contracts for hospital services for children.

The principles of the guide are that children should be cared for in accommodation separate from that provided for adult patients; that facilities should be provided for parents to remain with their children overnight; and that children have a right to information about their treatment appropriate to their age and understanding.

Health authorities and voluntary organisations have collaborated in implementing these good practices. For example, I recently heard of a patient preparation scheme run at Frimley Park hospital, with the collaboration of the local branch of Action for Sick Children. Children who are to be admitted to hospital are invited to make a preparatory visit with their families on a Saturday morning. They visit the ward to see the beds, lockers and playroom. They are introduced to the medical and nursing staff and are given the opportunity to watch videos and read books on events surrounding the administration of an anaesthetic or an operation.

The staff at the hospital confirm that this reduces the anxiety that the children and parents feel when the admission takes place, and thereby improves the outcome of the treatment. I sincerely hope that other hospitals will follow that fine example.

To put all this into perspective, I am pleased to say that, despite a small decline in the number of children's beds since 1981, the number of child in-patient cases has increased by 60 per cent. This reflects the decreases in the length of time a child needs to remain in hospital, and the increased demand for care created by advances in medical science.

Although health is crucial, it is only one dimension. For children to have the overall quality of life we would wish for them, they sometimes need the protection of the law to underpin their rights. In a way, it is sad that the law needs to enter young lives, but over the centuries—it is still true today—evil and injustice, from abuse to exploitation, have been perpetrated against children and, no less true, it has, just as sadly, been perpetrated by them. From legislation, therefore, flow policies and practices that seek to protect, to guide and sometimes to reform, but which always put the interest of the child first.

Since October 1991, we have had, in the shape of the Children Act 1989, the most comprehensive legal framework for the care and upbringing of children in the world. The Act has been hailed as the most significant reform of children's legislation this century, but the mere existence of legislation cannot ensure that children's welfare is promoted and safeguarded. We have therefore fulfilled our promise given during the progress of the Bill that we would monitor closely its day-to-day practice to ensure that Parliament's intentions were being carried out. The first report on the Children Act came to the House in February. It contained a wide-ranging description of how the Act had operated in the first year, and described the progress made by local authorities in implementing the legislation. Practice may not yet have resulted in perfection, but, I am pleased to say, the report shows that practice in the other sense is increasingly reflecting the principles of the Act.

The increased availability of services for children in need is helping families who are experiencing difficulties to stay together. At 31 March 1991, 59,834 children were in the care of local authorities in England. A year later, the number being looked after by local authorities was estimated to have fallen to 55,000, a reduction of about 5,000.

Following the implementation of the Children Act, 2,215 children were subject to emergency protection orders, giving authority for the child to be removed from home. That compares with 4,677 children removed to a place of safety the previous year under the Children and Young Persons Act 1969. Those are clear indications of how new practices and social workers working in co-operation with parents, as the Act intended, can make the system work better.

I am pleased to say that the number of children with a multi-agency child protection plan, and hence on child protection registers, decreased between April 1991 and April 1992 by about 15 per cent. and now stands at 39,000. The tragic cases of children killed or seriously injured by their parents or carers amount to between 50 and 100 a year. Such cases rightly attract our attention and our concern, but they must not be allowed to blot out the enormous amount of good work undertaken successfully day in and day out, and often night in and night out, by professionals who protect and improve the lives of so many vulnerable children.

One problem that we are tackling is that of unallocated cases, which was identified by the second report of the Select Committee on Health. The social services inspectorate has been pursuing that regionally.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** The Minister will be aware that I was a member of the Select Committee on Health when the inquiry was undertaken. One of the issues that concerned members of the Select Committee of all parties was the

major problems faced by certain London boroughs that had difficulties in the allocation of statutory child care cases. They faced discrimination under the standard spending assessment arrangements of the Department of the Environment. That point was made in the report. What action have the Government taken to deal with the problem?

**Mr. Bowis:** The report was studied carefully; that is why the social services inspectorate went in not just to criticise, but to advise. We are seeing progress. As the hon. Gentleman will recall, the inquiry found that there was no problem in 40 per cent. of authorities and that, in the vast majority, fewer than 20 cases were unallocated.

However, I recognise that an unallocated case is a vulnerable case. That is why we are monitoring and advising the very few authorities that appear still to be having problems. I still have concerns, as the hon. Gentleman has, about some cases. However, the number of authorities where there are problems has been falling. Most of the other authorities about which he and the Select Committee were concerned have shown encouraging improvements.

We, of course, recognise the importance of providing adequate financial resources to social services departments for the work that they have to undertake under the Act. In 1993-94, the standard spending on children's services will be 32 per cent. higher than it was 1990-91, which is a real-terms increase of 16 per cent. In addition, we have a specific grant of £5·7 million a year for the guardian ad litem service. We have also set up the family support initiative on which we shall spend up to £1·5 million over three years. Its purpose is to encourge the expansion and development of good practice and policy in the provision of family support services by voluntary organisations.

The voluntary sector work is being supported in a number of ways: the production of training materials, advocacy, advice and counselling, information services and the promotion of inter-agency co-operation. One example is that the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children is being funded for a prevention of child abuse project in Corwall. It is working with volunteers on a particular estate to promote within the community an awareness of the problem and of the help available.

I hope that that exercise, which could be called childwatch, will spread to other estates where there are perceived to be problems. Everyone, not just the authorities, has a role in the area. The message to people is, "Don't look the other way. Don't pass by on the other side. If you know that there is a problem in your neighbourhood, bring it to the attention of people who can help to sort it out."

I also acknowledge the importance of day care services. We recognise that it is good for pre-school age children to be with other children for some of their waking hours. That enhances the child's development and improves the transition to full-time education. Nine out of 10 children take part in some group activity before they rech compulsory school age. More than 500,000 three and four-year-olds go to play groups. A similar number of children of those ages go to nursery schools or classes, or to the reception class of a primary school.

We have a rich variety of day care services, with important contributions from the private and from the voluntary sectors. That gives parents choice. Since 1988, the number of private and voluntary day nursery cases has doubled. There are now 90,000 places in day nurseries. The number of child minders has grown by 40 per cent., and there are now more than 100,000 child minders with places for 240,000 under-fives.

My Department is building on its experience during the 1980s of running centrally funded initiatives with voluntary organisations to test policy ideas on services for the under-fives. We are spending £1·5 million over three years and in 12 areas for an out-of-school initiative to pump-prime an expansion of day care services for school-age children. In addition, we have a small grants scheme to help existing local schemes to expand and develop. A lot of good work is developing from bringing together the various sectors that look after children under school age and as they get into the school day.

**Mr. Malcolm Wicks** (Croydon, North-West): The Minister surely does not want to suggest any complacency about the provision for the under-fives. Does he not recognise, as many parents in Croydon recognise, that, when both parents have to work outside the home to pay the mortgage or the rent, it is sometimes impossible to find decent child care for the under-fives? His Department knows of the studies. Does the Minister not recognise that, compared with many progressive European countries, our provision for the under-fives, whether pre-school or child care, is lamentable? It does not match the patterns of how people work and live in Britain in the 1990s.

**Mr. Bowis:** The hon. Gentleman is saying that, increasingly, both partners are choosing to work; that is their choice. If they both choose to work, it is reasonable to expect that they will be able to make a contribution to the support services for their children.

I said that those services are available. The figures show that the voluntary and independent sectors are coming forward with opportunities for such families and I am sure that those opportunities will continue to develop. There will, of course, always be some children of greater need whom the state, and the local authorities in particular, need to support. Overall, the picture is good news and bears comparison with any other progressive country in Europe or elsewhere.

**Miss Joan Lestor** (Eccles): I am interested in what the Minister says and I do not dispute his claim that there is now a developing variety of voluntary care. Unfortunately, it is very expensive. There is the problem of the women—it is usually a woman, although not always—who is left alone to bring up children for a variety of reasons.

Women on income support find the fees of private day care prohibitive. People can pay £60, £70 or £80 a week for good child care between 8 am and 6 pm, which is what a working mother requires. Those women are forced to stay on income support although they would rather work and would rather that their children had the experience of the pre-school activities that the Minister has rightly highlighted. That is one of the central problems in day care today.

**Mr. Bowis:** The hon. Lady does not need to tell me about the problems of people living in the inner cities. I represent many of those people. I also see the opportunities that are coming for them. As the hon. Lady says, if someone is on income support, it is likely that the

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facility will be provided. However, the hon. Lady highlights the problem of the jump from being at home on income support to going out to work. One sometimes needs to be able to afford the costs of day care in the interim period. That area is worth looking at. The basics are there, however, and as the hon. Lady generously acknowledges, there is greater choice for parents in general. A safety net exists to help those who really cannot afford provision, and we need to ensure that the ladder from one set of circumstances to the other is adequate.

I am not claiming that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. I hope that no one will get that impression just because I have rightly highlighted our successes. None of us can have read the well-documented and publicised stories of revulsion—and, sadly, no one can guarantee that similar events will never happen again. But it is worth reminding the House of the positive steps taken by the Government in the past two years to minimise the possibility of abuse and to enhance the quality and delivery of residential child care.

In his report, "Children in the Public Care", Sir William Utting identified a number of respects in which improvements were necessary. The Government accepted the broad thrust of those recommendations and, with local authorities and other agencies, we have been working hard to implement them.

In December last year, we published the report of the Warner inquiry into the recruitment and selection of staff working in child care. My predecessor, who is now Minister for the Environment and Countryside, took immediate action to ensure that local authorities acted to make necessary improvements in staff selection procedures. From the progress reports we have received, it is clear that most local authorities share our view of the importance of improving procedures.

More recently, we have announced the establishment of a residential child care support force, to be led by Adriane Jones, former director of social services in Birmingham. I announced yesterday the group's terms of reference, on which we are currently consulting the local authorities and others. One of its prime purposes will be to achieve improvements in the quality and delivery of residential child care, as well as ensuring that the necessary personnel procedures are in place.

In considering the problems of residential child care, we must remember that children's homes today care mainly for older, adolescent children, some of whom are disaffected, troubled and troublesome. We must not forget the difficulties that that can cause for the vast majority of committed caring staff. In April, my Department issued new guidance on permissible forms of control in children's residential care.

Any responsible and caring parent would accept that children need the right balance between care and control. That is precisely what the guidance aims to achieve, and we will be monitoring its effectiveness. I emphasise that the guidance is not a charter for excessive and unjustified use of physical restraint. If there is evidence of such restraint, it needs to be stamped out quickly.

The provision of proper care and control as well as education, rehabilitation and training were features of the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary on 2 March, when he announced the Government's proposals for dealing with a small but significant minority of juvenile offenders.

The Government will be announcing further details of those proposal in due course. The House will already have noted one important feature of my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement: the secure training centres for that group of offenders will be subject to inspection by the social services inspectorate.

If we are to deal effectively with that small group of little villains and young thugs and improve the quality of social services generally, we must ensure that social workers receive proper training to equip them for the often difficult tasks that they have to undertake. Both the Utting and the Warner reports made important recommendations about the training of social workers. The report of the review of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work was published on Monday.

I yield to no one in my admiration for the vast majority of effective, sensible and dedicated people working in social work up and down the country, but time and again, the message reaches me that we need common sense and not outdated dogma. We need practical, down-to-earth training and not lessons in political correctness. When common sense goes out of the window, something much more dangerous flies in. That must not happen, and I believe that, under the chairmanship of Jeffrey Greenwood, we can be confident that social work will meet the challenge in the best and most effective way possible.

I have highlighted the great progress that we have made. The United Kingdom's record on child care, welfare and health stands comparison with that of any country in the world. I have sought to salute the partnership that has made that possible. However, so long as there is a child in pain or distress, so long as cruelty and crime are done to or by our children, so long as a good record could be a better one, for so long will the Government continue to strive to achieve more for, by, with and from the children of our country and the children of the world.

10.14 am

**Mr. David Hinchliffe** (Wakefield): I welcome the Minister to his new post. I had intended to do so at Health questions a couple of weeks ago but, unfortunately, he did not answer the question that I expected him to. I wish him well in his work at the Department.

The Labour party welcomes this opportunity to hold a debate on the health and welfare of children. The most telling example of the short-termism—a phrase that we have heard a lot recently—not only of the Government but of Parliament as a whole is the very small amount of time that we devote to discussing the real future of this country, which is dependent on the health and welfare of our children and young people.

Excluding the debates on the Children Act 1989, the number of occasions on which we have debated the welfare of children since I came to this place in 1987 can be counted on the fingers of one hand. That is a disappointing record.

One reason advanced for the lack of debate is that there is a broad political consensus across the parties about child care policy in general. To argue that is to take an extremely narrow view of what is meant by child care. Although there may rightly be some cross-party agreement on the narrow question of legal provision for child protection,

there is certainly no consensus on the key political decisions that are urgently needed to bring about a real and fundamental improvement in the health and welfare of our children.

It is simply not good enough to ignore the damage done to millions of children through mass unemployment, homelessness, poor housing and the wider moral bankruptcy of a Government who have presided over Britain's achieving the highest divorce rate in Europe. I am sorry that the Minister made no mention of that deeply worrying factor, which affects many millions of children in our country.

The Labour party believes that one cannot separate the discussion of child protection and children's well-being from an analysis of the wider political issues that have a direct impact on the health and welfare of individual children. During the passage of the Children Act 1989, I pointed out that central to Government policy on child protection was an individual pathology model that largely ignored the wider social and economic context.

The Minister may have emergency protection orders, care and supervision orders and so on coming out of his ears, but until the Government address the social, economic, moral and political issues leading to family breakdown and child abuse, we will not start out on the road to the development of a coherent and meaningful child care policy.

I make those remarks before commenting in detail on the operation of the Children Act, because, far too often in the past five years, debate on child welfare has been bogged down in discussion of the processes of law, and there has been a failure to address the reasons why that legal intervention was necessary in the first place.

When the Minister's predecessor published the first annual review of the Children Act in February, the social work press reported that he was in congratulatory mood. He claimed that the Act had resulted in a marked decline in statutory intervention in child care, which he believed was reason for some satisfaction. Although the main parties both had a strong desire for the Act to work, the implication that the overall well-being of children can be measured by reduced statutory intervention is open to question.

The Opposition certainly hope that the legislation has meant fewer unnecessary placements of children in compulsory care. However, we are seriously concerned that the vital preventive work envisaged in section 17 of the Act has not got off the ground. From talking to a range of agencies concerned with child care, it is apparent that, while local authorities are undertaking their duties under section 47 of the Children Act to investigate concerns about child welfare, the longer-term but crucial preventive steps under section 17 are much less in evidence.

I have no doubt that the crisis orientation of the implementation of the Children Act relates directly to problems of resources at local level rather than to philosophy. The Association of Directors of Social Services, an independent body, told us not long ago that nearly 90 per cent. of social services departments had either standstill budgets or planned cuts in the current financial year.

The Labour party's comprehensive survey earlier this year of local authority social services budgets found clear evidence of the provision for children at local level being raided to fund the implementation of the community care changes that have taken place since 1 April.

**Mr. Corbyn:** My hon. Friend will recalll that, in answer to an earlier intervention, the Minister said that standard spending assessments reflected the needs of inner-urban areas and particularly the deprived state of children's care in many inner-urban areas. Does not my hon. Friend agree that inner-urban areas such as those that we represent have fared extremely badly in relation to SSAs? All our social services departments are being cut, budgets are being raided to fund other things, and the children of the poorest inner-city communities are losing most under this Government.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. His authority, like mine, has been hammered in relation to SSAs in recent years. Over the past two years in my area, there has been a £3 million discrepancy between SSAs and actual spending needs for meeting statutory obligations. If my authority had decided to go along with the Government's advised level of expenditure, it could not have met its legal obligations under child care legislation.

Although the Minister has not had a great deal of time to master his brief, it annoys me that he repeats the same old nonsense that his predecessor talked about SSAs rising. He should consider the reality of actual spending, because there is a huge difference between SSAs and actual spending.

My point about the inner-London boroughs was not answered. The Select Committee on Health recognised a huge discrepancy between the asessment arrangements for inner-London boroughs and those for other areas. The hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), who is present today, is a member of that Select Committee, and he heard the evidence. Many of the inner-London boroughs were discriminated against quite blatantly by the Department of the Environment.

**Mr. Bowis:** In that case, no doubt the hon. Gentleman studied the differences between the efficient inner-London boroughs and the inefficient ones. It is not simply a question of throwing cash into the local government pot; it is question of the efficient use of resources. That is why some London boroughs, which I do not need name and which receive less money from central Government, manage to provide better-quality services than others which receive twice as much.

Does the hon. Gentleman accept that some local authorities make a sensible use of charging to top up what they can spend on services while some fail to do that? Does he also accept that the money that he refers to as being taken to fund community care changes has been ring-fenced with £565 million—£140 million more than was strictly speaking necessary under the social security arrangements? There should not be the difficulties that the hon. Gentleman has described. He should look into his own backyard.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** I am very familiar with my own backyard. I happen to have the good fortune of a very well-run social services department in my constituency. I have no doubt whatsoever that it is efficient, and that it is using the local ratepayers' money effectively and well.

As a Yorkshireman, and having read the stories in the media about London boroughs, I sat on the Select Committee inquiry with great interest. I found that, far from it being simple inefficiency, the explanation was much more complex. Problems of unallocated child care cases related to the blatant discrimination, clearly for political

*[Mr. Hinchliffe]*

reasons, against certain London boroughs. Everyone who sat on that inquiry must have reached that conclusion. That was the conclusion of that Select Committee, which had a Conservative majority.

The Minister should address those issues. We must stop talking about SSAs and talk about actual spending and the resources available to local authorities for child care and community care purposes. As the Minister travels around the country, I hope that he will listen to people from a variety of political backgrounds.

I have spoken to Conservatives who are deeply worried about the under-investment in local authority social services. The Minister should speak to people in his own party, when he will realise that I am making not a partisan point, but an objective one, which is supported by plenty of independent evidence.

From discussions that I have had with people across the country, I am aware that there is great concern about the new duty on social services under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 to house children in need who have reached the age of 16. That duty is simply not being implemented across the country in accordance with the original intention of the legislation.

The Minister will be aware that section 20 has particular relevance to meeting the needs of those leaving care. However, it is apparent from evidence in a range of reports that that particularly vulnerable group is obviously far too often falling through the safety net envisaged by the Act.

Many hon. Members will have had experience of dealing with homeless young people who were often previously in care. They will share my concern that, far too often, those young people are turned away by social services and housing departments, which rightly argue that they have insufficient resources to implement the Children Act and to fulfil their responsibilities.

That group suffers the additional disadvantage of being ineligible for income support. As the Minister is aware, the result is that many youngsters are needlessly at risk and out on the streets.

Several organisations are looking to a judicial interpretation of the Act's provisions. However, the Government must address, as a matter of urgency, the apparent inconsistency in the application of section 20, and must deal with the reasons why many local authorities clearly feel unable to fulfil their duties.

There has also been confusion over the Act's provisions in respect of the control of children in care. Alongside inquiries into the misuse of control in care settings, the intention of the Children Act was to protect youngsters from such abuse. However, although guidance subsequently issued by the Department of Health told residential staff what they could not do in terms of control, it gave them very little advice on possible action that might be taken.

The advice offered more recently by the Department of Health, to which the Minister referred, attempts to respond to concerns arising since the implementation of the Act. However, the real problem lies with residential care provision itself and not simply with control. We have landed under-resourced, often under-trained and underpaid staff with the frankly impossible task of trying to deal with levels of behavioural difficulty which, in the past, would never have been seen in that environment.

The philosophy of the Children Act was right. However, with regard to children in trouble, the confused messages on control issues emanating from the Department of Health have added to the difficulties arising at local level with the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. I have lost track of the number of social services managers who have asked me whether, in implementing the Children Act and the Criminal Justice Act, the Department of Health and the Home Office are aware of each other's existence.

There is a real concern that the lack of a coherent approach at national level to provision for children in trouble is leading to the introduction of a less than properly thought-out proposal for new-style approved schools—I can find no other phrase to describe what the Government have proposed. I urge the Minister to consider what happened when the Government were panicked into ill-thought-out political gestures as an answer to youth crime.

The Minister is aware that I have a little experience in this area, as I worked for many years directly with young offenders. In addition, one of Lord Whitelaw's experimental short, sharp shock centres, which were such a disaster, was situated in my constituency.

I do not underestimate the scale of the task entailed in drawing together a meaningful policy on children in trouble and on child protection. I have spent much of the past 11 months that I have been on the Opposition Front Bench in dialogue with a series of organisations that are concerned about children and young people. They often offered very differing views on what we should do and on the way ahead.

The Labour party will publish a detailed policy discussion document later in the summer. Central to our thinking on the issue will be the need to establish a coherent national political strategy for children—which, frankly, does not exist at the moment under this Government. Not only do we not have a national strategy at the moment, but it is absolutely clear that there are blatant ideological differences within the Government between those drafting laws for education, criminal justice and asylum arrangements for refugees and those concerned with the Children Act. We recognise that if there are different goals and messages at national level, it will not augur well for the implementation of such measures locally.

**Mr. Bowis:** Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the Children Act is very much a guideline and a policy for children? It is a framework or a structure on which we can build. It is not set in historical concrete: it is something that we can continue to advance and amend to meet the relevant case.

Does he accept also that one of the ways in which we can provide better care of children is the care of offenders? Does he accept that there is a small but significant group of persistent young offenders for whom everything has been tried, and that the only answer to protect society as a whole is to take them out of circulation for a period? What one does with them, we can discuss.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** The Opposition have made absolutely clear our belief in the need to protect the public. However, having worked for much of my life dealing with youngsters who have offended, I find it very worrying that the Minister bandies about the term "little villains and young thugs". If he cares to look at the backgrounds of many of those youngsters, he will see that there are reasons why we end up with what he terms villains and young thugs.

The sad fact is that the Government seem to be prepared to opt for a philosophy of locking up youngsters rather than remembering that every piece of evidence gained from research on locking up youngsters is that, when they come out, they are far worse than when they went in.

My central point is that we need a coherent national strategy that considers why youngsters become, as the Minister puts it, little villains and young thugs. There are very clear reasons. The Government are not seriously addressing that matter, and it is on that point that our parties differ markedly.

Over the past few years, we have seen markedly different approaches in different Government legislation. It is astonishing, for example, how little thought has been given to the fairly obvious impact of local management of schools and grant-maintained status on child protection arrangements at local level.

It is deeply worrying how little thought has been given to the possible consequences of the advent of the purchaser-provider splits in health and in some aspects of children's provision on child protection. To me, it is a matter of great concern that the Government have done absolutely nothing to monitor the impact of those changes on child protection.

I give notice to the Minister, so that he can prepare his brief, that, in a couple of weeks, we will publish a report on a survey that demonstrates great concern across the nation about just those points.

**Mr. Bowis:** Into my hands has come a copy of the hon. Gentleman's letter. I notice that he had to have replies in by Friday 18 June. I wonder whether the reponses have shown that there is a problem, or whether they confirm that the system is working rather well.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** I do not wish to hold a press conference this morning, but the Minister will be welcome to attend our press conference. I assure him that every reply to the letter gives our party reason for great anxiety about the manner in which the changes have been brought forward, and in particular about the fact that the Government have done very little at local level to monitor the impact of those changes on child protection. I will certainly ensure that the hon. Gentleman receives a copy of the detailed analysis of our survey when it is published in a couple of weeks.

The Minister will be aware that central to the United Nations convention on the rights of the child was article 12, on the child's right to be heard. Implementation of the 1989 Act, shortly before ratification of the convention by the United Kingdom, set in motion machinery for ensuring that the child's voice is heard in a way that it has not been heard in the past.

It has been particularly interesting to see how certain sections of the media have sought to sensationalise the issue, with bizarre stories of children allegedly divorcing their parents for a variety of spurious reasons. How sad it is that there has been much less media interest in highlighting the permanent damage that has been done to a significant number of individuals within the care system and elsewhere because, in the past, our laws have denied children and young people the right to be heard—the right to speak out against the way in which they were being treated.

It is fairly common knowledge that a significant number of legal actions by individuals who were damaged and abused as children, often within the care system, are currently in the pipeline. It is particularly worrying that many of those people, whose lives have been totally ruined by what has happened to them, fail in their entirely legitimate actions because the Limitation Act 1980 does not take account of their circumstances. I have received several representations on the issue and I hope shortly to introduce a Bill that will amend the limitation legislation to take account of such circumstances, which, when it was drafted, it certainly did not anticipate.

I hope that the Minister—this is a non-political, non-party point—will look seriously at the Government's taking that amendment on board. If it remains in place, vast numbers of young people who have been abused within the system will be disadvantaged as a direct result.

The Minister talked in detail about inter-country adoptions. I look to him to make a breakthrough in respect of the concerns of many thousands of people who were child migrants from this country. I am sure that he will be aware of this very sensitive issue. I knew nothing about this issue; it was a great surprise to me, having worked in social work, but last year, I met a woman who visited this country with the Australian rugby league team, and she told me in detail about her father's experience as a child migrant dispatched from Britain.

I am aware that the Government are being asked to assist many people who have been grossly damaged by the experience. I am not making a party point, because it happened under successive Governments of different parties. However, I hope that the Minister will respond and ensure that resources are made available to counsel some of the people who have suffered from experiences as child migrants.

I hope that the Minister will also address the concerns of people who consider that the Children Act, does little to secure a voice for the child or the young person when he or she is assessed as in need of services, and the local authority concerned cannot provide those services because of reductions in its budget.

I cannot overstate the concern that is expressed to me every week—I have heard the point several times this morning—that local authorities controlled by various political parties are deeply worried about the desperately difficult financial times they presently face in attempting to implement the variety of legislation introduced by the Government.

I remind the Minister that we need to address the inability of some authorities to meet their statutory obligations. Many authorities—for example, the London authorities to which I have referred—consider that their allocation from the Government does not reflect their needs. Objective analysis of the kind that was undertaken by the Health Select Committee clearly proves that point.

It is because of the lack of a voice for the child, despite the Children Act, and the Government's unwillingness to face up to the reasons for the denial of services in some areas that there is understandably such widespread support for the creation of an independent children's

*[Mr. Hinchliffe]*

rights commissioner to promote the rights and interests of children and young people. I am sorry that the Minister did not refer to that matter in his lengthy speech.

I recall very vividly, when the United Nations convention was ratified by the United Kingdom Government in 1991, the comments of John Rae Price, the director of the National Children's Bureau at the time:

"unless the underlying causes of poverty, alienation and inequality are tackled, ratification of the Convention will be but a token gesture".

No one doubts the contribution of the Children Act in enabling significant improvements in the operation of the law relating to children, but its use often arises directly because of the consequences of that poverty, alienation and inequality that were referred to by Mr. Rae Price.

The Government have not only failed to tackle those problems, but have adopted policies that are clearly worsening them. In the 13 years since the Black report on inequalities in health was published, with key pointers to the improvement of the health of our children, we have had a Government who have chosen not only to disregard that report's widely supported conclusions but positively and deliberately to depart in completely the opposite direction.

For the past 14 years, we have had a Government who have regarded the incqualities identified by Black as not only inevitable but an essential motivating factor towards individual success. Their political philosophy has not only necessitated ignoring Black, but required burying the lessons of history. Even the most dogmatic of free marketeers—one or two are present—cannot deny the crucial role of collectivism and the state at national and local level in the dramatic improvements in child health and welfare over the past 150 years—for example, in the key public health measures of the last century, the development of council housing and a system of income maintenance and social security.

Clearly, rolling back the frontiers of the state and deregulation mean reducing the ability of our society to tackle the blatant inequalities of health that are most definitely still with us 13 years after the Black report.

We know that the decline in infant mortality rates has been much slower over the past decade than in previous ones. It may well be harder to reduce mortality rates beyond a particular level. Earlier, I said that it is especially worrying that the rates have declined more slowly in Britain than in other comparable countries, and we now have one of the highest rates in Europe.

The clear correlation between low birth weight, death in infancy and various measurements of social deprivation has been illustrated frequently, not least by various reports of Select Committees. While infant mortality has decreased, there has been much less of an improvement in the socio-economic related causes of death. The National Audit Office reported on maternity services in 1990 and pointed out:

"above-average perinatal mortality rates are likely to be associated with above average levels of social, economic and housing deprivation."

The conclusions of that report were endorsed by the subsequent maternity services report of the Select Committee on Health, which was initiated largely by my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise)—she is in her place today. She will have noted, as I did, that the recent survey by the British Association of Perinatal Medicine, which was published on 9 June, showed that more than 1,000 new-born babies die each year due to a lack of basic equipment and inadequate staffing in NHS neonatal units.

In that maternity inquiry, I recall, as will my hon. Friend, taking evidence on the importance of the school health service and the provision of good-quality school meals not simply for the health of the children concerned directly but for the health of the babies that they would subsequently have. I also recall the unanimous concern of witnesses about the need to take drastic action to reduce smoking among parents, which retards foetal and infant development, and children in later life.

The Government's response to the vitally important conclusions of that report are, as we know—they removed the Chairman of the Committee. He and other members of the Committee had been faced with the fact that there is an obvious connection between social deprivation and poor health, which the Government are simply refusing to address in various policy documents, including "The Health of the Nation". That connection has arisen through the lack of an adequate and nutritionally balanced diet.

Both the National Children's Home and the Family Welfare Association have shown how so many low-income families simply cannot afford nutritionally healthy diets. The annual NCH fact file, which is a fairly objective view of the status and care of children in our society, said:

"1. Every day in this country, at least 9,000 children in families on income support go hungry.

2. At least a further 9,000 parents and families on income support will go hungry to feed their children.

3. Every day, the children of 553,000 families living on income support will not eat a good enough diet.

4. Every day, more than 3 million children will be living in poor families, unable to afford items that a majority of people regard as a necessity."

We must add to that the misery that is endured by millions of people who are homeless or poorly housed because the Government have abdicated their responsibility to house them adequately. We can see exactly how much Britain's ratification of the United Nations convention has meant.

The Secretary of State for Social Security talked only this week about poor people making second-rate efforts because of the universality of state benefits, which he intends to cut. Every day, in my constituency and elsewhere, I see poor mothers and fathers struggling to survive and give their children a chance in life. They are kicked in the teeth almost daily by the Government, who treat poorer people with total and utter contempt.

The Secretary of State may well cut even further the pittance that they are allowed on which to exist. Let him not forget that, just as the mass unemployment created by the Government is directly responsible for the increase in public expenditure, so he should not be in the least surprised when his benefit savings have the knock-on effect of requiring additional subsequent expenditure on health care, child protection measures, provisions for young offenders and an expanded prison system.

I have spoken at length—longer than I intended—about my party's concern about the implications for our children and young persons of a lack of any form of political strategy to address their needs. I should like to have said much more on the measures that might be taken in the short term to have an immediate impact on child

welfare, especially the reform of our adoption and divorce laws. My party believes that reform of those laws is long overdue.

Some time ago, we had a debate on the adoption law review proposals, when I made clear the views of my party. I know that my legal colleagues on the Opposition Front Bench have set out their thoughts on the Law Commission's proposals for divorce law reform. I endorse the need to take urgent steps to protect the interests of those 150,000 children under the age of 16 who are caught up in divorce every year.

It is absolutely vital that couples are given time to reflect on the breakdown of their relationship and access to the counselling and mediation services that are necessary to help them and their children. Great Britain now has the highest divorce rate in Europe—one in every 2·3 marriages breaks down. Whatever our politics, we should all be deeply worried about that fact. I can point to the economic and social reasons that sometimes contribute to marital breakdown, but there are deep moral questions about the overall direction of our country which also have a direct bearing on family breakdown.

When it comes to partnership—marriage in the family—which is the starting point for all our children, Conservative Members seem to say one thing and frequently do another. They say one thing about personal morality of the individual and often do something different, as we have seen yet again this week.

When the moral direction of the Conservative Government for the past 14 years has been one of active encouragement of personal selfishness, opting out and looking after number one, is it any wonder that we see the values needed to underpin personal relationships and family life disappearing, and family breakdown on an unprecedented scale? Is it any surprise? When will the Minister see a clear connection between the moral direction pursued by the Government and the lead that they have given to the nation, and the social consequences that we see locally in our daily lives?

We need nothing less than a whole new agenda for children. The starting point must be no longer regarding social inequality as a positive virtue. In policy terms, that means positive discrimination towards the poorest in our income tax and benefit systems, and moving in precisely the opposite direction to the present strategy. It means fundamentally reviewing our moral attitudes and values, and moving from the opt-out, look-after-number-one view of life to a renewal of societal concern for the less well-off, beyond the occasional rattling of tins and personal consciences.

It means rejecting the idea that mass unemployment is a price worth paying and an economic regulator to be switched on when required, regardless of the human consequences. It means listening to the message in the Black report on the abolition of child poverty, the provision of school milk and nutritious school meals, investment in day care, ante-natal facilities and local authority housing. It means recognising that society's main tool for the achievement of such ends must be positive and substantial Government intervention.

It means developing a health climate that is aimed at evaluating inequalities and a health service that positively discriminates towards areas of deprivation. Above all, it means recognising the importance and value of our children, in a way that is certainly not happening at present under this Government.

10.48 am

**Mr. David Evans** (Welwyn Hatfield): I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister to the Dispatch Box and wish him every success in his new job.

This debate goes to the heart of the problem that we have with the most crucial aspect of our lives—the health and welfare of our children. When I was young, I was brought up to fear three things—almighty God, my father and the village policeman. Children need to be guided by a firm but sure hand. Instead, they are confused by a hesitant and soft system that is filled with fairy tale theories and seriously lacking in common sense. By deliberately shedding the vital ingredients of discipline, authority and supervision, we have been left with a system that threatens and damages the health and welfare of our children.

The Government can be proud of their record on health. Infant mortality has fallen by 40 per cent. since 1979. The rate of immunisation of children is at record levels: 95 per cent. of children receive diphtheria, tetanus and polio immunisation; 92 per cent. of children have received whooping cough immunisation; 93 per cent. of children have received measles, mumps and rubella immunisation. Expenditure on vaccines for immunisation of children is estimated at £40 million per annum, with 650,000 children being immunised every year. The number of cot deaths or sudden infant deaths fell in the first nine months of 1992 by more than 55 per cent. compared with 1991. So we Conservatives have more than kept our promises on the health of our children.

Today, I wish to concentrate on the welfare of those who most need our Conservative principles. The focus must be on those whom I call latchkey kids. Unfortunately, many children are allowed to run riot. People scratch their heads in disbelief and ask why that occurs. I am sorry to say that it occurs simply because we have allowed it to occur. We have created little monsters and pint-sized Rambos. To whom should we apportion the heaviest blame for this sickening state of affairs?

I blame the parents who do not give a damn about their kids and let them run wild. I also blame the socialist do-gooders on the Opposition Benches for their politically correct baloney, which tells us that it is wrong for a child to experience discipline and authority.

**Mr. Corbyn:** The hon. Gentleman referred to pint-sized Rambos. Does he believe that there is any connection between violence among young people and the violence that they experience in society through what they see on television, the war games that they are taught and the war toys and video games that are pushed on them? Does he not think for a moment that there is some connection between the continual intake of violent images and the violence that is later exhibited by them as young people?

**Mr. Evans:** It is not often that I agree with the hon. Gentleman, but in this instance I agree with him entirely. *[Laughter.]* It may come as some surprise to the hon. Gentleman that we agree. I shall deal later in my speech with the point that he raised.

I blame the socialist do-gooders on the Opposition Benches. *[Interruption.]* I have said that already and I say it again. The hopeless, has-been hippies have created a system in which some children have no rules and responsibilities. It is no wonder that so many children are going off the tracks.

*[Mr. Evans]*

Also, society has undermined the authority of the police. I give one example. For a minor offence, a policeman has to fill in 47 forms. For a more serious offence, he has to fill in 119 forms. It takes two hours to fill in 47 forms. So, for four minor offences, a policeman spends the following day in the police station filling in forms rather than outside on the beat where we want him. That is one way in which we have undermined police authority.

The problem is clear. We face a breakdown of discipline in society. It stretches from the home to the school and to the world at large. Too many parents pay too little attention to the upbringing of their children. As a result, my constituents tell me that they are scared to go out at night for fear of being mugged, raped or robbed. They are fightened to leave their homes unguarded. That happens because the parents of little hooligans—that is what they are—could not care less where their children are, what they are doing or who they are mixing with. I am not alone in that view. It is shared by the vast majority of the British people.

A Home Office research paper found that in the past 20 years some 70 to 90 per cent. of respondents in a succession of surveys identified lack of discipline by parents as a major cause of juvenile crime. These negligent parents are completely irresponsible. They allow their children to watch all kinds of filth and violence on the television and on video. The dark influences of the visual media have had a disturbing effect on those youngsters who are not lucky enough to receive firm parental guidance.

**Mrs. Audrey Wise** (Preston): I agree with the hon. Gentleman's analysis about filth on the television; it is not suitable for people of any age. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the fundamental purpose of the production of most of that filth is making private profit? Do not his Government deplore any interference with such an objective?

**Mr. Evans:** The Conservative party believes in free enterprise and free choice, but I agree with the hon. Lady that the material that we see on our televisions gives great cause for anxiety. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House feel exactly the same as I do and that the matter will be discussed at some length at another time in this place.

Where else do youngsters get the idea of maiming toddlers? Where do youths get the idea that wielding a gun or knife is glamorous? Too often, violence is depicted without the moral standpoint. Worse still, the homicidal maniac is idolised.

We have also heard recent reports about computer porn. Children spend much of their time in the evenings in their bedroom playing violent computer games or watching computer porn while their parents are downstairs oblivious to the world of their child because they never set foot in the child's bedroom. They never talk to their children. They never take any interest in them, pay any attention to them or exercise any supervision of them.

Children need to be protected from harmful influences. That requires the participation and authority of parents. Sadly, many parents prefer to neglect their responsibilities and leave their children to their own devices for long periods. When those neglected children inevitably go off the rails, their parents feel aggrieved that they are asked to come to the school or police station to pick up their child. They shrug their shoulders and tell the authorities, "He is not my problem. Why don't you do something about him?"

It is a sad world when thousands of married couples would give all their time and money to love and care for a child while many people lucky enough to have children show no love or responsibility for them. The politically correct cuckoo brigade on the Opposition Benches would recommend a jolly good lecture to negligent parents, highlighting the need to show more affection to their children.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** I am listening carefully. Undoubtedly, the hon. Gentleman will achieve his objective of a line in *The Sun* tomorrow morning. I make a serious point.

**Mr. Jonathan Evans** (Brecon and Radnor): That was a cheap point.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** It is a cheap speech. Does the hon. Gentleman think that there might just be a connection between the example that we have had from Ministers this very week and the moral direction in which society as a whole is going? This week is not an exception. We seem to get it virtually every week from the very top of the Government. Does the hon. Gentleman see a connection or is he completely oblivious to the common ground between the behaviour of the Government and behaviour at grass-roots level?

**Mr. Evans:** It was a socialist Home Secretary who started what we are now paying for 25 years later. The Conservative Government have done more than any Government to put that matter right. Unfortunately, the problem goes back a long way.

**Mr. Gary Streeter** (Plymouth, Sutton): Twenty-five years.

**Mr. Evans:** More than that.

Highlighting the need for parents to show more affection to their children does not work and will not work. I recommend a bloody good kick up the backside. If parents will not show a natural interest in their kids, it is up to the Government to make the parents of persistent young offenders more responsible. Perhaps their child benefit should be suspended as and when their child is convicted. Failing that, perhaps those parents should face a custodial sentence. That would give them some future incentive to show some responsibility for their offspring. Children need role models and they need to respect authority. Sadly, the pathetic behaviour of negligent parents leaves many children with no role model and no respect for or deference to authority.

The problem of negligent parents has a knock-on effect in schools. Lord Elton, in his report on discipline for the Department for Education, noted that he was

"aware of research findings which link anti-social and aggressive behaviour in school to the quality of the child's upbringing and family relationship".

**Mrs. Llin Golding** (Newcastle-under-Lyme): Can the hon. Gentleman tell why it is mostly boys and men who commit crimes? Does he believe that that is connected with the role model of the father?

**Mr. Evans:** I would like children to look up to those role models that I respected when I was young—God, my father and the village policeman. They are the role models that I have in mind.

Pathetic parents lead to badly behaved children and that leads to trouble in schools. With the abolition of corporal punishment, however, schools no longer have an effective means of disciplining children. That loss of discipline has led to a loss of respect and a loss of control.

The recently deceased novelist, Sir William Golding, shot to fame with his first novel "Lord of the Flies". Little did he know that it would come to reflect the present anarchy in the classroom, where little hooligans are allowed to rule the roost, with brutal consequences. We have heard horrific reports of children being savaged by sadistic forms of physical and mental bullying. The power and authority of teachers, however, has diminished to the point where they are scared even to touch a child for fear of being suspended. We even hear regular reports of teachers being subjected to violent physical and sexual assaults by children who are, quite simply, out of control.

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** My hon. Friend may be aware that the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and other charities have expressed great concern about bullying in schools. One of the difficulties that they face, however, is schools' refusal to recognise that that problem exists. Even when parents raise the issue, they have to fight governors and teachers who say that there is no bullying problem at the school. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is part of the problem to which he has referred?

**Mr. Evans:** One need only recall the head teachers conference to appreciate that they do not recognise what discipline is about. One need only observe the conference of the National Union of Teachers to discover what they think about discipline. Need I say any more?

Naturally, I blame the parents who have failed to give problem children a proper upbringing, but I also blame the succession of Ministers who did not have the guts to re-establish a sensible framework for authority and discipline in schools by reintroducing corporal punishment. Generally speaking, that lot on the Opposition Benches seem to reject corporal punishment on the half-baked notion that they are protecting children. What a lot of rubbish. I believe that the absence of corporal punishment has allowed little thugs to bully and harm pupils and teachers.

Children are not stupid. They know that if they are not going to get punished when they do something wrong, they can go on doing it. That process of permitting delinquency has graduated from the schools to the streets. The Home Office has instructed the police to caution rather than prosecute juvenile offenders. On occasions, juveniles who have been caught four or five times committing offences have merely received four or five cautions. Where is the logic in that? We can caution youths until we are blue in the face, but unless we come up with an effective deterrent, those delinquents will carry on offending.

If anyone is interested in reading horror stories and has already read the most recent Labour party manifesto, I suggest the 1990 criminal statistics for England and Wales. I was shocked to discover that youths had merely been cautioned for rape, indecent assault on a female and conspiracy to murder. A staggering 2,071 youths aged between 14 and 17 had been cautioned for burglary. What is going on?

Those young offenders should be properly punished for their crimes. We have been told that the borstals for youths will be up and running in three years' time, but my constituents ask me what we are going to do about those youths who are running riot today. Even when those special borstals are established, I doubt whether they will do any good. Those baby borstals will be about as tough as kindergartens. The staff will be instructed to comfort and cosset the offenders. I would not be surprised if the Home Office issued a circular to instruct the staff to provide offenders with a nice hot cup of cocoa before bed time.

Last May, *The Sunday Telegraph* reported on another Home Office circular, under the heading

"Are you enjoying your porridge?"

Apparently, the staff had been instructed to ask offenders whether they were having their underpants changed regularly enough, whether their cells were hot enough, cold enough, too noisy or too quiet. They were asked whether they could sleep at night. That is just what the new borstals will be like, because they will be run by socialist do-gooders.

I suggest that we drop the trendy socialist claptrap philosophy and return to a dose of discipline and authority. We need to urge my right hon. and learned Friend the new Home Secretary to take the bull by the horns and introduce a framework that will being those kids back into line. Let us reintroduce flogging—cat-o'-nine-tails if you like—because that will make those thugs think about crime. That would certainly have a better effect than one pointless caution after another, which lets thugs go out and rob and rape again. That is what is happening every day.

The socialist softies on the Opposition Benches may shake their heads, but they should bow their heads in shame, so should many on the Conservative Benches, at the fact that their soft soap slogans and slushy nonsense have landed us in a mess. By listening to their sort for too long, we have removed responsibility, authority and discipline from our society. The nation is now being held to ransom.

A solution has emerged from an unlikely source—the European Community. My friends know my honest view of Europe: no, thank you. One practice of the Community that I would grasp with open arms, however, is national service, not necessarily in the armed forces, but in the community. Young people, men and women, could then learn the benefits of discipline, team work and a deference to authority.

The Government should be encouraging young people to get out, get active and get stuck in. Children, sadly, no longer seem to have any sense of participation or involvement in events. That is particularly true of sport. Children just lounge around their bedrooms at every opportunity, playing computer games or watching television. When they get fed up with those computer games, they go out in the evening and hang around the streets and estates, where boredom, inevitably, leads to mischief.

Children should be encouraged to play more sport. School teachers have, sadly, become 9 to 3.30 merchants. They should hang their heads in shame when it comes to latchkey kids. In my day, when the school bell went at

*[Mr. Evans]*

3.30, we were encouraged to participate in sport, whether it was cricket, hockey, netball, swimming, running or jumping. The teacher took pride in producing a swimming team. The whole school was made to stay back to cheer its side. That created team spirit and pride, rather than the dreadful individualism which seems to be affecting our nation, our youth and, dare I say it, our party.

Sad to say, these days, the most vulnerable go home to an empty house while mum is at work. They have two hours to fill in, which, in itself, produces problems. It may even be necessary to pay teachers overtime to stay on at school, because a concentrated effort to encourage youngsters to participate in sport would be in the long-term interests of everyone.

As a youth, I played football and I was fortunate enough to make football my career. I only wish that more children could enjoy the excitement, sense of achievement and discipline felt when participating in sporting activities. The politically correct crackpots of the Opposition would probably disagree and argue that sport is too rough and too competitive. Perhaps that is why they cannot win a general election. Looking back on the Labour party's record, I think that it makes the English football team look successful. I would not be surprised if it appointed Graham Taylor as its new campaign manager—he could not be worse than the one it has got. Sitting opposite that lot day after day, I have had to conclude that they lacked discipline in their upbringing and are obviously a bunch of political delinquents. I do not wish to spend any more time on that lot because they are losers—there is no hope for them.

Children are different. They have a life of potential and achievement ahead of them. It is up to us to guide them through the path to adulthood with care, attention and supervision—most of all supervision—and provide them with role models in authority and the use of discipline. The Government must free themselves from the clutches of the chattering classes and adopt a commonsense approach to the health and welfare of our children. We do not need to spend vast sums of taxpayers' money. All that is required is an occasional clip around the ear and a cuddle every night before bedtime. For the health care of our children, I give the Government three plus points and a gold star; on the subject of our children's welfare, I would say of the Government that they are trying, but could do better.

11.14 am

**Miss Joan Lestor** (Eccles): If the views of the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) have been formed as a result of his activities on the football field, I recommend that the Government ban the sport immediately. I cannot believe the speech that I have just heard and I do not intend to pick up on it in any way, except to throw out one or two general thoughts.

People call for activities for our young people at a time when youth service facilities are decreasing, many regions do not have recreational facilities and the aspirations that the Government describe as important cannot be met because of cuts in local authority expenditure. Therefore, to talk about activities in that context seems to undermine the philosophy that we should adopt.

Some of us have fostered children or worked with children in need and children who have suffered in a way that it is hard for others to comprehend—where children have been abused, ill treated, violated and moved from home to home never to be rehabilitated. After 12 or 15 years of such existence, many such children end up as delinquents who are antisocial and violent. But unless one traces the history of those children and learns the lessons of how to guard against a repetition of such events, we will end up with more borstals, more secure accommodation and more measures designed to curtail such behaviour. I do not think that most hon. Members would want that.

We must learn the lessons of what has happened in the past. To be fair, I think that the Government have sometimes responded well to the problems. We can all remember the cases of Maria Colwell, Tara Henry, Jasmine Beckford and Kimberley Carlile, and a host of children who died because we let them down. We must always be sure that the structures that we set up as a result of the inquiries we undertake following the deaths and suffering of those children are watertight. We must constantly review the position.

Yesterday I was disappointed by the reply I received when I asked whether there was to be a review of all the structures involving children and young people in residential care. I was told that that would not happen in a major way. We must always review the provision. People slip through the net and we cannot know at all times what is happening in any home or organisation for children.

I was interested in the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) about boys. Persistent offenders are nearly always—although not always—boys. Why is that? Is it because we expect too much of our boys, who find that they cannot meet those expectations and so become young offenders? Is it because the status of young men in society is measured in terms of owning large cars and becoming providers, breadwinners and heads of families, and many boys believe that they will never achieve that status? We should consider that aspect.

We should also study what is happening to young girls. But we must remember that we are talking about a minority of young people. An increasing number of very young girls are having babies. They do not have babies in order to obtain a house. Perhaps they do so because the only way in which they can achieve status in society is to become a mother. The lack of educational and work opportunities for many young girls results in an increasing number of them seeking refuge in obtaining some form of status by becoming mothers, which worries me. However, it takes two to make a baby and we should ask why the number of teenage pregnancies is increasing. What sort of society produces such a problem?

We all know that unless we intervene at an early stage to help alleviate the problem of young people, the pattern tends to be repeated. I have fostered children for a long time. Happily, I have seen some of them adopoted or rehabilitated, but some were less fortunate. Of the less fortunate, those on whom I have managed to keep tabs over the years have, unfortunately, tended to become part of an ever-repeating pattern.

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** The hon. Lady mentioned teenage pregnancies as though they might all be intentional. I also have some experience of child care work and I think that she will agree with me that most teenage pregnancies are not intentional.

**Miss Lestor:** I was just about to comment on that. We kid ourselves that young people are well aware of birth control, but they are not. The hon. Gentleman is right when he says that many teenage pregnancies are not intentional. Many young girls who become pregnant decide to go ahead with the pregnancies despite the social difficulties which they know that they will face. We must address that issue. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we have not tackled the issue of family planning and birth control for boys and girls in our society. We could develop an argument on the subject of why teenage pregnancies are becoming more frequent. They were not so common years ago when less knowledge was available about family planning. The age of teenagers who become pregnant is decreasing.

Parents are blamed for everything in today's society. All hon. Members with children have neglected them in some way or other. Being a Member of Parliament means that we have to neglect our children—we have to leave them to our partners as we are at Westminster most of the week, not with our children. If they are honest, hon. Members from both sides of the House, irrespective of political affiliation, will admit that sometimes they fail to get to a birthday party or some other event.

There are degrees of neglect of children, but the accusation of neglect must not be levelled simply at the poor, which is not fair. The poor care for their children as much as those who are better off; it is someone's circumstances which can lead to neglect. To argue that parents do not care and should be put in prison is ridiculous and shows the lack of understanding about the neglect of children. All hon. Members—the majority of whom are men—are fortunate. The men, if they have children, have wives at home looking after them.

I remember one Conservative Member who asked me who were the lovely little children who were running around me. I said with great pride that they were my grandchildren. He said that my response made him feel terrible as he would not see his children until Friday. When we talk about the neglect of children, we must be careful about what we say. People who are poor or unemployed care for their children just as much as anyone else, but they cannot afford to pay other people to assist them, as many of us can.

We must consider the impact of television, to which probably all children are subjected. People will say that only a minority become violent and behave in an antisocial way as a result.

All our children these days play video games and watch a great deal of television. It is important to find out whether what they see on television is reinforced in the family circle. If children see violence and are told by their parents that violence is terrible and that people should not behave like that, they will begin to question what they have seen. If, on the other hand, they are told that the violence is wonderful and manly, they will react differently. There is a generation gap: we did not play video games, so we do not know about their impact. In any event, how we react to what we see on the screen and how schools and other institutions in charge of young people react to it is all important.

There is not just one cause of antisocial behaviour by this minority of children. Our schools are not collapsing because of indiscipline. I repeat that the problem is confined to a minority. Most youngsters who are cautioned—85 per cent. of them—never offend again. It is unfair to maintain that there is a relentless tide of bad behaviour——

**Mrs. Wise:** Perhaps my hon. Friend would like to hear about the experience of a member of my union—an elderly lady who took part in a television programme about young people. She listed several instances of good behaviour, but they were not included in the final programme. Only the criticisms were included.

**Miss Lestor:** I am not surprised. We hear about this minority all the time; we concentrate on it. We have all had a great many letters, however, from young people in our constituencies asking how they can raise money for various good causes. They want to be involved. They are increasingly aware of environmental issues. We have all been to functions at which we have seen the good activities carried out by young people. Certainly, there is a problem with a minority, but that problem cannot be divorced from the social circumstances in which many of them find themselves. If we forget that, we sell these young people short.

Young people do not become violent out of the blue. We should remember how many of them become thugs after they themselves have been treated violently. Similarly, many youngsters who suffer sexual abuse go on to become sexually abusing adults—but not all of them do. A majority of the most violent people in this country have been violently treated themselves.

I am also worried about the fact that a large number of young people who end up in penal institutions used to be in local authority care, often taken into care to remove them from unsatisfactory homes. Perhaps the personality damage had already been done before they went into care, but there must be a link. Equally, a disproportionately large number of young people sleeping on the streets have been through the care system. We cannot ignore these factors or claim that social circumstances are irrelevant. There is a thread that runs through all these experiences and we should not just dismiss it and call for the return of the birch.

The National Association of Young People in Care will bear out what I am saying. We need to ensure that our structures for dealing with children and young people are not open to abuse. Children who have suffered at the hands of people in the care system, in which we have placed them for their own protection, will obviously encounter problems and difficulties later on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) dealt adequately with many aspects of the Children Act 1989, but I draw attention to the decline in the school nursing service and the problems that that will entail. I recently asked a parliamentary question about the numbers of school nurses in post. In 1979, there were 3,810; in 1985, 3,110; in 1991, there were 3,050. Clearly, there has been a decline. Now, two health districts, Bath and Bristol, have said that they no longer intend to provide a school-based nursing service and that they intend to reduce universal school children health surveillance programmes. Doubtless the Government will say, as they have in the past, that the service is not needed so much —that children are healthier and are going to see their family practitioners. I question that and so does the Royal College of Nursing.

*[Miss Lestor]*

Schools nurses in many areas see every child for a health interview at the start of his or her school career. That leads to the early detection of problems, on which advice can be given. It is therefore a great pity that the service is to be allowed to deteriorate. Statistics may show that more of our children are healthy—I am sure that that is true—but what an indictment of 14 years of Conservative Government it would be if there had been no progress on this front. More children are being immunised—we have stamped out many diseases during the past 50 years—but there will always be a minority to whom the overall approach does not apply. They will be the children who will lose out; they are the ones who do not go to family GPs, whose parents may be poor and unable to take advantage of the service in their area. The Government and health authorities are selling children short if they allow the school nursing service to decline.

In this country we are good at concentrating on pre-school health services for children. We have a good health visitor service—long may it last: I hope that it will never be tampered with. After children go to school, however, the service is not so good.

The British Dental Association and other organisations have expressed concern about children's teeth. The number of examinations carried out is declining. It will be said that children's teeth are improving because of fluoridation. That may be so, but too many young children still get caries and there is not enough early detection. That may be partly due to the cost for adults of going to the dentist, which may lead to fewer children accompanying their parents to the surgery. There is a wide variation in the prevalence of dental caries among five-year-olds. The highest incidence is in the northern urban districts and among poorer people with poorer diets. The lowest incidence is in the southern areas where people tend to be better off.

**Mr. Corbyn:** Does my hon. Friend agree that another problem has been the continual cuts in the school meals service, the abolition of nutritional standards in 1980 and the high price of school meals? More and more children are bringing packed lunches to school, often containing far too many sweets and far too little protein and fruit. It is simpler to pack sweets than to prepare sandwiches.

**Miss Lestor:** I was coming to children's diets, and advertising. Most of us have expressed concern about the decline in the school meals service. A recent survey in a school showed that children were bringing white bread sandwiches with jam or paste, chocolate biscuits, packets of crisps and drinks full of sugar. That may be the result of ignorance or of poverty. When we did away with decent school meals, we opened the door to all sorts of problems with our children's health. It is a great pity that the service has declined.

Another related issue is the effect of food advertising on children. The dental health promotion, Community Dental Service, in Hampshire recently sent to me a copy of a letter that it had written to the nutrition section of the Department of Health regarding a chocolate drink, manufactured by Crookes Healthcare Ltd., a subsidiary of Boots, and sold under the brand name of Farley's. That drink is designed to encourage toddlers to sleep.

Anyone who has ever had a baby knows that the biggest mythical phrase in the world is "sleeping like a baby", because they rarely do. I am sure that many parents have been attracted to that drink, for it says that it will soothe their toddlers to sleep. The drink is called Bed Timers and is aimed at children between the age of 12 months and four years. Bed Timers contains a total of 43·3g/100g of sugar. Almost half the content of that product is sugar.

Other products that are on the market are just as bad. If hon. Members have ever sat in front of their television sets during half-term or at other times when children are at home and watched the advertisements, they will know that cereal and all sorts of drink advertisements are aimed at children and that children, just like us, are being brainwashed. Those who care about children's health should talk to the promoters of these products and ask them to take out the sugar. They should also ask them not to show these advertisements at a time when children are likely to be watching television.

**Mr. Roger Knapman** (Stroud): Does the hon. Lady agree that good example and respect for the law are important? Will she therefore ask for another survey to be conducted? Five Opposition Members are in the Chamber, of whom two actively encouraged their constituents not to pay their local taxes. What sort of an example is that to young people in their constituencies?

**Miss Lestor:** We could talk about Chancellors of the Exchequer who have their legal fees paid by the Treasury and the rest of us. If the hon. Gentleman wants to go into this game, there is a whole string of issues that we could raise.

**Mr. Corbyn:** What about watches?

**Miss Lestor:** Yes, watches as well, but do not let us be silly. I began my speech on the assumption that we all care about what happens to children. What the intervention of the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) had to do with the sugar content in drinks I cannot imagine.

In 1990, a Food Commission survey found that half of all advertising during one week of children's television was for food and soft drinks—51 per cent., eight times higher than any other category. In just over 10 hours of viewing, there were 92 advertisements for food and drink, an average of nearly 10 an hour. The vast majority—78 per cent.—were for pre-sweetened cereals, sweets, crisps, fast foods and soft drinks. After the Government White Paper "The Health of the Nation", which includes the health of children, it is nonsense that our children should be subjected to such a barrage of influence on their diet.

We all know abut the dangers of heart disease later in life. I make the same criticism, in a different context, of the promotion of smoking in such a way as to attract young people to begin to smoke. These are issues that we rarely examine. Instead, we congratulate ourselves and say that for many children things are much better. Of course they are. However, for a minority of children—in some instances, a growing minority—things are getting very much worse. The problem is linked to unemployment, bad housing and poverty. The gap between the two is widening. That worries me very much.

**Mr. Michael Fabricant** (Mid-Staffordshire): I take many of the points that the hon. Lady makes regarding soft drinks, but does she commend the Independent Television Commission for preventing in this country

something that happens on a dreadful scale in the United States—the linking of cartoon films with toys that are available, the suggestion being that if a child does not have a particular toy that is shown on a cartoon there is something wrong with the child—that in some way he or she is inadequate?

**Miss Lestor:** A little bit of that is creeping into advertising in this country and it is to be deplored. I mentioned some time ago in the House that Benson and Hedges uses the puffin symbol to advertise cigarettes. The moment we begin to link positive images for children, characters that they love, with something else, we are on the road to disaster.

I welcome the debate. All of us who care about children have a duty to them and to all who look after them to make sure that the services that exist are provided to them all. Unhappily, as I have already said, the gap between children is widening. We cannot separate the social circumstances in which many children find themselves from many of the difficulties that they face. We must always be vigilant and ensure that when we pass laws we include all children in the provisions, not just the majority, for it is the minority of children who cause us concern and it is they who are suffering in a disgraceful way.

11.35 am

**Mr. Roger Sims** (Chislehurst): I join in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on his appointment, and on the manner in which he has swiftly got to grips with his portfolio. He rightly covered a number of strong points, and he had some good stories to tell about children. He also highlighted problems that continue to have to be faced.

The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) made a typically robust speech. Although I agreed with some of his criticisms, he would not, I am sure, expect me to agree with some of the others. Stripped of party rhetoric, however, no one doubts his commitment to children, and his sincerity.

Health and welfare is a vast field. It is impossible to cover everything in a brief speech, so I intend to confine my speech to a few issues that interest me, particularly those that stem from my involvement with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the magistracy and the Children Act. That Act represents one of the two landmarks in child welfare in recent years. There have been a number of admirable initiatives. I refer also to the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, which was agreed and ratified by the United Kingdom.

Both the Children Act and the United Nations convention are admirable in their intentions and philosophy, but we must ensure that they are fully implemented. We must ensure that the philosophies that underpin the Children Act are implemented and that the philosophies that underlie the United Nations convention are implemented in other countries. One could give a list of problems that show that the convention is not being applied throughout the world. We must ensure that it is.

It is accepted here that children represent a distinct section of the national community. They have their distinctive problems and needs. There is a case, to put it no higher, for considering the appointment of an independent children's rights commissioner to act as a watchdog and to view the legislation that emanates from all Government Departments from the angle of the child.

Organisations and individuals are appointed to look after the interests of various sections of our society—women, the disabled and ethnic minorities. Children are just as important, if not more important, a part of the community, and merit particular attention being paid to their needs.

A number of interesting initiatives that affect children have emerged in the past few years. Childline, set up by Esther Rantzen, enables children in trouble to pick up a phone and talk to people who may be able to help them. There is no doubt, from the thousands of calls that Childline has received, that this service has met a very real need.

The NSPCC has developed, alongside that service, its child protection line, which enables people who are concerned about certain children to voice those concerns, make contact with appropriate people and have action initiated. It also enables desperate parents to ask for and get help before problems that are emerging reach a tragic climax. The thousands of calls that both services receive show the extent of the problem and the need for those services.

I believe that the Children Act may prove to be one of the most important measures passed by the last Parliament, and, indeed, by this Government. It is worth reading the words of the chairman of the Children Act advisory committee, the hon. Mrs. Justice Booth, who reported in the foreword to her annual report on the Act:

"What can be said with confidence is that the enthusiasm and goodwill that greeted the Act have remained unabated."

The Government's report on the working of the Act generally supports that view.

Having said that, the report also points to the inevitable problems that have arisen, one of which has already been mentioned—day care. Paragraph 4.35 of the report says:

"Examination of correspondence from MPs and the general public confirmed that some local authorities were seeking to impose on childminders and daycare providers more stringent or higher standards than those recommended in the national guidance."

I must confirm that that certainly seems to be so. An admirable holiday play scheme operates in my constituency. With a few professionals, volunteers help to run schemes in school buildings during the holidays to enable children to occupy their time in a range of worthwhile educational and leisure pursuits. The scheme suddenly faced quite unduly onerous requirements on the qualifications of voluntary helpers, on health checks for every helper and on space, with no account being taken of the playground or playing field, all of which threatened the future of the scheme.

A similar case arose more recently. I learned of a constituent who, for many years, has run an admirable and well-supported nursery group. She was visited by the inspection manager of the local authority children's division, who required a number of quite unreasonable changes to be made before the group, which had run so successfully and satisfactorily for many years, could be registered.

The predecessor of my hon. Friend the Minister issued some guidance on 11 January. Paragraph 4.38 of the Government's report says:

"The circular . . . reminds authorities that, in the interests of children and families, they must strike the right balance

*[Mr. Roger Sims]*

between ensuring standards and encouraging development of provision. There is a presumption under the legislation that registration should be granted unless the authority has good reason not to register."

I invite my hon. Friend the Minister either to issue further guidance or to emphasise that circular in the next annual report. We must ensure that the implementation of the philosophy behind the Act is not strangled by bureaucracy.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation conducted a survey into respite care for children. It found:

"The increased bureaucracy undermines the previous flexibility of services and is causing link families to leave."

It quoted from a respondent, who said:

"'I feel that the requirements of the Children Act have placed some unnecessary burdens on carers, workers and users, making arrangements more inflexible. Existing good practice may well be eroded by such formality and form-filling.'"

It is important to strike a balance between what those who were involved with the Children Act wanted to achieve and what is happening on the ground.

**Mr. Bowis:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this matter. He is right to say that, in practice, some well-run organisations, day centres, playgroups and so on have suffered from bureaucracy and an intrusive interpretation of quite well-intentioned rules. That is why we issued guidance in January.

I hope that it is working and that the debate may draw it to the attention of people who operate the Act. I hope, equally, that he and any hon. Member who is aware of instances where it is not working will draw them to my attention, because I want to pursue the problem and get the matter back on the rails.

**Mr. Sims:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for responding so promptly to my point. I invite him to respond similarly, if not immediately, to the next matter that I want to mention—the continuing problem of the number of children who are on the at risk register but who have been unallocated. It is worth reminding the House that a child is put on the at risk register because somebody is concerned about what has happened or because of signs that they saw in the child or the family.

Paragraph 2.59 of the Government's report on the Children Act says:

"As at 30 June 1992 the total number of unallocated children . . . was 1,543 or 2·9 per cent. of the total numbers of children looked after."

It notes that, in 31 authorities, all the children have been allocated. I am happy to note that my borough is included. That shows that it can be done, but some have a very poor record; indeed, three authorities account for two thirds of the unallocated figure.

We can argue the toss about resources and I have some sympathy with the point that the hon. Member for Wakefield made, but I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to put the strongest possible pressure on authorities that have so many unallocated children to organise their resources and get their priorities right.

The courts seem to be settling down to the new Act and I take this opportunity to pay tribute to magistrates who sit in the family courts. They are not the family courts that some of us would like to see, but we are getting there. Those magistrates had, in effect, to forget all that they had learnt and to be almost retrained.

Some evidence shows that not all legal practitioners have become used to the new approach of the Children Act. They must forget the adversarial approach that they have used in the past and probably still continue to practise in other courts. It is not a question now of whose side they are on. There is only one side in family courts —the child's.

I invite my hon. Friend the Minister to investigate the role and workings of guardians ad litem, who play a particularly important part in court procedures. He should consider whether they should be managed centrally rather than by local authorities. He will realise that local authorities often bring cases before the court. If they are also managing the GALs, it must, to some extent, compromise their independence, or at least the perception, if not the fact.

It is interesting to note that some courts have been issuing explanatory leaflets to the parties involved, including solicitors, to assist them with the new procedures of the court. Perhaps there is a case for doing so on a national basis.

If children are likely to appear in court, they now have the advantage of the admirable child witness pack issued by the Department of Health, the Home Office, the NSPCC and Childline with support from the Gulbenkian Foundation. That was exactly what was needed, but not only for children. It would be a great advantage if something similar could be produced for practitioners, parents and others who are to appear in court.

The value of the television link in court, which enables a child to give evidence without physically having to be there, is already being proved. Recent provisions enabling videos to be admissible as evidence are also to be welcomed. There are still circumstances, however, in which a child has to appear in court, which can be extremely intimidating and traumatic.

I hope that the Minister, in conjunction with the Lord Chancellor's Department, will further consider the idea of pre-trial hearings at which a child could give evidence and be cross-examined in chambers—thus as far as possible avoiding the necessity of the child having to appear in court.

While on the subject of court proceedings, I must mention the recent case in which Judge Ian Starforth Hill referred to the eight-year-old victim of attempted unlawful intercourse as "not entirely an angel". As one of my hon. Friends says, that is disgraceful, and it was also the general reaction. Surely, when a child is abused by a adult, the child cannot and should not be blamed for the abuse.

A further dimension to the problem to which I feel I must draw the House's attention is the Attorney-General's sentencing guidelines on incest. The guidelines cite as a mitigating factor the apparent

"genuine affection on the part of the defendant rather than any intention to use the girl simply as an outlet for his sexual inclinations."

It is well know that the genuine affection shown by the abuser, especially when the relationship between the abuser and the child is a close one, may have a traumatic effect on the child because of the profound betrayal of trust. I hope that the various Departments involved in this sphere will review all the sentencing guidelines on incest and provide more training for the judiciary in child sexual abuse and similar cases.

Finally, I refer to the scandal of cases in which children have been abused and, in some instances, have died, but where no criminal proceedings have followed, simply because of the right of silence.

A well known, relatively recent case was that of Kim Griffin, who died from dreadful injuries at the age of only two months. She had been in the care of her parents. The coroner's verdict was death by unlawful killing. No charges were brought. Both parents exercised their right of silence, so it was impossible for the prosecution to proceed. The parents were free to leave the interrogation to which they had not responded and, of course, they are free to have more children, which means that there is a possibility of a repetition of that sad event. The case, alas, is not an isolated one; there have been a number of similar cases in recent years.

Many people believe that the law must be changed. The NSPCC has presented a well-prepared dossier on joint enterprise to the royal commission. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Minister will make the valid point that the issue is being considered by the royal commission, but I am worried by press reports suggesting that the commision has already decided against any change in the right of silence rule. Whatever its views on the application of the rule generally, I suggest that there is an overwhelming argument for a change in its application in the cases that I have just described.

We all accept that we have an overwhelming duty to protect the rights of the child. Surely, the younger and more defenceless the child, the stronger our responsibilities. If we fail to protect a child who has been neglected, abused, gravely injured or even killed, we must at least ensure that those responsible are punished, and that justice is done.

11.55 am

**Mrs. Llin Golding** (Newcastle-under-Lyme): "What sort of person could do that?" Are they the words of disbelief that we use to justify our lack of action in dealing with the unimaginable pain and suffering inflicted on the children who are the victims of physical, mental and sexual abuse? Do we really feel that, when an offender is caught, charged and put behind bars, our expression of revulsion and the detailed coverage in the press and other media are sufficient to enable us to say that another monster has been caught, another child has been saved and that we can now push the problem to the back of our mind until the next shocking headline? Is the banging of prison doors the end of society's responsibilities? Should not we be asking ourselves how it happens, why it continues, what happens to the victims and the offender and, most important, what can we do to stop it happening again?

How does an apparently normal person justify to himself the molestation of children? I say "normal" because it is not identifiable men in dirty raincoats who do these evil things but men—it is mainly men—in all walks of life, men who are often well respected and in responsible jobs. What has happened to them that means that they refuse to see that their behaviour is wrong, wicked and evil?

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** The hon. Lady is correct in saying that most of the people engaged in child abuse are male, but she will no doubt have seen that there are, sadly, many cases in which women become aware of the abuse but defend the abuser. There was such an instance only last week in Wales. Two brothers committed suicide because of years of continual abuse by an uncle. The mother was aware of it, but turned her gaze from it, believing that her discovery would lead to the abuse stopping. While the hon. Lady is considering the fact that most abusers are men, will she postulate on the issue of why, when women learn of the abuse, they often defend the abuser?

**Mrs. Golding:** The hon. Gentleman is quite right. The reasons are varied: fear of the man, fear of the family splitting up or a failure to recognise what is happening in the house. There are many complex reasons and I am sure that we could have a separate debate on the subject, but, if I may, I shall stick to a narrow brief today. What has been done to change attitudes and to protect children from being further molested by men? Giving offenders fairly short prison sentences and then releasing them back into the community is certainly not the answer. More often than not, prison reinforces their behaviour and fails to make them face up to the damage that they have wreaked on so many children's lives. I am aware of the many efforts to provide treatment for sex offenders in prison, but I believe that such treatment has little hope of success unless it is long term and intensive. Our Prison Service cannot and does not provide such treatment.

I am convinced that the only hope that society has of changing the attitudes and beliefs of sex offenders is attendance at clinics such as Ray Wyre's Gracewell clinic. Ray Wyre has faced up to the ugliness of this world with determination and great courage. He knows that too few sex offenders receive experienced, specialist treatment. Too many are allowed to continue offending.

**Mr. Michael Stephen** (Shoreham): Is the hon. Lady aware of Dr. Wyre's views on the effect of pornography on sex offenders? From a lifetime's study of the subject, he is convinced that the availability of pornography contributes to sexual offences against children.

**Mrs. Golding:** The hon. Gentleman is right. There are wide-ranging concerns about pornography. We recently had an exhibition in the House and I am certain that it shocked many hon. Members who had no conception of what was going on in the world of pornography.

The funding of clinics needs to be addressed. The Gracewell clinic is a charity which is funded by donations. Ray Wyre has told me that community care funding from the local authority will be the source of additional funding. The Faithfull Foundation has now been established to carry on the work that the Gracewell clinic started. It was established by the determination of Baroness Faithfull, that champion of all causes concerning children. She spent days on the telephone to raise money to enable the foundation to be established. In future years, she will have to find the funds to keep it going. Surely it is nonsense that that should happen. These organisations fight vile crimes against children. The Government should see that and should fund them as such so that they do not have to go, year after year, cap in hand, to different Government Departments attempting to get money to continue work that so badly needs to be done.

What happens to accused sexual offenders who never come to court? Many do not because the Crown Prosecution Service says that it would be too great a strain on the child to give evidence. Few parents are as enterprising as a lady who wrote to me in anger because of the release of the man who had molested her small

*[Mrs. Golding]*

daughter. She cut out details of the case from her local newspaper, photocopied them and delivered them to every street near where the man lived. That relieved her anger, but it did not bring justice. The real crime was that the man was set free into the community to molest other children. In considering the welfare of the child who had been molested, the court failed to address the welfare of children who were put at risk by the decision not to prosecute.

Is not it time that sexual offences against children were dealt with in some other way, outside the formal courts system? Is not it time for a different form of sentence, which recognises that the abuser needs treatment, to be considered for a man who is found guilty of sexual offences? It is obvious that the release of such men into the community or the shutting of a prison door is not the answer when the welfare of children is at stake.

**Mr. Fabricant:** Does the hon. Lady agree that there is a danger that if the miscreant receives treatment, those providing the treatment may believe that he is cured? The danger that then arises is that the miscreant can be let out into society when he has not been cured.

**Mrs. Golding:** The hon. Gentleman may think that there is a cure for these men. People who deal with them say that it is difficult to cure them. All they can do is make the offenders think and look at the reality of what they have done. They can then, perhaps, let the offenders go back into society. If they have saved a number of children from being molested in the short term, that is something and it is better than doing nothing. However, the more work is done, the more we learn about such men. The more we learn, the more we can help.

If we are to protect children, every effort must be made to identify signs of abuse. There has been a highly successful campaign that tells children to say no to strangers. However, it is usually not strangers, but people who are responsible for the care of children—often members of the family, a family friend or baby sitter—who molest them. What thought has been given to advising children, without frightening them, that sexual abuse by adults is not normal, loving behaviour? How can a bridge be built from children to adults to allow them to realise that sexual abuse is occurring? It is difficult because abuse is veiled in secrecy.

A child is coerced by an abuser into believing that the abuse is a secret which must not be revealed because if it is, terrible things will happen. Sometimes, children are made to believe that abuse is normal and a sign of love, so to say no would make them wicked; in any case, it is all their fault. How can that barrier be broken down? Children often hide their hurt and distress because they are afraid of not being believed or are afraid that, if they are believed, they will be taken away. What they most want is for the hurt or the abuse to stop and for everything to be all right. We do not want adults to go rushing in and to destroy the children's small world.

I spoke to one of the officers of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. I asked him what he would do if he were given enough money to do one special thing—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) will be interested in this. He answered unhesitatingly that the one thing would be to have one fully trained person in each school who had time to listen to children and to talk to them in small groups so that he or she could pick up signs of what was worrying them. The children would then know that they had someone whom they could trust and someone who would not tell them to go away because he or she was busy and did not have the time. In the real world, we are unlikely to have that. We have people who care about children, but who have other jobs to do as well. Many of those people have been mentioned in the debate today.

One group, the Professional Association of Nursery Nurses, had a training seminar in Birmingham last Saturday, which I attended. The nursery nurses listened not only to Ray Wyre talking about the sex offender but to the internationally acclaimed Madge Bray, who spoke on healing the child who has been abused. Who knows better than she what an extremely difficult job that is?

The training programme and training packs help to identify the children who need our help, but, having found them, where do we go from there? The process of healing needs to begin quickly. Delays in court hearings put strain on children. To attempt to give a child therapy while being aware that the child may need to go to court to give evidence is difficult. Is not it time that the excellent Pigot report on video evidence was looked at again and that legislation was passed to avoid additional strain being put on children? Parliament has gone a long way in changing the law on children's evidence, but we have not yet gone far enough. Would it also be a good idea for money to be paid from the criminal injuries compensation scheme directly into a trust fund to help to heal children who have been damaged by sexual abuse?

Madge Bray and her colleagues have set up two houses in Shropshire which give a home, care and therapy to children who have been severely damaged by abuse. More funding is needed to enable them and others like them to deal with the children who need their help. The abuse of children is a difficult and complex subject, of which sexual abuse is only a part. I have touched on only one aspect of the work that numerous people in all professions are doing to help children.

Are we in the House the sort of people who say, "What sort of person could do that?", and wait for others to deal with the problem? I do not believe that we are. We, more than most, have the power to alter things. We should look again at our legislation and the need for change. The welfare of children is the responsibility of us all. We should not leave them alone to cry in the night.

12.10 pm

**Mr. Michael Fabricant** (Mid-Staffordshire): It is a rare privilege to follow the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding), my fellow Staffordshire Member. Before I begin on the serious matter of this debate, I seek the forbearance of the House for the fact that I am wearing what Dame Edna Everage might call her face furniture, due to a minor—I hope—injury to my left eye. I had the choice of looking like Roy Orbison or wearing an eye patch and looking like Moshe Dayan. I opted for the Roy Orbison look. While the Minister is on the Front Bench, I should like to commend to my hon. Friend the Minister for Health Dr. Jeremy Prydel and his colleagues in the medical eye unit of St. Thomas's hospital, who looked after me so well yesterday morning.

I believe that it was Oscar Wilde who said that the best way to make children was to make them happy. I could not

agree more. The good health, well-being and happiness of children should not only be the aim of parents everywhere but should be the responsibility of the Government. It is a responsibility which the present Government have taken on with relish; they have recognised the duty of care and are fulfilling their obligation. We are witnessing a marked improvement in the health of children, as many hon. Members have said. The Children Act 1989, on which I shall concentrate today, was one of the most comprehensive and radical reforms of child law enacted by Parliament for many years. That Act has been widely hailed as a great success.

The Opposition—notably the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock)—have for many years scorned what they call our obsession with the traditional family or with family values. We make no apology for that so-called obsession. We are not embarrassed by it. I believe that it is family values which maintain the structure of society and protect children in our society. Even Professor Halsey—for so long a Labour party guru and major influence on the Labour party's thinking on social issues—last year extolled the virtues of the traditional family:

"Children from these families",

he said,

"tend to do better physically, educationally and emotionally."

It is a sad fact that more than a third of all families in our society are single-parent families. There are many apologists for that—many people who try to justify it or even defend it. I believe that there can be no substitute for the traditional family.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** I find the hon. Gentleman's comments on Labour's attitudes to family values somewhat strange. I am not aware of my hon. Friends having made comments of the kind that he suggests. We believe fundamentally in family values. Our comments have been on the Government's performance and on the fact that the wider policies that they pursue do not support family values but lead every day to the break-up of families.

**Mr. Fabricant:** Naturally I cannot agree with what the hon. Gentleman has just said. If he is stating that there has been a change in Labour party policy—or in views that some members of the parliamentary Labour party have previously espoused—I am delighted to hear it.

Families provide the sense of security that is so beneficial to a child's development. They also provide role models from which a child can learn much and without which children may flounder. Baldwin—not the Baldwin who was quoted yesterday but James Baldwin, the 19th century American writer—wrote:

"Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them."

For that reason, it is tremendously important that parents—or a single parent—should provide a suitable role model. Our appreciation of the value of family life lies at the heart of the Children Act. The Act provided for intervention in family life by public authorities and courts only where that was absolutely essential in the interests of the child. The aim of the Act was that, wherever practicable, children should be brought up and cared for in their own families and that, when they were needed, social workers should work with parents in partnership.

The Children Act introduced the new legal concept of parental responsibility. Is not it sad that that sense of responsibility—something which we should all innately have—should need to be written into the law? The Act also balanced parents' rights and duties with the powers of local authorities and the child's interests.

Quite rightly, parents are held responsible under the Act for bringing up their children, but local authorities and other agencies are also given a role to play. No court order transferring a parent's responsibility for caring for a child can now be made unless that is better for the child. That tremendously important principle has now been enshrined in English law. The welfare of the child is now the paramount consideration.

The Government have every right to claim a great success with the Children Act. Mrs. Justice Booth, chairman of the Children Act Advisory Committee, has called it "a great Act" with "huge potential". We can already see a new spirit of co-operation developing between the judiciary and our councils and welfare services. I am especially conscious of that—as, I am sure, is the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme—because we in Staffordshire have experienced our own difficulties with the care of children in recent years.

We should rejoice in the fall in the number of court orders since the Act was introduced and the decline in the number of cases reaching the courts. In my view, the statistics are impressive. There were more than 1,500 applications for emergency protection orders from October 1991 to June 1992. The equivalent figure a year earlier for place of safety orders was more than 3,000.

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** May I caution my hon. Friend on the subject of the figures? I am sure that he is not suggesting that, in the past year, there has been a dramatic reduction in the amount of child abuse. I put it to him that one reason why there may have been fewer emergency protection orders is that many local authorities are coming to terms with the complexity of the new law. There is another side to the argument: there may be children who are unprotected by the Act at present.

**Mr. Fabricant:** I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention. He is right: there will always be unprotected children.

The Children Act 1989 has been criticised for being complicated. However, any such all-embracing Act must be comprehensive and complex. We should be encouraged by the fall in the number of children removed from their parental homes. Local authorities are forming a genuine partnership with parents and they are helping families to stay together. The new emphasis on parental responsibility and on court intervention only when that is to the benefit of the child is worth noting.

Since the Children Act came into force, the Government have monitored carefully the child protection register. The aim has been to concentrate minds in local authorities on the reasons for placing children on the register and for keeping them there. We should be pleased that the numbers fell by 15 per cent. between March 1991 and March 1992. However, we cannot and will not be complacent.

The performance of some local authorities is deeply worrying. Like many hon. Members, I am very concerned about the number of children on protection registers who are not being allocated social workers. Last June, Lambeth sadly had 914 children on its register—twice as many as any other London borough. The legislation to which I have referred has been backed solidly over the past year by

*[Mr. Fabricant]*

additional Government expenditure. Local authorities' standard spending on children's services for 1992-93, the first full year after the Children Act, was more than 20 per cent. higher than for 1990-91.

The Government's campaign to improve the health of our children is being fought on many fronts. The leading cause of death in children over five is accidents. That death rate fell by 27 per cent. in the 1980s, but there is still more to be done and there is no room for complacency. A Department of Health task force is examining accident prevention with a number of agencies, including the Child Accident Prevention Trust, and schemes are being developed to teach road safety to very young children.

Children are being encouraged to adopt a healthy life style through a wide array of projects. I was grateful for the comments of the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) about the way in which unhealthy eating habits for children are encouraged on television. It is important that the Health Education Authority counters that.

The HEA can boast the comprehensive "My Body" project which develops health education through physical activity in primary schools. The health in clubs project for youth workers would no doubt encourage my hon. Friend for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) who spoke earlier.

Immunisation rates against infectious diseases are at record levels. There is now a 95 per cent. coverage for diphtheria, tetanus and polio and 92 per cent. coverage for measles, mumps and rubella. Over the next five years, £5 million will fund projects aimed at helping children with life-threatening illnesses. That was very welcome news when it was announced last year. Respite care, home support and residential care should benefit. I am confident that that initiative will achieve its goals in due course. It focuses sensitively on a child's home and local community, his family home and friends. It will, without doubt, lead to improved services for seriously ill children.

All that good work is now being bolstered by the Department for Education. That shows that, although we might not talk about "national strategies," there is a co-ordinated strategy on the Conservative Benches, between the Department for Education, the Department of Health and the Home Office. The national curriculum has ensured the provision of essential health education for school children aged between five and 16. The National Curriculum Council has identified the key components for health education and its advice has been issued to all primary and secondary schools. Is not that a national strategy that crosses the boundaries between Government Departments? I applaud the response of our schools in developing health education programmes. That is indeed a national strategy which we are putting forward in deeds and not simply words—as is the case with some Opposition Members.

The drive for higher standards in schools shows how concerned the Government are about the welfare of children. Education, like health, is crucial to a child's healthy development. Alfred Horn said:

"The first thing that education teaches you to do is to walk alone."

Providing the means to walk alone is one of the most serious obligations of a Government. The provision of a national curriculum will be remembered as one of the greatest achievements of this Government because we have a duty of care to all our children for health, legal care and education.

In their radical reform of child law, and through the provision of decent health services and a decent education, the Government have shown how deeply they care for our children. As Douglas Newton said:

"The worldwide fraternity of children is the greatest of savage tribes, and the only one which shows no sign of dying out."

In this country, at least, we can go further: this tribe is all set to thrive and the Conservative Government can claim much of the credit.

12.24 pm

**Ms Liz Lynne** (Rochdale): I welcome the Minister to his new appointment and wish him well. As the Liberal Democrat health spokesperson, I welcome the opportunity for this debate.

It almost goes without saying that the health and welfare of the country's children is one of the most important issues to be addressed by any Government. It may seem a cliché, but it is clearly true to say that children represent the future and if we do not have regard for them now we fail to have proper regard for our own and our country's future. The health and welfare of children must therefore be at the forefront of our minds.

There has recently been a series of major stories in the press about the health problems of individual children, one of which ended up in court. The most recent of those cases was publicised by the National Health Service Support Federation only last weekend. A young boy was born three months premature, suffering from detached retinas in both eyes. Suitable treatment is not available in the United Kingdom, but it is in America. However, because the NHS is unwilling to pay for the treatment in America, the family must raise £60,000 themselves. Some hon. Members may respond to that story by saying that, of course, it is a very deserving case, but there are many such deserving cases and the NHS cannot afford to deal with them all and difficult choices must be made.

Whatever one thinks of that argument, it ignores the fact that the cost to the health service, let alone to the child and his family, of having to support a visually impaired child is much greater than the cost of the operation. Not only is the Government's position uncaring, it is economic nonsense and a reflection, perhaps, of the underfunding of the health service. I know that the Minister will claim that more money has gone into the health service, but I argue that the health service needs yet more money.

Hospital care for children has also been in the limelight in the past week as a result of the publication of the report of the London specialty reviews. The review relating to children recommends, as do the others, a concentration of facilities in fewer and larger hospitals rather than specialist services spread around a large number of specialist hospitals. Obviously, there is much concern among staff and patients at the hospitals affected. People are naturally concerned about the loss of national institutions.

Those fears are not confined, however, to London and the home counties. They can also be found among the people of Greater Manchester and elsewhere. For instance, Booth Hall children's hospital in Manchester—hailed as a centre of excellence by a Minister, no less—is now threatened with closure by the end of the century. Naturally, local people are up in arms. One woman who

was interviewed did not even know where the new children's hospital site was and she was desperately worried about that.

If the Government are to press ahead with rationalisation, they must consider providing support to families on low incomes, to enable them to visit a sick child whenever they consider that they are able to do so. I was pleased to note that that point was made by the specialist review team—a reflection, I believe, of the hard work of the Two Dear to Visit Campaign. However, despite the importance of hospital services and the media publicity that they rightly generate, we should give much greater attention to the health and welfare of children. The bare necessities of life, such as a decent home in which to live and a good diet are the basic requirements of good health and welfare.

It is a disgrace, therefore, that in one of the richest countries of the world there are increasing reports that many children do not have their basic rights. A recent report by the National Children's Home states that the number of children placed in temporary accommodation by London councils more than tripled from 14,000 in 1986 to 43,166 in 1992. Furthermore, 18 London boroughs have said that they do not have enough family-sized homes to house all their priority homeless applicants. London is certainly not alone; that is happening throughout the country.

**Mr. Stephen:** Is the hon. Lady aware that, at present, there are about 10 times as many empty houses as there are homeless families in this country? What should we do about that?

**Ms Lynne:** I am aware of that. We have to make sure that those homes come back into the public domain. The Government can help by releasing capital receipts. I know that they will release them in future, but capital receipts are still tied up. Much of that money could be spent on repairing property that is not presently used by homeless families.

Virtually everyone in the National Children's Home sample could provide a catalogue of symptoms and conditions that they and their families had suffered. Many of them were as a result of living in cold and damp conditions. Also, there were illnesses such as rheumatism which are worsened by such conditions. Those health problems are not helped by the absence of health care for many of those families. One couple claimed not to have received a visit from a health visitor, despite having very young children. As a consequence, children are missing out on vaccinations and developmental checks.

Of course, in such conditions, children's development and health are impaired. There is little or no room to play or learn. Frequent moves make it difficult for children to make and keep friends. Children are often teased for being homeless and some become disruptive at school as a consequence. We have heard many reports of that.

The health and welfare problems of children are not confined to children in those circumstances. I have received information from a consultant paediatrician on the effects of an adequate diet on the health of children in inner cities in particular. The report showed that between 30 and 50 per cent. of children of Asian origin in inner cities suffered from iron deficiency. In one Sheffield practice alone, the figure rose to 55 per cent. of all children tested.

The action of iron in the brain is especially important during childhood growth. Iron deficiency might cause a delay in neurological development. Clearly, that is a potentially serious problem which the Government should address and I hope that they will. However, "The Health of the Nation" does not mention it and, in the opinion of the consultant to whom I spoke, the problem has virtually been ignored by health planners.

What is required is appropriate nutritional education by properly trained health professionals and a mass screening programme such as that in the United States, particularly in inner cities. Surprisingly, however, primary health workers who are responsible for nutrition education in Britain do not receive specific training in nutrition. Despite that, many health visitors are eager to screen for iron deficiency, but the modest capital needed for the required equipment is not available. I hope that the Government will look at the problem and take appropriate action as soon as possible.

Just those two issues higlight the health and welfare problems of vast sections of our child population. The problems are made much worse by poverty.

A report in the *British Medical Journal* in March this year showed that children whose parents were classified as unoccupied had the worst mortality rate of all social groups. The conclusion of the article was that strategies to promote the nation's health must take more account of material and social deprivation. If, as a result of this debate, the Government finally acknowledge that key point, the first step has been made to improve the health and welfare of a vast number of our nation's children.

I hope that the Minister will accept my final point. If children whose parents are just above the income support level are charged for prescriptions, it will be detrimental to the children's health. I hope that the Minister and his colleagues will put pressure on the Treasury to rule out the possibility that children whose parents are just above the income support level might have to pay for prescriptions in the future, because many of those parents will not be able to afford to do so.

12.35 pm

**Mr. David Amess** (Basildon): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on his debut at the Dispatch Box. His promotion was entirely on merit. I hope that this will not be the kiss of death, but I wish him a long and successful career.

I have been greatly interested in the speeches of all hon. Members. The House is made up of Members from all sorts of backgrounds and we bring our own experiences here. I intend to do that today. None of us is an expert and none of us has the solution to any of the difficult problems regarding the health and welfare of our children. I certainly intend to draw on my own experiences as a father.

You may, Madam Deputy Speaker, have missed the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans). He greatly entertained the House and made some relevant and pungent points on discipline. I wrote down one of his expressions about cuddling children and giving them a clip around the ear.

The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) said that many of us were poor parents. I certainly admit to falling into that category because, when I telephoned my wife earlier today—not having seen her since the weekend—it

*[Mr. David Amess]*

seemed as though there was a riot going on in my house. I shall have to return this evening to instil some discipline into my children.

In the interests of being politically incorrect on the Conservative side, I am happy to use state services in my constituency of Basildon. I am delighted to say that we have an excellent local hospital. It is a trust hospital and dispenses magnificent services throughout the local community.

I shall draw on an experience I had five weeks ago with our youngest child, who is only 18 months old. I am vain enough to say that at present she looks like Shirley Temple; unfortunately, her behaviour resembles that of the Terminator. I was up late sitting in a chair—I had fallen asleep while reading a book. Suddenly, my wife came down with the 18-month-old in her arms. Clearly, the child was running a temperature and in some distress.

When I woke up, I saw my wife dispensing Calpol. Within a flash, she said, "Phone for an ambulance." The situation then became like a horror movie. I could hardly believe what was happening because, while I was telephoning the ambulance, the child stopped breathing. Unless one has experienced that and has some expertise in how to deal with it, one does not realise what a shock that is. I learnt at first hand what a great shock it can be.

All I can say is that the emergency services were absolutely superb. There is no question that there was any special treatment or favour. This happened in the small hours of the morning. The emergency services came quickly and resuscitated our child. We ended up at the hospital. A few days later, it was explained to us that the child had overheated. Nature is so wonderful that, if that happens, the child then has a fit and everything is restored. After five children, we thought that we had seen it all. Now we know that, no matter how robust a child is, such things can still happen. I pay tribute to the marvellous treatment that our local hospital gave.

I wish to highlight several areas of activity at Basildon hospital since it became a trust. Basildon hospital not only has two wards providing comprehensive medical and surgical care for sick children but a children's centre providing comprehensive assessment and support services for parents of disabled, chronically sick and handicapped children.

The children's centre encompasses physiotherapy, speech therapy, audiology, child psychology, family therapy, social work and clubs for Down's syndrome children. The trust has recently refurbished a distressed parents room which provides privacy and comfort. It is supported by a bereaved parents counselling service which provides help for parents for as long as they need it.

Beds are provided so that every child can have a parent sleeping beside him or her or in more private peaceful facilities away from the ward. Security measures have been implemented to protect children in our care. Stringent security checks are carried out by the director of nursing and the personnel department to ensure that suitable staff are working in our wards and to minimise any risk to children.

The trust is taking a pro-active approach to increasing the number of registered sick children's nurses working on the wards. To assist with that, the trust is seconding nursing staff to attend the relevant English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting training course for the care of sick children. Three nurses were sent last year and three more will be sent this year. It is expected that the trust will achieve the Department of Health recommendation that, by 1995, two registered sick children's nurses should be on duty at any one time. Professional practice on the children's ward is monitored closely. Any cause for concern is rapidly highlighted. If any nurse gives cause for concern, he or she is immediately removed from the children's ward pending further investigation.

Moving on rapidly to the welfare of our children, I was touched by certain comments by my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield. I am convinced that there is a general lack of discipline in society. On occasions, we experience it in the House. Who are the opinion formers who set the example to our great nation? Sadly, whether or not we are to blame ourselves, it appears that politicians are becoming marginalised or trivialised.

We had a Minister resign only yesterday. I am beginning to wonder whether people will be generally satisfied with resignations. Will they want Ministers to be brought to our market squares and put in the stocks or publicly executed? One wonders where it will all lead eventually. Because I happen to love this place and believe that it is all-important, I believe that we should be listened to and have real contributions to make.

We have a real contribution to make towards the conduct of society.

**Mr. Wicks:** I agree that we need to instil values of honesty, integrity and compassion in our young people and that the Government can set an example, either a good or a bad one. Which example does the hon. Gentleman believe that the Government are now setting for our young people?

**Mr. Amess:** The hon. Gentleman has highlighted the reason behind the remarks I am about to make. If we allow our discussions in the House to resort to the subject of individuals' personalities and behaviour, there is no hope for democracy. I am not ducking the point that the hon. Gentleman made, but there is a huge gulf between the socialists and the Conservatives. It concerns me greatly that we seem to make too many excuses. Where are the standards? We seem to accept the lowest common denominator. Someone must say what the right standards are. As for the welfare of our children, it is not the case that the Government—I know that the socialists want a grand plan for everything—can act as parents for our children.

**Mr. Wicks:** I believe that the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood my point. I was not talking about the Government's social policies. I was attempting to help the hon. Gentleman to develop his theme about the importance behind the way in which the Government, or any other institution, conduct their affairs and the example, either good or bad, that they set for young people in terms of honesty and integrity. I was not talking about personalities or the hon. Gentleman's mates in the Government. I was referring to Governments in general. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that Governments set a good example to our young people?

**Mr. Amess:** I am a Government supporter and I happen to believe that the Government are setting a very good example to our young people.

**Mr. Corbyn:** The hon. Gentleman is on his own there.

**Mr. Amess:** Oh no, I am not. On 9 April 1992—not that long ago—I was not on my own. I have no doubt that when the next election is called, all the nonsense and trivia will be put aside. The British people are not so daft that they will be taken in by the Opposition and their lack of policies, which is evident day in day out, week in week out, month in month out.

I do not want to be distracted from my argument about the welfare of our children. We need proper standards and discipline. It is appalling that the peak age for offending is 15. What are we going to do about that? Are we always going to make excuses and say that Jonathan's behaviour is bad because his parents were brought up badly and the parents of those parents were brought up badly? When are the excuses ever going to stop? We need to draw a line and say what standards are expected by a civilised society. We set the laws and we should see that they are enacted.

**Mr. William Cash** (Stafford): Does my hon. Friend agree that children prefer a disciplined environment? Many of the difficulties and psychological problems from which children suffer stem not just from family background but from a lack of discipline. That is evident in our schools as well. The root cause of their difficulties is not only that they are not taught the difference between right and wrong but that they grow up in an atmosphere of imposed insecurity.

**Mr. Amess:** My hon. Friend is entirely right—children respond to discipline. We can see that in terms of Government behaviour—once we show a chink or weakness, the situation quickly gets out of hand. As long as we are certain that what we believe in is worth fighting for, we must be strong and determined. I have no doubt that we must take that approach to the welfare of children.

Young people are responsible for so many good activities in life. I pay a warm tribute to the local organisations in my constituency—scouts, guides, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, boys' clubs and pre-school playgroups—which are doing a magnificent job. The Government support and encourage voluntary organisations, but such groups cannot do it all. The schools cannot do it all—they cannot bring up the children. Opposition Members may not ask for extra money for voluntary organisations, but they ask for extra money for all sorts of things. Ultimately, the voluntary organisations cannot do it all. It is important that we all take on our responsibilities, and set and meet standards.

I have an example to illustrate the core of the problem. In February, I attempted to introduce in the House the Human Fertilisation (Choice) Bill. When it was defeated, it was a sad day for Parliament, which should be eternally ashamed of what happened on that day. I had naively thought that sex selection was undermining the essence of the health and welfare of our children. I was not ready for what happened in the House.

Feminists and others came to the Chamber to speak against and vote against my Bill. It was interesting that when, four or five weeks ago, "The London Programme" telephoned a number of hon. Members who had voted against my Bill to ask them to appear on television and articulate their case for sex selection, those hon. Members said, "Oh no, of course we are against sex selection. We were only voting against the Bill because of Basildon." That lack of discipline in the House undermines the democratic process.

I thought that there would be all-party agreement on my Bill. We know only too well that sex selection runs counter to the feminist position. However, that was not the case when it came to voting on the Bill. It was voted down when a majority of hon. Members decided that life and what we were trying to discuss in the Chamber were so trivial that it was all right for parents to decide whether they wanted a boy or a girl.

I congratulate the Government on their record in the health and welfare of children. I have no doubt that, within a short time, Opposition Members will see the error of their ways and join the Government in recognising that such problems cannot be solved by the state and Government, and that individual responsibility is all-important.

12.53 pm

**Mrs. Audrey Wise** (Preston): I had intended to congratulate the House on dealing with this subject in a wide context, but, having heard the speech by the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess), I feel that things have gone too far. Indeed, I begrudge every moment not devoted to the subject of the health and welfare of children.

Nothing contributes more to damaging the health, welfare and happiness of children than bad housing. I will not labour the point, because others have already made it, but I associate myself with what they said.

Every week, many of my hon. Friends and I are faced with the tragedies that are acted out in homes and, in the case of those not fortunate enough to have homes, bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Many children live in the kind of homes which can only give them the message that they are well and truly animals of the lowest order, deserving of no humane consideration. The root cause is the financial pressure on councils and housing associations.

Long ago, when my grandfather stood as a Labour candidate in a local authority election, he referred to the importance of housing. It is a pity that we have to discuss the subject today in the same terms as he used.

I believe that play is for children the equivalent of work. It is certainly of the utmost importance. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) was mocked when he suggested that it is no use telling children to play football if they have no football ground to play on, but he had a valid point. Not only do we lack sports facilities: we lack the most elementary play facilities, even for the tiniest children. Our children are often made to play in areas where they are a nuisance to older citizens.

For some time, I have looked into the problem of the general neglect of play safety, especially of bouncing castles. The slashing cuts in the Health and Safety Executive budget perpetrated by the Government notwithstanding, it should be pointed out that, had a new machine been introduced to a factory, more care would have been devoted to ensuring the safety of its users than has been devoted to the safety of those who use bouncing castles. I was involved in an interminable correspondence which was passed from Department to Department—none

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of them knowing whose responsibility these castles were. Finally, the Health and Safety Executive emerged as the responsible body.

Accidents are supposed to be reported, but nothing is done to collect the statistics without which we cannot compile our knowledge of the subject. We are talking here about serious accidents—not bruises, but broken necks and a toe in an eye. Our neglect of such matters shows how profoundly unfriendly and neglectful society is to children.

I should like to touch briefly on the experience of mothers at birth. Although there has been a gratifying reduction in perinatal and infant mortality, there is no room for complacency. Social inequality is as great as ever; 4,000 babies' lives would be saved every year if the figures for social classes 4 and 5 were brought up to those of social classes 1 and 2. The figures come from a Public Accounts Committee report of about two years ago.

There is unnecessary trauma. An inquiry by the Select Committee on Health revealed that many mothers, when giving birth, experience unnecessary trauma and distress, and their dignity and their wishes are often disregarded in a cavalier fashion, to the great detriment of the beginning of their lives as mothers and the founding of their families. We outlined many splendid recommendations that have been taken up with alacrity by the midwifery profession in particular and by voluntary organisations, such as the Maternity Alliance, the National Childbirth Trust and AIMS—the Association for Improvements in Maternity Services. I hope that the Government will respond positively.

We uncovered an almost total lack of research into the post-natal health of mothers. If the health of new mothers is neglected—everything from depression to backache—the life of the infants in their care will be detrimentally affected. I therefore await energetic action by the Government.

A fairly narrow issue, it may seem, although it affects many people, is the Government's proposal that there should be a limited or selected prescription list. Last Saturday, a mother came to see me and brought with her a petition. She did not know that one has to pray to this honourable House in specific, archaic language. She just wrote down her experiences and fears and collected the signatures of other people.

Although it is not an official petition, I want to share with the House what this mother wrote. She and her husband, who had never done anything like this before, collected 900 signatures. She said:

"Alexandra is what would appear to be a normal, healthy, happy, six-month old baby, but unfortunately she suffers from a skin condition called atopic eczema. This form of eczema affects her in the most distressing ways, as she is unable to sleep more than two hours at one time and also requires up to eight forms of medication a day and 24-hour care. The Government is considering the removal of all types of skin medication from the NHS medical list. This would mean going without medication due to costs which cannot be met by the ordinary working family, resulting in permanent disability or full-time hospitalisation. Alexandra is one of many who will suffer if the Government is allowed to go ahead with yet another policy aimed at helpless and defenceless children. Please show your support for the future of Alexandra and many like her."

If hon. Members know anything at all about skin conditions, they should use their imaginations for about 10 seconds and consider the life of that family. My constituent is wrong when she says that all forms of skin medication would be removed from the prescribed list. Those that would still be available on prescription, even under the Government's proposals, would be the fiercest and most potent forms, which have to be used with the greatest discretion and whose use, especially their long-term use, should be minimised.

Those potent forms of medication must be backed up by the constant use of emollients of all kinds. It is important that they should be of all kinds. Skin sensitivities are so precise and so varied that one cannot talk about generic prescribing and thereby meet the needs of these people, many of whom are children. The lives of their families will be rendered utterly miserable, as will the lives of those children.

**Miss Lestor:** When I was lobbied recently by dermatologists in Salford, I discussed this very point with them. In addition to my hon. Friend's point, they referred to the fact that, in the case of children, they have to experiment with a treatment because, as my hon. Friend said, there is no one overall treatment. The Government's proposals will cause havoc and misery to families, and will be very expensive for the parents.

**Mrs. Wise:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Furthermore, new sensitivities can appear. The medication often has to be changed. There is scope for further exploration of this condition and the use of alternative therapies. More research should be done into allergies. However, none of that is a substitute for topical preparations to be applied to the skin.

The proposal is concerning professionals as well as parents. I have a letter from a health visitor in Preston, who says that she comes

"across many families who have children with Eczema or similar skin complaints. These children often need many months or even in severe cases, years of treatment with Dermatological creams. The area in which I work has a very high unemployment rate and a large number of single parents, as well as people on lower wages. I feel that, if people have to pay for these essential medications, they will not seek treatment if they have not got the money to buy these creams and may try to use other substances which they can buy more cheaply over the counter, but which will not be as effective. If Eczema is left untreated it can cause a lot of ill-health by introduced infection due to scratching, misery for the child keeping it awake at night, and for parents as well as the child".

The problem is not confined to my constituency or only to poor families. I received a letter from a mother in Hampshire, who says:

"My four year old daughter has severe atopic eczema and has to use a large range of emollients together with topical steroids to keep her condition under control. She has to be moisturised regularly at hourly intervals to stop her skin cracking and peeling and I am at present using 500 grams of moisturiser on her a day. He skin is very sensitive and through trial and error we have at last found the creams that suit her. Should these now cease to be available, I know her condition will deteriorate badly. She has already had a spell in hospital and it is only the constant use of these emollients that keep her out of hospital. Surely it is more cost-effective to continue to provide these valuable creams on the NHS than to take up much needed hospital beds, not to mention the extreme suffering which will be caused to the eczema sufferers and their families."

I am glad that that mother chose to write to a Labour Member. I do not know what conclusion to draw from that, but I am glad that she chose to share her information with me.

Someone from London says:

"Our four-year-old son Peter has suffered from eczema since he was six weeks old. For the first two years of his life he itched so intensely that he woke scratching several times a night and his physical and mental development was held back. In 1991 he started to see Dr. John Harper, the consultant at Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children, Hackney"—

about which I will have more to say later—

"and also at Great Ormond Street. Thanks to the sophisticated management provided by QEH, the eczema is now well controlled, and Peter is a happy and lively little boy . . . Peter regularly uses a combination of seven back oils, emollients and creams. Of these only one is proposed to remain on the Selected List. If the others are removed, we shall have to purchase them via private prescriptions at an average cost of just over £24 per week or over £1,250 per year excluding any dispensing fees charged.

Both of us hold reasonably well paid professional jobs. We would manage to find this amount, simply because we could not do otherwise—although there would be sacrifices by the rest of the family. The impact on a low-income family would be horrific. (We point out that £24 a week is three times the amount of Child Benefit Peter receives)."

I chose to read those letters because sometimes we have to let people speak directly to the House, in their own words and from their own experiences, which often are more immediately relevant than ours.

I think that the Government hope that the general public will think that skin complaints are trivial. Of course they are not life-threatening; they are just profoundly life-damaging. A member of my family once experienced such intensive itching that she wanted to throw herself under a bus, so I can imagine what it must be like if the person affected is a baby.

I urge the Government to think again about the selected list in general, and in relation to skin preparations for allergic conditions in particular. I know that the Government have been fully briefed by the National Eczema Society. Eczema is a chronic problem, but there are other problems relating to children's intensive care needs.

Hon. Members may have seen the television programme about the shortage of intensive care beds for children; I do not intend to labour the points that it made, except to say that it reduced my mother to tears. As a great-grandmother, she imagined her great-grandchildren suffering the deprivation depicted in the programme. I hope that the programme reduced Conservative Members to tears—and, more important, spurred them to action.

One particular case that received publicity involved my own local hospital, the Royal Preston. An 11-year-old girl died of asthma, and my local hospital was one of three which could not give her the intensive care she needed. She died two miles from the Alderhey hospital in Liverpool. She lived in Cumbria; one does not need much knowledge of geography to understand the significance of that.

She was first treated at a hospital in Lancaster, but, through lack of intensive care beds, it could not give her all she needed; nor could Preston or Manchester. If she could have been treated at the Royal Preston, she would have been in intensive care considerably before the final crisis that was reached in the ambulance.

Asthma kills 2,000 people a year. It is a serious and increasing problem, and many of its victims are children. Some suffer relatively mildly, but many suffer a great deal of misery and handicap at school, for example. However, as 2,000 people a year die from asthma, it is imperative that there are sufficient beds for children, and that they are specialist paediatric intensive care beds. I have been appalled by the regrettable complacency in some—although not all—of the speeches made by Conservative Members today.

However, hospital beds for children represent only a relatively small part of the way in which we deal with children's health. We do not want to fall into the trap of providing a national sickness service rather than a national health service—a national health service should be a much wider concept—but, if we cannot even manage to provide a national sickness service, we are falling at the first hurdle. That failure is affecting many children.

I refer briefly to the situation in London. I do not represent a London constituency, which possibly makes it all the more appropriate for me to draw attention to the problems facing highly deprived areas not very far from the House itself. The recent specialty review gave some valuable information and made some interesting, possibly dangerous, and certainly expensive, recommendations. I shall share with the House some of the information.

The report stated:

"As might be expected there is a correlation between deprivation and high admission rates to hospital for children under 15"—

but, in the case of the very highest deprivation, there is a dip in admission rates which suggests that such populations

"might experience difficulty in gaining access to health care."

The figures for London show that the two areas with the greatest levels of deprivation—Tower Hamlets and Hackney—have lower hospital admission rates for children up to the age of 14 than less deprived areas. That is not because the reasons for hospital admissions suddenly end. Deprivation and admissions should not follow a curve—a more deprived area having more hospital admissions—that suddenly drops if an area is even more deprived, although those children do not need to go to hospital. The figures show that there is something wrong with hospital provision. Will the specialty review remedy that?

The review recommends the closure of the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Hackney, and its transfer to the Royal London hospital site. The review says, however, that the Queen Elizabeth

"has a paediatric, accident and emergency service, which provides a major contribution to primary care in this locality. We heard good reports of the service provided at the Queen Elizabeth from local GPs."

I cannot understand how the report could then say:

"We recommend as a matter of priority that the services currently provided at the Queen Elizableth are transferred in their entirety to the Royal London Hospital."

The review also says:

"Since the proportion of children in the population is so high and their needs are so great, it will probably be necessary to reprovide out patient and day care facilities on or close to the Queen Elizabeth site . . . The site development plans for the Royal London will have to be worked through carefully if children are to receive the maximum benefit from our recommendations. The impressive new unit at the Royal London hospital will not be large enough to meet all requirements."

I may be cynical, but I think that we shall get the closures and the transfers. I do not think that we shall get the re-provisions, the extensions and the maintenance of numbers of doctors and nurses which the report also recommends. I may be cynical; there is one way to prove me wrong.

The provision is patently too low at the moment. It is fashionable to say that London is over-provided, but, in

*[Mrs. Wise]*

Hackney and Tower Hamlets, it is not over-provided but under-provided. Cynics like me should be proved wrong by lifting the provision first, by providing the extra first, and by stopping trying to use hon. Members such as myself, who are from provincial seats, as a stick with which to beat our colleagues in the deprived inner areas of London. Some of us saw through that ploy long ago.

**Mr. Corbyn:** I appreciate very much, as do many London Members, what my hon. Friend is saying about the health service in London. In Professor Tomlinson's proposals, consideration was given endlessly to the financial consequences to this hospital, that hospital or the other hospital. Consideration was given to the market potential of this or that hospital, and to the private sector.

No consideration was given to the problems of poverty, bad housing and homelessness throughout London, and the Government are clearly approaching the health problems of London from the wrong angle.

**Mrs. Wise:** I agree with my hon. Friend. The studies of London health care are inadequate and are endangering London's health service, which could certainly stand a lot of improvement. I think that we shall get the closures, but not the improved primary care. We shall get the closures to the children's sector, but not the extension of provision and the re-provision.

As a mother and grandmother, I would rather keep what I have, even if it is not first-class and de luxe, than have facilities closed and fail to have adequate re-provision.

In the atmosphere of cuts, there will not be adequate re-provision. It is a pity that, in discussing the health and welfare of children, we must focus on those children who may die for want of hospital care, or those who may suffer endless miserly for lack of something as simple as a cream with which to soothe the skin. I would rather have spoken, as some of my hon. Friends did, of the wider issues in society. There are so many respects in which our society —and in particular, the Government—let down our children.

I will conclude by referring to my constituency, and by making a point about adolescents. A few weeks ago, I received a letter from members of staff at the Royal Preston hospital about the adolescent unit of that hospital. The letter said:

"We have recently been informed that this service is to be transferred to an acute paediatric ward specialising in burns, plastic surgery and orthopaedics which will offer only four adolescent beds instead of current eight beds."

The letter says that the adolescent ward

"offers adolescent patients the facilities of their own lounge, kitchen, shower and laundry room, together with full-time supervision by trained nurses with dedicated responsibility for adolescent patients."

The staff thought that the number of beds was to be cut from eight to four. I have found out today that there is now no specialist adolescent provision at the Royal Preston hospital. Adolescents will either go to the paediatric wards or to the adult wards.

There is now no specialist adolescent accommodation as described in the letter from the hospital staff. That is deplorable. I have no doubt that the decision has been forced on the hospital by the general stringency in the health service. I am making a criticism not of the Royal Preston hospital, but of the situation faced by our hospitals. It is important that children are in children's wards, and that the special requirements of adolescents are met fully.

I hope that, in time, we will be able to say that our society properly looks after the welfare of our children, in sickness and in health and whether they are poor or from a more fortunate background. I deeply regret that that is not the case today. We cannot make that claim, and the situation is getting worse for many children and their parents.

1.22 pm

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** (Eltham): I made my maiden speech in the House in July 1975. In it I referred to how the trade unions represented the interests of those at work and in work, while the rest of us have responsibility mainly for family and domestic interests. Many in the union movement have rightly given attention to matters other than work-related interests.

It is worth noting that in 1975, the then Labour Government proposed a two-year freeze on family allowance, yet wanted to have a pay increase every six months for those in work. The problem was that inflation was running at a rate of 10 per cent. in the first six months of 1975. People were that much worse off in a short time. The control of inflation makes a great difference to those who care for dependants. That is where the issue of health and welfare of children comes in.

I would define health and welfare as trying to improve the chances of well-being and to reduce the incidence of avoidable disadvantage, distress and handicap. There is no point in thinking that either we or our children can go through life in a totally risk-free environment. We know that, even at the time of birth, a significant proportion of children suffer from congenital malformations or disabilities.

It is worth starting where Arthur and Peggy Wynn did in their analysis of pre-conceptual care. People should be aware that for a child born to a non-smoking father the chance of a severe congenital malformation is 0·8 per cent. If the father is a smoker and consumes tubes 20 times a day at 10p a time, the chances of a child suffering a severe congenital malformation rise two and a half times to 2 per cent. That is an increase in avoidable risk which people should know about.

I do not argue that everyone can give up smoking straight away. I call smoking tubing to avoid the glamorous word. I prefer to say more accurately that people buy a tube which is three or four inches long, bring it near their faces and light it up. That practice can increase the chances of severe congenital malformation by two and a half times. It should also be known that if a mother has consumed significant amounts of alcohol in the 48 hours before conception, that also has a statistically significant effect on the chances of a child being born with a handicap.

I do not want to pretend that handicap has to be life changing. People can come to terms with handicap and many handicaps are not terribly relevant to people's lives, although some are. However, the smoking and drinking to which I have just referred are, in terms of avoidable disadvantage, distress and handicap, things that people should know about.

I believe that people should be practising what I call "conception control" if they are sexually active at a young age. There would then be a greater span between the

generations and people would move from puberty and grow up before taking on the responsibility for children at too early an age.

One of the developments that I have welcomed over the past 10 years since the House began to debate family policy issues is demonstrated by the fact that *The Daily Telegraph* now has a weekly family supplement. As well as the more jolly things, that supplement refers to some of the more serious things in life.

I have a plea for our radio and television broadcasters. Most of us who watch television or listen to the radio are aware that, every week, there are startlingly obvious programmes about gardening which tell people, for example, "Now is the time to prune your wisteria" or "Now is the time to scratch the thatch from your grass."

When will we have programmes to help the 600,000 or 700,000 people each year who are forming a family or the 200,000 or 300,000 people who are going through family separation, divorce or break-up? What about the 1·4 million people who contribute to a pregnancy which leads to birth or the 1·4 million parents whose children reach primary school age each year? What about the 1·4 million parents whose children reach the troubled teenage period?

In addition to the soap operas, there should be opportunities, in five-minute or 10-minute bursts once a week or half an hour a month, to raise the kind of issues that parents face for the first time because those issues have been faced by generations of people before. Such coverage might help people to develop confidence and competence in the experiences that they face.

Parents are primarily involved in raising children. They determine most of the health and welfare. They improve well-being and help reduce the avoidable risks that children face. Parents are even more important than the medical and social services and teachers. Clearly, when parents can work in partnership with the professions, life becomes much better for the children. That is clearly shown by the remarkable figures produced by the national health service in relation to child immunisations.

There is a difference between the apparent Labour party position and the Government's position in respect of child immunisations. About five years ago, some 40 years after the establishment of the national health service, we woke up to the fact that we had a lower level of childhood protection against avoidable childhood diseases than there was in Zimbabwe or Beirut in the middle of civil war. We had taken our eye off the main aim of the NHS, which is to cut out avoidable or disabling disease.

Taking the figures generally, it was clear that the worst problems were in the inner-city areas. People asked whether it was difficult to set the same immunisation target for inner-city areas as for suburban or countryside areas. Although I do not want to stress this too much, at that time, some Opposition Members thought that we should set a lower target for immunisation in inner-city areas, because the problem there was more difficult.

I believe that the Government were right to say that, as the problem was more difficult in inner-city areas, there should be greater incentives to reward doctors and others. It was clear that the parents would be rewarded by the fact that their children would not fall ill. There was an incentive for doctors and practices to provide good support staff, to involve the parents and to create a culture in which parents were aware that protection was important, knew how to get it and received reminders if they forgot to come forward at the right time.

I am not convinced that we were right to allow the school medical service or the school nursing service to die away. What we have managed to achieve in respect of the first six to 18 months of life should be extended throughout the school years. I ask the Government to consult people in the education service, the national health service and the royal colleges to see what can rightly be done at reasonable cost to try to extend the advances that we have re-established for the very young to children of primary and secondary school age as well.

There are some shocking facts in terms of the well-being of children. One is that eight is the peak age for a male child to be hit by a car in a traffic crash—not an accident, a crash. The peak age for a female is 11. That in part answers the question about the difference between boys and girls or men and women in terms of crime and so on. We give more protection to our daughters than to our sons. If we could extend protection of our sons for an extra three years, they might turn out still to have exciting, risk-taking lives but not to the ludicrous extent that so many of them get themselves killed by cars and not to the extent that they get into habits or activities out of school which lead to a life of crime for a period.

It will come as a surprise to many people listening to this debate that, by the age of 30, 30 per cent. of men have been convicted of a serious criminal offence—one for which they could have been sent to gaol for six months or longer. Studies—sadly, they are not up-to-date studies; they are not the result of a sudden crimewave—showed that 10 per cent. of 15-year-old males and 25 per cent. of males by the age of 21 have been convicted of a serious criminal offence. That is a lack of order on which we should focus.

It comes down to care and control. I have always put the emphasis on "order" rather than on "law". We bring in law to define as criminal behaviour that which is seriously anti-social or dangerous. It is the order or structure that matters.

I visited an impressive primary school—Middle Park—in my constituency, where ordinary teachers with ordinary children managed to have control and care in an assembly in which no voice was raised and in which teachers could speak to 200 or 300 people even more quietly than I am speaking now. Children from each class were rewarded for an improvement in their behaviour or for their work. They got recognition for the good things. They were treated by the teachers in a calm, quiet way. I should like that attitude to be extended to secondary schools as well. In my constituency, I recently learnt a good deal about the upbringing of three children, Georgina, Stuart and Stephen. I heard about how they have been taken along to Sunday school classes, how their parents encouraged them at primary school and at secondary school, about their weekend activities, and about Stephen and his father doing things together. I also heard from others such as a police inspector who used to go running with Stephen, who was involved in the London marathon—a very fine thing for someone approaching 18. I also heard how Stephen had worked at school and was going to qualify as an architect. I heard from ministers in the Methodist Church how the family of parents and children attended church together.

That is the kind of upbringing that many others in my constituency would benefit from. If more people had the upbringing that Georgina, Stuart and Stephen received, fewer children would get into serious trouble and we

*[Mr. Peter Bottomley]*

would certainly cut the number of those who wander aimlessly around the streets with knives—one of whom, sadly, murdered Stephen at a bus stop in my constituency about two months ago. That might be an extreme case, but one should look upon Stephen's family as a normal family —people who are capable of doing the things that hon. Members pontificate on.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider a decent response to this national year of the family. I make two suggestions. First, every three to five years—perhaps starting next year—there should be a publication across Departments on what the family policy targets are. By "family policy", I am not talking about what people should believe or what they should do with their bodies —we can get over-excited about such things; in my 18 years in the House, no one has ever come to my surgery to ask for advice on either matter. They have come to ask for advice on the upbringing of their children and how to overcome some of the barriers which are in front of them. Those barriers are rather more in front of the poor, the underprivileged and those who have bad housing than others.

The targets set in 1986 by the Department of Transport for reducing casualties have led to a reduction in serious injuries of 35 per cent. The number of deaths is down by 25 per cent., although traffic has increased by about 30 per cent. Such targets have worked in child immunisation and casualty reduction and can work in other areas such as education. Targets can be specified in health, the Home Office and housing.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider setting up across Europe a framework for cohort studies, perhaps with European Community help. The child cohort studies were the ones that gave us the first clue to the impact on child development of mothers smoking.

With a basic framework, all European countries in the Community—and perhaps some outside—could co-operate to set up a new cohort study every seven years and provide framework funding so that we can carry out further analysis as people go forward. That would be a positive approach—it would not require a directive, but could show co-operation.

As a final European point, the House knows that 20 children a year die unnecessarily on our roads because we refuse to move to common European time. Obviously, there is some risk to children going to school in the mornings, but there is a much greater risk to children coming back from school and during the hours when they are playing. There would be the same number of hours of daylight, whether we had common European time—as I call it—or double summer time and we moved to an hour earlier in winter, instead of Greenwich mean time.

The number of deaths and the number of serious and slight injuries are predictable. The work has been done by the Transport Research Laboratory. The gain in Scotland is as great as, if not greater than, the rest of the United Kingdom.

If there is any other field of public policy where we knew that we were condemning 140 people to death because we could not bother to apply common sense as a result of some political failure, we would change smartly and the newspapers would be right to criticise if we did not. I ask the newspapers to start examining the issue of the 20 children and 120 adults who will die unnecessarily this winter because we cannot move to common European time. We should start to have that sort of rational approach which leads to great benefits to our children in terms of their health and welfare.

1.37 pm

**Mr. Malcolm Wicks** (Croydon, North-West): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) because we worked together for a number of years when he chaired the Family Forum and I was at the Family Policy Studies Centre.

I shall outline some of the key trends and issues relating to the themes in this debate on health and welfare as they affect families with children in the United Kingdom. I shall outline some trends that are associated with insecurities and new needs. We always need to balance that with a recognition that some of the new trends and emerging family developments are associated with strengths.

I can remember the hon. Member for Eltham talking about backing the sense of competence and confidence of families. We need to do that. When we discuss family life in Great Britain or read about it in our newspapers, it is as though the trends are pointing in a downward direction and we ignore some of the strengths. We always look back to the golden age of the family—I suspect that the historians among us would say that it never existed. The remarkable capacity of the British to be optimistic only about the past is something which we need to question. I am as interested in the strengths in family life as in its weaknesses.

We need to understand the major changes that now affect societies like our own—I include the European family, because the trends are not restricted to our own shores. Those of us who are interested in family policy and in relating matters about health and welfare to a wider policy agenda affecting employment, law and order, housing and many other matters must understand the force of some of those changes. Some of them are remarkable in terms of their scale and development over a relatively short period.

Let us recognise that more and more of our children are born to people who are not formally married. The increase in the proportion and number of children born outside marriage is demographically significant. It may have social significance, too. We need to understand it. Back in 1981, just 13 per cent. of our children were born outside marriage, most to single mothers. Today, almost one in three children—32 per cent. at the end of 1992—are born outside marriage. The change that has taken place is that, although many of those children are still born to single mothers, about half are born to cohabiting couples. The increase in cohabitation has taken place throughout Europe. The level of cohabitation is high in Scandinavian countries, but it is on the march throughout Europe. It is of social significance. As someone who is interested in analysing such issues and examining data, I worry that we know too little about that trend.

I am pleased that my former research institute, the Family Policy Studies Centre, will soon publish a report funded by the Rowntree Foundation on cohabitation and its significance for social policy. We do not know much about the trend and its significance. If the children born outside marriage—whether to cohabiting couples or to single mothers—were as secure and had the same needs as

those born to the more conventional families, cohabitation would be a matter of interest only to theologians, churches and so on. It would have no social policy implications. At present, we do not know the answer to the question whether the life chances of children born to cohabiting couples are any different from those born to conventional married couples.

We rely to a great extent on the official collection of data on matters such as the number of marriages and the number of divorces for our social analysis. Therefore, let us recognise that our official statisticians are not capturing many emerging family patterns. If a couple cohabits and the relationship breaks down, with consequences for the children, by definition that is not captured in statistics on divorce because if the two people were not married in the first place, they do not divorce. We all get excited about the number of divorces every year and whether it has risen a little or fallen a little. Let us remember that that statistic captures a smaller proportion of the picture of family breakdown than it did a generation or even 10 years ago. That is significant.

The importance of cohabitation has increased. More couples choose to have a child before marriage. Most of the couples go on to get married. In older generations, of all the things that one did, one got married first. Certainly in Scandinavia, and to some extent in Britain, marriage is the thing that people do at the end of the process. The Swedish demographers tell me that a couple may have one child and then get married when the second child is on the way or the first child goes to primary school.

Although many pundits deplore the decline in the popularity of marriage, the remarkable thing sociologically is that marriage is still so popular. Most of the material and legal advantages of marriage have disappeared—although not all of them. Yet by the year 2000, seven out of 10 people will probably still get married. That is the interesting factor which has policy implications.

As we all know, marriage is an increasingly risky institution and occupation. Of new marriages taking place in the late 1980s and early 1990s, 37 per cent. will end in divorce. The proportion seems to be increasing. The significance of that to today's debate is clear, because most of the marriages that break down will involve children under the age of 16. That is a worrying factor. Every year, approximately 160,000 children in Britain see their mum and dad divorce. The risk of a child under the age of 16 having divorced parents is about one in four.

I urge the House to examine those trends carefully. In 1969, for England and Wales, and a few years later for Scotland, the House decided to legislate for easier divorce. Personally, I have no quarrel with that decision, but I doubt whether the House was able to think through the social, psychological and economic implications of its decision for so many of our children.

The evidence that is emerging increasingly proves that divorce can be an economic and emotional disaster for adults and children. I am not pleading that the clock should be put back and the law changed—far from it—but we should recognise that the social revolution in family life has not been bloodless. It has had calamitous consequences for women and children in particular, although I know that men, too, have been adversely affected.

Although many one-parent families have been created by divorce, many result from the rise in single parenthood. The economic consequences of that are obvious. Surely it is worrying that as many as seven out of 10 such families are dependent on income support. Of all one-parent families, 85 per cent. will spend some of their lives on income support.

If I were Chief Secretary to the Treasury—I doubt whether that will happen for a while—and I were undertaking a review of public spending, I would not have started at the end of the process. There is no point in asking why we are spending so much now and what we can get away, politically, with cutting. I would start at the beginning of the story and I would try to understand why more and more of our people and families with children are becoming socially insecure. I would ask questions not about social security benefit but about employment, training and child care. I would ask how we can create socially secure families. If I were serious about cutting spending on social security, that is where I would start. Perhaps the Government will prove me wrong in showing that they have had the wisdom to start at the beginning of the story. That is always a useful place to start.

Divorce and the rise in the number of one-parent families have produced more socially insecure children. There was a time when some people wanted to hope that the great social revolution of family change was having no calamitous consequence. However, research from my former institute, the Family Policy Studies Centre, shows that on a range of indicators, based on longitudinal survey data, children in one-parent families do less well than those in intact ones. That is clear whether one is studying data on the numbers who acquire educational qualifications, on those who leave school early at 16, on those who form a cohabiting relationship or on those who have a child while still a teenager.

It would be good to debate the balance of reasons for that disparity, which range from material and economic disadvantages, which I would stress, to the psychological and emotional difficulties of bringing up a child single-handedly. I would certainly lay stress on the sheer difficulty of doing that. I sometimes think that debates between ideologues about one or two-parent family life should give way to a new movement for three or four-parent families; the costs and strains are now so immense that the more parents a child has, the better!

Today, between one in five and one in six of our children are brought up in one-parent families. Life is tough, emotionally and psychologically, for many of them. Those children are more likely to leave home early because of family break-up. Life is also very tough materially and financially. Those difficulties should be one of the major issues on our future social policy agenda.

The political right use the term "dependency culture". As a relatively new Member of the House, however, I am struck by the number of people in one-parent families who come to see me at my advice surgery who, for want of other opportunities, or for want of realising that they exist, are totally dependent on the state. Life is not good in such circumstances. If all that people can look for is more money from the income support system—goodness, they need it—or a slightly better flat in a local authority tower block, life is tough. If we are to offer hope to so many children we need a new agenda on training and employment.

Another significant change that we need to consider is in the pattern of work and family life. We now have almost contradictory trends—the rise of mass unemployment

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means that many children in this country do not know what it is like to be in a family whose head, whether woman, man or both, gets up early in the morning and goes out to work. Many children do not have experience of that working pattern. By contrast, more of our children are growing up in families where both the mother and father work outside the home. That has important social policy implications for child care.

I know that other hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall curtail my remarks. The policy implications are important as they show the interdepartmental nature of the family policy agenda. The Minister rightly talked about the concerns of the Department of Health from his departmental base. But we are talking about a far wider policy agenda than that.

The 19th century public health reformers found that if one wants to improve the nation's health, one does not necessarily start from doctors and hospitals but should consider housing and general public health measures. In the same way, many of today's key policies on health and welfare involve education, housing, employment child care and training. I hope that we shall adopt that wider agenda in future. The key to the policy is to build a partnership between the family and the state. It is an idle debate to pretend that either the state or the family can do everything in terms of pre-school care and health and welfare. We must ask what partnerships we need to build in future.

One aspect of the moral dimension that we should stress is that the rapidly changing social patterns and the emergence of new family forms—one-parent families and step families—can be associated with stress. We need to debate the subject of step-families more frequently, as 9 per cent. of children are in step-families and many of them face difficulties and stresses, which we seldom debate or recognise.

How should we build the partnership and what balance should we strike between the rights of families to work, child care and training, and family responsibilities? How do we strike the right balance between duties and rights in the future? Such questions should form the cornerstone of future debates on family policy.

1.52 pm

**Mr. Jonathan Evans** (Brecon and Radnor): I thank the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) for his characteristic generosity in allowing me enough time to contribute to the debate. Having listened to the contributions, I must say that it has been a pleasure to be here, as the quality of speeches from both sides of the House has been high.

I shall refer to only two contributions, but that does not mean that I think that the other speeches were not worthy of comment. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) drew attention to the guidelines on sentencing on incest. I agree with most of what he said, but I shall voice a caveat about his perception that, in dealing with such crimes, we should be interested only in punitive sentencing. I say that knowing of specific cases in which a child has drawn attention to an incident of sexual abuse and a close relative such as a father or uncle has been arrested and charged with the offence. The effect on the offender has been to produce such feelings of guilt that there have been instances of suicide.

I ask the House to consider the effect of such events on the child who has drawn attention to the abuse—probably, dare I say it, with no clear perception of what the abuse amounted to. If the child draws the abuse to the attention of the authorities and loses the relative involved, it can have a crushing effect on the child. When considering the guidelines on incest, it is important to bear that factor in mind.

The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) rightly spoke of the importance of listening to children, and I endorse her comments. We need to listen not only to children at home and at school but to children in care. So often when children in care have had something to say about their experiences, they have not been heard. There have been several recent instances of that.

I must declare an interest as president of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in Cardiff, vice-chairman of the Welsh council of the society and honorary consultant on law and policy to the society. I have acted for the society in Wales for many years in many of the cases that it has brought before the courts. I am pleased that the society in Wales is working on two projects with local authorities, creating children's rights officers with the primary aim of encouraging children in the care of local authorities to feel that they have an independent person to whom they can turn.

Over the years, the perception of child care on the part of the legal profession has undergone quite a change. When I first qualified as a lawyer, we were not required to have any training in the subject. A great deal has altered since then, culminating in the 1989 Act. Now, we have panels of specialist child care lawyers. Here I declare another interest as a member of the Law Society's panel of specialist child care lawyers.

Some aspects of the Children Act are worthy of the description of the most radical reforms of child law this century. The emphasis on working together—much debated throughout the 1970s and 1980s—is one. The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) mentioned the fact that there have been many inquiries in the past, and one of the key lessons to emerge from them was the necessity for professionals to work together, to share information and to develop a multi-disciplinary approach. That was encapsulated in the legislation, which also emphasised parental responsibility—although how we enforce that effectively is a continuing question. It is all very well to emphasise perental responsibility, but many cases arrive in court because that responsibility has not been exercised or has been exercised wrongly.

Another great advantage of the Act has been the training of magistrates and judges. It is now first class—so much so that it has become rather better than the training given to lawyers. Some aspects of the Act, however, need to be treated with caution. I drew that to the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) when he referred to the fall in the number of emergency protection orders. I simply do not believe that there has been a dramatic reduction in child abuse, and I am not yet persuaded that only the cases that need to be brought before the courts are being brought. Herein lies the fear about the complexity of the legislation. In other respects, it was certainly a great step forward, but had it come to the House three or four years earlier it would have

emerged rather differently. It followed the Cleveland inquiry, and it was more parent-centred than child-centred.

The Act involves a great deal of bureaucracy and I fear that that may partly explain the reduction in the number of cases that have been brought under it. We need further to examine the role of the law in respect of children. As the editorial in the current issue of the "Practitioners Child Law Bulletin" asked,

"Is child law good for children?"

Have the complexities of the legal system started to override the interests of children? That is a matter perhaps for philosophical debate, but we need to keep it at the forefront of our minds.

The NSPCC, in its justice for children campaign, drew specific attention to the fact that that question was bound to be answered more on the side of the legal system than on the side of the child. The NSPCC view is that when children are caught up in legal proceedings, their needs are not met. It is often the case that the different professionals, working together, pay specific attention to their own needs in the proceedings and sometimes lose sight of the needs of the child. Nowhere is that more clearly illustrated than in the approach adopted by Crown Prosecution Service lawyers in taking cases before the courts.

I have been given specific instances by the NSPCC of young children who have drawn attention to abuse that they have suffered. An eight-year-old child, of perhaps limited intelligence, may manage, through foster parents, to draw attention to an instance of abuse. One case that was drawn to my attention showed that this child was unable to differentiate between reality and fantasy—so much so that the child believed that a pantomime was real and was therefore sick as a result of the fear of being present at that event. Unfortunately, that child was unable to receive therapy. The Crown Prosecution Service felt that evidence of that treatment might be used in court, and that it would be claimed that in some way the child had been coached for the proceedings.

This is an important matter. The way in which professionals deal with cases and the way in which the Crown Prosecution Service takes steps to protect the interests of children will no doubt have to be discussed by the House on a future occasion.

2.2 pm

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): I am grateful for having 10 minutes in which to speak and to other hon. Members for co-operating on the timetable. I am particularly pleased that the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) mentioned the appalling case of the murder of Stephen Lawrence and the horrors that followed for that family and so many other people. It is a scourge on the country that young people like Stephen should be murdered in such a vile way. I hope that the media will recognise the horror of racist attacks and racist murders and the increase in the number of those crimes throughout the country.

We are debating the health and welfare of children. I believe that there is a strong link between the welfare of children and the poverty of the family and the area in which they live. There has been a study of children's health needs in London. An independent review of specialist services in London was published this week. By means of a series of tables, it shows the Townsend score of deprivation in inner London districts.

The deprivation level for my district, the Bloomsbury and Islington district health authority, is seven, which is quite serious. The highest score is 11, which is for Tower Hamlets. The average figure for inner London is seven and for outer London districts minus 1. Those are much less deprived areas and they are relatively affluent. The score for the other districts in the four Thames regional health authority areas, which extend out into Essex, Kent, Middlesex and Surrey, is given as minus 3, which means that, by comparison, they are very affluent.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that infant mortality rates and perinatal mortality rates in inner urban areas such as those that I represent are considerably higher than elsewhere. Therefore, I would say with the greatest kindness to the Government that they have got their health strategy for London wrong. London does not need rationalisation and hospital closures. What is needed is a serious examination of the health of Londoners, particularly of London's children and of the associated socio-economic problems, and a rapid improvement in primary care, housing and education facilities. That would be the best possible contribution to the health needs of inner London children.

A serious problem, which has not had much of an airing, is the high level of air pollution in London, as well as environmental concerns. I firmly believe that there is a link between the high levels of bronchial and asthmatic conditions among children and air pollution. One only has to go into any infant of primary school and talk to the school secretary. There one finds a shelf full of Ventolin sprays that are given to children during breaks and at lunchtime. It cannot be right that the solution to air pollution in London is the prescription of more and more Ventolin to children to alleviate their suffering. The problem, surely, is the air quality of the city. I am glad that many hon. Members have signed my early-day motion on the subject, because unless we consider the transport, industrial and waste incineration problems of London, air pollution will only worsen. The Department of Transport follows a policy of encouraging car use in London by increased road building. These problems must be investigated.

The area that I represent is an inner-city community. There is a danger, which other hon. Members have mentioned, in saying that somehow or other if children are more deprived in a poor area it is because their parents or guardians care for them less than parents from more affluent areas care for their children. That is not true. Many parents care dearly, want the best and do the best for their children, but that is a little difficult when both parents are unemployed and live in high-rise blocks with inadequate play space, no single bedrooms for the children and none of the things that many hon. Members simply take for granted.

Like other hon. Members, I hold a constituency surgery every Friday evening, which is always packed. There is a huge queue every time I arrive. I have a fair idea what most of the problems are, because they tend to repeat themselves week after week. The majority of them relate in some way or another to poverty and bad housing.

Children come in with their parents to see me and in order to be able to talk to parents I often say to the children, "Would you like to draw a picture?" and I keep a handy supply of toys and bits of paper for them. I said to one little girl, "Would you like to draw me a picture?" She said, "What of?" I said, "You choose whatever you

*[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]*

want and I shall look at it when you have finished." I spoke to her parents about their housing problem and 10 minutes later she gave me her picture. I asked, "What is that?" She said, "It is my dream bedroom." She has to share a bedroom with two older brothers, and there is little chance of their being offered a reasonable-size flat in the near future because my borough council is not allowed to build or buy anything. The only construction is a small number of housing association properties. The number of people who are in bed and breakfast, the number who are street sleeping and the number who are concealed homeless is increasing. The problem is getting worse not better.

If hon. Members talk to teachers in inner-city infant schools and nurseries about the problems that are associated with overcrowding and bad housing they will begin to understand why children under-achieve at school. We want the best for our children. We should like our children to grow up with the ability to play in parks and gardens and have their own bedrooms. That would be heaven for many of the children whom I represent and I ask the Government to look seriously at such social problems and the background to them.

There are connections between the problems of children's lack of achievement and pre-school education. I believe strongly in the need for a wide variety of pre-school education. Socialisation among small children is important. The ability of children to play safely and the ability of parents, particularly single parents, to get a break when the child is at playgroup, nursery, creche or whatever is vital.

The importance of access to good, qualified nursery education cannot be over-emphasised. Life is a complete nightmare for many parents who are both working. It is incredibly expensive for parents to put their children into private nurseries because they cannot get them in local authority nurseries. They then have to arrange other kinds of informal care, which are often very expensive and, in some cases, extremely unsatisfactory.

The provision of nursery education is particularly important. My borough has a fairly good record on attempting to provide pre-school nursery education. We are not thanked, applauded or helped by the Government for doing that. Indeed, quite the opposite. Islington, like other inner-London boroughs, apart from Wandsworth —we should all like parity with Wandsworth's standard spending assessment—has done badly in its SSA. Wandsworth, like Westminster, has been dealt with specially by the Government to return a Tory council—the Minister, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), knows perfectly well what I am talking about.

In Islington, two nurseries—Springdale and Harvist —are due for closure. The parents and those who work there have occupied them and undertaken to continue to operate them to try to persuade the council to keep them open. At one level, the argument is with the council because the council has decided to close them. There is strong support for what the parents and workers are doing and I hope that the council rescinds its decision and decides to expand nursery provision. All the parents, children, neighbours and the hundreds and thousands of people who have signed petitions supporting the nurseries know that the real problem is central Government's attitude to inner-city local authorities. The victims of that attitude are often children and the very poor of those communities. I hope that we shall not lose sight of those connections.

I have very little time, but it would be remiss of me not to make two further points. First, if children are to be able to develop, they need open space. I like the idea of children playing sports—football, cricket or whatever they want to play—and of their having decent play facilities. It is a bit rich of Conservative Members to say that there should be better sports facilities in inner-city schools when the Conservative Government, through the London Residuary Body, is selling playing fields all around London. Schools in my constituency have to rent playing facilities from private schools on the outskirts of London in order to have a sports day because they have no sports fields of their own. That cannot be the right way to treat many inner-city children.

What about library closures and the reduction in library opening hours? It means that children have few outlets other than to watch endless television programmes, some of which are good, some of which are bad and some of which are appalling. Alternatively, they play video games, some of which are good, some of which are bad and some of which are downright evil.

Secondly, there is an international dimension to today's debate. When I arrived home from the House a few weeks ago, my son Ben, who is six, rushed to meet me at the door and said that he wanted to talk to me about something very important. He had just been watching "Newsround" and wanted to know what the Government were doing about the import from India and elsewhere of carpets made using child labour. Although we want the best for our children, we should also ensure that our trade policies are not leading to the exploitation of child labour in other countries simply so that we can import cheap carpets and crafts.

That leads me to the problem of unaccompanied child refugees. The Government recently fought bitterly against an amendment that would have guaranteed the statutory provision of a supporter for every unaccompanied child refugee. We have a great deal to do to ensure that our children—and all children—grow up in a safer and cleaner environment than we have so far managed to achieve.

2.12 pm

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** With the permission of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall speak for a second time.

This has been a useful debate. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) for putting it in an international perspective, which had been lacking. Many of us are aware of the need to deal with the issues that he raised.

I listened carefully to and agreed with many Conservative speakers, but it is commendable that the majority of Labour Members who have spoken have been women, whereas no Conservative women have spoken. I believe that women bring a specific perspective to these issues, and it is helpful to have a balanced debate.

Time is limited, but I shall pick up one or two points that have been made. One of the main points made by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), with whom I entirely agree, was that we should not rely too heavily on statistics, especially in relation to child welfare. I think that the Minister will probably accept that. I speak with some concern because I was a social worker under the

old law, prior to the Children Act 1989. I am absolutely convinced that too many place of safety orders were taken out under the previous legislation, often to protect the social workers who were being attacked by the media for not acting.

I am sorry that the Minister does not take more seriously the daily dilemma facing many social workers. They must decide whether to intervene. From personal experience, I know that, whatever one does in social work, one is wrong in somebody's eyes. We should recognise that and praise the valuable work of many social workers. If we are concerned about unallocated child care cases, we are saying, in a roundabout way, that social workers are doing a reasonable job.

We have had some good speeches and some less serious speeches in the debate. The people who entertained us have departed long ago. I shall not spend too much time responding to some of the rather silly points that have been made in what, overall, has been a useful and constructive debate.

I was sorry to hear the Minister talk about the little villians and young thugs. He needs to analyse the issue deeply. Are these little villains and young thugs born bad? If they are, the task of social policy is to pick up the ones who are born bad and to lock them up from the word go so they will not cause problems. I do not believe that children are born bad. We must address the issue, which has been picked up by Conservative Members as well as by some of my hon. Friends, of why a small minority end up causing society difficulty. I am sorry that the comments of certain hon. Members did not contribute to serious thinking on those issues. It is all very well talking about socialist do-gooders, but we should remember that the Government have been in power for 14 years and must, therefore, have some responsibility for the overall state of British social policy.

Conservative Members talked about blaming the parents. I listened carefully to the serious speech made by the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley). How we prepare parents is an important point. I was in no way prepared to be a parent. I had no preparation whatever for the most important task of my life. One learns as one goes along. I have made mistakes—we all have. There is something that we can do and the hon. Member for Eltham was right to make such points.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) spoke with great authority and experience. She talked about the decline in the school health service—a point echoed by the husband of the Secretary of State for Health who talked about the service dying away. We should all be concerned about that. My hon. Friend the Member for Eccles may be aware that a report is due to come out in the next couple of weeks from the British Medical Association, the Health Visitors Association and a number of other organisations. It deals with the issue of attempting to resurrect this crucial children's health service.

The hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) made his usual serious and well-thought-out speech. He and I do not agree on everything, but I believe that he made some important points and I hope that his hon. Friend the Minister will listen to his plea for a children's rights commissioner.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) made a brave and sensitive speech on how we deal with child sexual abuse. How is it that only some people abuse children and how do we deal with those people? Is imprisonment the best way? My hon. Friend made an important point by saying that we need to fund the few clinics, such as Gracewell, that have a different approach to the treatment of people who offend in such a way. Are there other forms of dealing with sexual offenders?

The hon. Member of Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) talked about Labour's attack on family values, but he was not able to substantiate his point, so I could not understand him. I felt that he overdid the argument that the Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of parental responsibility into law. Having worked in child care from the late 1960s, I am aware that there has always been parental responsibility in law. It has been addressed in a different way by the Children Act, but the hon. Gentleman should not go away with the impression that, suddenly, we have something different. We have not.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) raised the Two Dear to Visit campaign. It rings a bell because, in my constituency, parents have expressed concern about having to pay to park when they see their children in hospital. We are reaching a bad state of health care when people have to pay to go to see their loved ones in hospital, and it is causing great problems.

My hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) made a powerful speech about maternity, the Select Committee report on the selected list and skin complaints and, especially, on the implications of the shortage of intensive care beds for children and the tragedies that arise directly from that. I take note of her comments on the implications of the specialty review in London. We are aware of what the review may mean in terms of retarding health care in London.

I agree with virtually everything that the hon. Member for Eltham said about smoking, about preparation for partnership and parenthood and about the role of males in crime. The socialisation of men must be addressed seriously. I have raised that matter before—and have been laughed at—but we must be concerned at the damage that some men do in society, and to women and children.

My hon. Friend the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) made the useful point that divorce statistics understate the extent of family breakdown.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North made what is, I believe, the key point in today's debate when he drew attention to the crucial link between child welfare and poverty. If we are to make that link, we must adhere to the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. I suggest that, if he has not yet done so, the Minister should look at what is in the convention. I draw his attention to one article whose conditions the Government have not met. Unless we meet them, we cannot honestly claim to adhere to the convention. Article 24 gives a child the right to clean water. I came across a case recently of a 12-year-old girl who had commenced menstruation whose family had no water for her to bathe in. Buckets of water had to be brought to her house to deal with those circumstances. That is unacceptable in this day and age. The Government have taken from numerous families the right to clean water.

The Minister said that children should be enabled to achieve, and I agree. My concern about Government policy is that, in so many ways, it is not enabling children to succeed and achieve. That is, to me, the central message of today's debate.

2.22 pm

**Mr. Bowis:** With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall respond to the debate. First, I thank the hon. Members for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) and my hon. Friends for their kind words of welcome. I also thank everyone who has participated in a thoughtful and good debate—the hon. Members for Wakefield, for Eccles (Miss Lestor), for Rochdale, for Preston (Mrs. Wise), for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks), for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding), as well as my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant), for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), for Basildon (Mr. Amess), for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans). My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) unfortunately did not succeed in participating, but perhaps he will follow in his predecessor's footsteps and include the occasion in his diaries.

The hon. Member for Wakefield referred to infant mortality. I must correct his comparisons with Europe. We are on a par with the best in the European Community. Our achievements are the same as those of France and Germany. The hon. Gentleman is looking at examples from Scandinavia, where Sweden has reached the figure of four per 1,000, which is our target, too.

The hon. Gentleman said that unemployment was important and I would not disagree with that, but he forgot to mention or to welcome the fact that unemployment has fallen for the past five months. No doubt that was an oversight.

The hon. Gentleman referred to homelessness. He would acknowledge that lead responsibility for the homeless lies with my colleagues at the Department of the Environment. However, as much research has shown that many young people who end up sleeping rough have been in local authority care at some stage in their lives—a point made by the hon. Member for Eccles—I naturally also take a strong interest in that area of policy.

During the past three years, the Government have provided £96 million to help those who are sleeping rough in central London, where the problem has been at its greatest. We have provided 950 extra places in short-term hostels, of which 190 are specifically for young people. However—and this is important—most of the resources are going towards 2,200 places in permanent housing so that people who have been in hostels can move on. That initiative has been particularly effective for homeless young people. A count by voluntary organisations in November found about 420 such people, compared with more than 1,000 three years previously; more important, of those 420, only 20 or so were aged 18 or under. There has been progress and the hon. Gentleman might have acknowledged it.

As the hon. Gentleman said, young homelessness is not exclusively a problem for London. That is why we have provided £3 million over three years under our single homeless young people initiative, which is funding 14 projects outside London. That is the Government's response to a perceived and understood problem and I hope that we can do better in future.

The hon. Member for Wakefield referred to the Limitation Act 1980. I understand the problems and I know that a recent House of Lords judgment in respect of inter-familial abuse decided that the Limitation Act applied in that case. However, it is by no means clear whether it applies in other cases. The law is not straightforward in that regard and the best advice at the moment is that legal advice should always be sought in particular cases. If the hon. Gentleman writes to me I will give him a considered reply on that important point.

The hon. Member for Wakefield also referred to child migration. The Child Migrants Trust provides for children who were taken to Australia before the war. The Government have given the trust a £25,000 grant to allow it to carry out work on behalf of those children. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the Australian Government have also made a contribution. We are looking for other ways in which we can help.

The hon. Member for Wakefield referred to a moral lead and I accept that challenge. We must set the moral lead for which the hon. Gentleman is looking. I believe that we are setting that lead. We have made it clear that parents are responsible for their children and that is very much in tune with the United Nations convention to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

We believe that an individual is ultimately responsible for his or her behaviour. However, we also believe that society is responsible for helping the vulnerable. We believe that society has a duty to help those in need to achieve and that it is society's duty to enable individuals to become responsible citizens. We do not duck the moral lead which the hon. Gentleman is seeking. However, we believe that there should be a partnership, as hon. Members have said, between individuals, organisations, Governments and agencies to enable people ultimately to be responsible for themselves.

My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield and the hon. Member for Eccles may be surprised to learn that they came together on the question of television. The hon. Lady was of the Martyn Lewis school of thought and believed that we should have more good news on television. There was an interesting meeting of minds in respect of the way in which violence on television poses a threat to, and influences, young viewers.

We all agree that physical and verbal violence can influence young viewers. The way in which women and children are treated by actors playing parts can also cause problems. References to drugs on television can be harmful to young people and may even be a come-on. Too many role models smoke on television—although perhaps fewer than used to be the case. We also see people drinking to excess.

Television companies must strike the right balance between alerting children to the problems that they will have to face and protecting them from bad influences. In that respect, I pay tribute to the Book Trust and its work in providing material that brings difficult problems to the notice of children in a way that they can understand, but which does not frighten them.

The hon. Member for Eccles referred to the circle of television and it is right that we should explore such issues. Circles do exist. We can recall children playing with bows and arrows and then playing cops and robbers. More realistic versions of such games were shown on television and there is now a more dangerous fantasy world of violence and horror. That must be examined.

The hon. Member for Eccles referred to a cycle of care, to crime and rough sleeping. We must also take notice of that. She referred to the parliamentary question which I

answered yesterday in which she requested an inquiry into residential care and children. We have probably had enough inquiries for the time being what with Utting, Warner and all the rest. We now need action and that is why we have set up the task force to ensure that we have action on the basis of those inquiries. Let us have action first and then see whether we need to look further.

The hon. Member for Eccles and my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham referred to school nursing services. I note what they say and I will certainly consider the matter, but the important point is that, although there has been a small decline in nursing services, there has been a 20 per cent. increase in the number of GPs. Also, 90 per cent. of GPs are involved in child health surveillance. Of course, that gives the continuity that many families welcome.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst, in his usual thoughtful way, referred to several issues. He rightly said that I would have to respond to some of those issues by saying that they are matters for the Lord Chancellor's Department—for example, pre-trial hearings, the eight-year-old girl he referred to, and the right to silence. They were matters in which children are involved, so I shall take a very close interest. On guardians ad litem and their independence, I agree on the importance of independence. We have tried to build that requirement into the system, but we will keep the matter under review.

*It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.*

## BBC World Service

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

2.30 pm

**Mr. Cyril D. Townsend** (Bexleyheath): I am delighted to have this opportunity to debate the future of the BBC World Service. You will know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there is great interest in the House on this subject. My case is succinctly put in early-day motion 1780, which was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris), and it has attracted so far the support of 362 hon. and right hon. Members. It emphasises the great concern about

"current proposals to reduce the grant-in-aid which will diminish Britain's capacity to capitalise on the considerable credibility built up by the BBC World Service over many years."

Few early-day motions have attracted more names, or more senior names.

On 30 July 1981, Lord Carrington, when he was Foreign Secretary, in another place, said:

"Let me begin on a note upon which there will be no disagreement in any quarter of the House: that is, the support and admiration of all of us—and of course I include Her Majesty's Government—for the work of the External Services of the BBC. There is nobody who does not recognise the excellence of what they do. Certainly so far as I am concerned, I believe them to be an important arm of Government foreign policy. Indeed, I think we have got to look at the whole of our defence and foreign policy as one, and external broadcasting has a most important part to play in the influence that Britain can exert throughout the world."—*[Official Report, House of Lords,* 30 July 1981; Vol. 423, c. 811.]

**Mr. Michael Fabricant** (Mid-Staffordshire): Is my hon. Friend aware that surveys conducted by the BBC World Service, and indeed by other international broadcasters, clearly demonstrate that the BBC World Service has more listeners than The Voice of America, Radio Beijing, Radio Moscow and Deutsche Welle combined?

**Mr. Townsend:** I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I shall refer to that point later.

Two years later, on a Channel 4 television interview, the same noble Lord made these rather revealing remarks:

"When I was Foreign Secretary, I was told I had to save money on the overseas service of the BBC. I think that was really totally counter-productive and the money saved was trivial compared to the amount of damage done. I think that the time has now come, really, when the Treasury and the Government ought to look at the cutting out of a function in Government rather than cheese-paring on the things that are essential and have to be done."

In both Houses of Parliament, there is a vast reservoir of good will towards the BBC World Service. We have had many debates on its funding over the years. I previously took part in one in July 1987. I find that many of the comments that I made then still apply today.

We have been here before, many times. For Conservative Members, there is annoyance that this old and deep wound for our party has been opened up again. In a debate in July 1981, a former Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, Sir Anthony Kershaw, with whom I used to share an office, was speaking for many when he said:

"We have two assets in the BBC—the English language and its high reputation, based on its activities during the Second World War, which it has managed to maintain.

We are to be asked to approve reductions in expenditure on the overseas services at a time when our country has

*[Mr. Townsend]*

reduced political power and when there is an increase beyond our imagination of the power of the spoken word that reaches out beyond frontiers and speaks to each man in his own tongue."—*[Official Report,* 23 July 1981; Vol. 9, C. 579.]

Perhaps I can quote two other witnesses of the high standing of the World Service abroad. In the *New York Times,* Malcolm W. Browne once wrote:

"The BBC is, for the free mind, what OXFAM is for the hungry".

I like best a remark made by, of all people, Colonel Gaddafi:

"All the Arab radios rave from dawn 'till noon nobody listens to them because everyone switches on London."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) said, the World Service has many competitors in both television—its new and successful service—and on radio, especially in the United States, Germany, France and Canada. But they lack the essential history of the BBC—they lack its integrity. That is why viewers and listeners do not put those services in the same category. The World Service has been shrewd to resist so-called crusader broadcasting.

The Foreign Secretary has described Britain as punching above its weight. The World Service is part of the answer, together with our Rolls-Royce diplomacy and the British Council. The central feature of our debates over the years has been that Ministers praised the World Service while cutting its funding in reality. During one period since I have been in the House, it was cut nine times in 10 years. That is a disgraceful record, but explains why it is a sensitive subject today.

In 1982, the cuts ended Spanish for Europe and the Italian and the Maltese services, and French for Europe and the Brazilian service were halved. I came across this extract in the BBC handbook from 1984:

"The role played by the External Services in coverage of last year's events in the South Atlantic is generally accepted to have been a vital one. The Argentina invasion of the Falklands came at a time when the External Services had just suffered the most wide-spread operational cuts for many years. Morale amongst highly motivated staff had been considerably shaken and many talented broadcasters had been lost."

Today, the World Service—the world's most successful broadcaster, reaching a regular audience of 124 million people, plus unknown millions in China—once again is braced to face severe financial cuts. I emphasise to the Minister—I am delighted that he is here today—that Bush house fully understands the Government's need to reduce its public sector borrowing requirement of £50 billion—about £1 billion a week. It accepts that every major organisation, public and private, has scope to reduce waste and improve efficiency. It appreciates that each and every spender of limited public funds is bound to be scrutinised closely at this time.

But the World Service offers good value for taxpayers' money. The United States spends considerably more on international radio than the United Kingdom, but achieves considerably less. The World Service is more cost-effective than The Voice of America.

It is not always easy to please the National Audit Office. Its June 1992 report said:

"World Service has a generally satisfactory system of resource planning, financial management and control, including internal value for money reviews, and has developed comprehensive procedures with which to assess the effectiveness of its output."

That is an A-plus report. No wonder. In the past seven years, there have been 23 reviews of different World Service departments, all but three by outside consultants. The hours of broadcasting per employee have risen from 14.1 in 1989-90 to 14.8 in 1992-93. Each World Service department has set its own performance indicators. This is a tight ship.

On its 60th anniversary, in December last year, Prince Charles described the World Service as the model of public service broadcasting. At much the same time, the model was told by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that its budget would be cut by £5 million in each of the next three financial years. It was also asked to prepare potential cuts of 2·5 per cent. and 5 per cent. of its total budget.

If the maximum cut is imposed, the World Service will have to find up £13 million next year, with similar reductions in subsequent years. My hon. Friends will appreciate that that is serious. I give two yardsticks. I checked this morning and was told that the Arabic service cost £4.3 million and the Chinese service £1.8 million. Commenting on the £5 million a year cut, Mr. John Tusa, the former superb managing director of the World Service said:

"If this cut goes ahead, it will go straight to programmes. It will be very, very damaging."

I suggest that he ought to know.

I expect the Minister to say in his reply that the World Service has had a 40 per cent. increase in budget in real terms in the past decade. That sounds good, but the figure has to be carefully examined, as always in government. I am told that total BBC grant in aid increased from £71 million in 1981-82 to £166 million in 1992-93. Using the Treasury measure of United Kingdom inflation, that was an increase of 36 per cent. in real terms. Between 1986-87 and 1989-90, the BBC took over responsibility for certain relay stations from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Taking that into account, the increase over the 10-year period reduces to 29 per cent.

Over many years, I have found the system of funding the services to be unsatisfactory. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been responsible for accounting for grants in aid only since the financial year 1977-78. The responsibility rested formerly with the Home Office.

The World Service has an excellent and happy relationship with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I welcome that, and do not wish to damage it. However, as the Minister knows, since 1977, Foreign Secretaries, including our present distinguished one, have resorted in desperation to that old and trusted policy of equal misery all round within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office vote. The thinking is, "If diplomatic and information office posts are to go, those chaps in Bush house should not expect to escape scot free."

But is it equal misery all round? I would welcome the Minister's comments on that point, because I am not so sure.

Over the 10-year period that I mentioned earlier, the BBC's share of the total Foreign and Commonwealth Office vote, which includes the diplomatic wing, the British Council plus the BBC—decreased from 16·5 to 13·7 per cent. It will decrease further in 1993-94 to 12·9 per cent. Is that fair? Is equal misery all round the only possible approach? Why not have greater discretion? Why not attempt to have some priorities: after all, what are

Ministers there for? Should not a medium in which Britain is regarded as the world leader be regarded as one such priority?

The manner in which successive Governments—certainly not just this one—have handled the service would be laughable had it not damaged our reputation abroad, as, no doubt, our ambassadors and high commissioners have mentioned to the Foreign Office in their dispatches.

Some years ago, in an attempt to make savings, a Conservative Government suggested to Bush house that the number of broadcasts to friendly nations should be reduced. That was wondrously short-sighted. In 1979, it was proposed that Turkey should be cut off from the service, but Parliament objected. The very next year, the Foreign Office came back with a request that broadcasts to Turkey should be increased.

I note that Mr. Tusa believes that the independence of the World Service would be enhanced if the FCO renounced its say in the services that it provides. He believes that that would result in a better and speedier editorial response. Could the Minister support some moves in that direction? Perceived independence from Government is important, and the World Service would like closer integration with a strong, independent BBC.

I understand that some press reports and comments have exaggerated the new crisis, but it is a crisis. What assurance can the Minister give us about the exact level of future funding for the World Service? Are the most serious options for savings—common, I agree, to all spending Departments—still under consideration?

Where information is in the hands of Governments—sadly, a growing trend—and where there is no permitted outlet for the voice of dissent, people turn to a respected and honest broadcasting service not only for coverage of events in other countries, but for news of their own country. In countries where there are multiple sources of information, the World Service's ability to become the preferred source of information—perhaps India is a good example—has tremendous importance now, and far-reaching implications for the United Kingdom in the future.

I want the BBC's past successes in overseas broadcasting to be built on, not pulled down. I want them to be expanded, not contracted. A traditional Conservative role, and one too often neglected since 1979, has been to support our great national institutions.

Are there those in high places who can see not only what the World Service has achieved in 60 years, but what it could achieve for our country and for our turbulent and largely undemocratic world in the 21st century?

2.47 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd):** The Government entirely share the views that my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) has expressed on the high quality and value to Britain of the BBC World Service. We are well aware of its unrivalled reputation around the world and the important role that it plays in our international relations.

I know that my hon. Friend has taken an interest in the World Service throughout his parliamentary career. I hope that I can reassure him that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office shares his views. I hope that I can reassure him by showing that its past conduct towards the World Service and its funding for it is evidence of that affirmation.

I recognise the concern, widely shared in the House and outside, that the World Service should have the resources it needs to do its job adequately. The Government have absolutely no reason to be apologetic or defensive about it. We have seen to it that the World Service has the resources. During the past decade, the funding has been put on a more stable three-yearly basis, and has been given a substantial boost—of about 40 per cent.—in real terms. Those figures are accepted by the World Service, which is where I take issue with my hon. Friend. When he says that Ministers praise the World Service while cutting its budget, I cannot possibly agree with him.

The grants in aid to the World Service in the present triennium funding period from 1991 to 1994—which my hon. Friend knows well—continues to provide for real growth in each of the three years. The amount increases from £163 milion in the last financial year to £172 million this year. The World Service is benefiting from a substantial rise, well above inflation. For some reason, that fact often seems to be overlooked amid all the talk of cuts and threats.

I know that my hon. Friend is a fair man, and I hope that he will take the opportunity, when discussing the subject with the World Service, to agree with what its current staff will say: that we have looked after them well. I hope that he will also take the opportunity to explain to his other colleagues and friends that we have, without fail, looked after the World Service well over the past 10 years.

In the past decade, the increased resources have enabled the World Service to undertake an extensive programme to improve audibility in most parts of the world. A large number of old transmitters have been replaced, and overall power output has increased by more than 70 per cent. At the same time, the World Service has been able to expand its broadcast output substantially—there has been expansion, not cuts. The World Service has been able to make significant improvements in programme quality.

An audibility improvement programme has taken place during the past 10 years. It included the construction of new relay stations in the Seychelles and Hong Kong. Some 20 new, higher-powered, transmitters have been installed in Caversham, Skelton and Cyprus to replace older equipment. An additional five transmitters have been installed at Ascension Island, Singapore and Lesotho.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) that, as a result of the improvement programme, the BBC's market share of world audiences for major international broadcasters has been even greater during the past decade. It has increased from about 50 per cent. to an estimated 80 per cent. today. The World Service now holds an unchallenged position as the leader in its field—a great achievement, and a great asset to Britain.

The expansion and improvements continue. So far in the current triennium, the World Service has been able to increase the number of hours broadcast weekly from 784 to more than 870—a substantial increase. It has also introduced two new language services, Ukrainian and Albanian—another increase, not a cut.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath mentioned prescription, which is the way in which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office maintains its interest in the World Service. It is a long-established custom, which

*[Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd]*

was endorsed by the Public Accounts Committee only last December. That Committee concluded that it must be for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to prescribe the levels of World Service output in the countries to which it broadcasts.

Last year, the Foreign Office gave the World Service discretion to vary the number of hours broadcast by up to 5 per cent. in the current triennium without the need for prior authority. That flexibility was welcomed by the World Service, and we are more than happy to have discussions on that subject, as we recognise that flexibility is a valuable instrument for the service.

I have no hesitation in saying that the success of the World Service is due, in significant part, to the World Service itself, but it is also the result of a joint effort based on our close and friendly relations with the World Service. I am very glad to have the chance to pay tribute to the effectiveness with which the World Service has used the resources with which it has been provided, and to the considerable internal efficiency gains that it has achieved, to make each pound that it receives go even futher.

I hope that I have dispelled any impression left by some recent press comments that the FCO keeps the World Service in a chronically underfunded state. It is just not so, and the World Service makes no such claim itself. It has enjoyed more than a decade of solid and steady expansion. In this financial year, it is receiving every penny of its promised increase, in spite of cuts elsewhere in the public sector, including cuts in the overall Foreign Office budget.

That is the context in which future plans for the World Service must be seen. Following usual practice, we recently held discussions with the World Service on its development programme and the allocation of resources in the next triennium, 1994 to 1997, based on proposals submitted by the BBC. The House will understand that I cannot at this stage make any commitment or give precise figures on future levels of grant in aid. Final decisions on the overall FCO and World Service funding depend on the outcome of this year's public expenditure survey. I do not know what that will be. No budget has yet been set for the World Service in the new triennium, so it is wrong to speak of cuts in the sense of cuts from previously agreed amounts.

Our recent discussions with the World Service show that current funding projections, published in the latest FCO departmental report, will be enough to enable the World Service to maintain present levels and standards of service. There will also be room for some new activity in response to the changing world situation, including even the introduction of new language services.

That is possibly partly because of the increased revenue that the World Service is expecting to raise. Continuing efficiency savings and cost savings in less important services will also be needed, but we have no reason to think that any service or language need be discontinued. The most important elements of capital spending will also be safeguarded.

I hope that I have reassured my hon. Friends that many of the recent reports about the damage supposedly being done to the World Service have been misleading and much exaggerated.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath referred to an immediate cut of £5 million. In the discussions that I have outlined, there was a cut of about £5 million in the funding baselines for World Service grant in aid in the years in question. It has been publicised and reported as a £5 million cut in the budget, but in practice the new amount represents a small, 6 per cent. increase in cash terms over the whole triennium—£530 million against £500 million—when other factors are taken into account.

Final decisions on overall FCO and World Service funding will in any event depend on the outcome of the public expenditure survey. A cut in the baseline is not a cut in cash—indeed, it can result in an overall increase in the cash.

As for the 2·5 per cent. and 5 per cent. illustrative cuts to which my hon. Friend referred, all spending Departments are having to prepare on a contingency basis of that sort in line with this year's PES. It is a general exercise, not one specially imposed on the poor World Service. Judging by the nod from my hon. Friend, he agrees with that.

Continued Government support and funding for the World Service is assured. It is, however, unrealistic to expect that the World Service can be insulated from the general financial situation and public expenditure policy. But the Government will continue to give it a high priority and to respect the World Service's position as the world's most listened to, most reliable, most effective and most respected international broadcaster. They will provide the World Service with the resources to do the job and to keep it at number one.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Monday 28 June 1993*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## TRANSPORT

### Railway Rolling Stock

1. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action the Government are taking to ensure that the United Kingdom retains the ability to build railway carriage body shells.

3. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the British Railways Board to announce the result of the tender process for new trains under the recent £150 million leasing facility.

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor):** The Government are providing record levels of financial support from the public purse. In 1992-93, British Rail investment stood at the highest level for more than 30 years. Investment of more than £3 billion is planned over the next three years, £2 billion of which will be on the existing railway. Later in the summer, British Rail will place the order for the £150 million leasing facility for new rolling stock, which we proposed in advance of privatisation. We have also recently announced measures to encourage the development of a rolling stock leasing market.

**Mr. Bayley:** Is the Secretary of State aware that there have already been 532 casualties of railways privatisation, in terms of the number of jobs lost at the York carriage works because of lack of orders, and a further 364 redundancies at other Asea Brown Boveri factories around the country? Is he further aware that ABB is the last surviving rail company in Britain which manufactures railway bodyshells, and that unless the Government ensure that the company receives orders extremely quickly the York works will close? We shall then have to import railway bodyshells from abroad—at huge cost to our balance of payments—and commuters in the south-east will not get the decent, modern trains that they are looking for, deserve and want.

**Mr. MacGregor:** First, those redundancies have nothing to do with privatisation. Even if we had not put forward our reform proposals, the position, which is largely to do with the recession and the switch in priorities in British Rail investment, would be the same. I am aware of the situation at ABB, and have had recent discussions with the company. I hope that British Rail will proceed as soon as possible with the decision to be taken on the £150 million leasing proposals, and I have urged it to do so. It is for British Rail to decide where that order should be placed.

**Mr. John Greenway:** Will my right hon. Friend urge British Rail to get its act together and place the order for the new trains for the Kent link line with ABB York as quickly as possible? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the future of the ABB York workshop depends not only on that order, but on the new leasing market for trains and an increase in orders from overseas railway operators? Would not it help ABB's export drive if British Rail were to place the order now and demonstrate its confidence in the excellent ABB work force?

**Mr. MacGregor:** I know of, and pay tribute to, the interest that my hon. Friend has taken in ABB. I also pay tribute to the huge improvements in ABB's productivity since it went into the private sector. The prospects of ABB securing overseas orders are greater now as a result of that improvement in productivity. It should be asked why it was unable to compete in international markets much earlier.

I hope that British Rail will reach its decision as quickly as possible. The choice of where investment lies is, however, for British Rail. The tendering process is now under way. I hope that the tenders will be in very shortly and that British Rail will make its decision as speedily as it can. I entirely agree about the importance of moving to a private sector leasing market. That will be concentrated on rolling stock, and we have been developing our plans for that.

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** The Minister knows that £150 million is less than half of what is needed for new rolling stock and that it will not meet the cost of existing orders that British Rail is ready to place. Why does the Minister not admit, honestly, that other nations that have privatised their railways, like the Swedes, have accepted that they can do so only with massive investment in new rolling stock? How does the Minister think that his shadow organisations will create one penny more for investment when he knows that only more money will create new jobs and better rolling stock?

**Mr. MacGregor:** By attracting private sector capital to the future leasing market. Current investment is at record levels. British Rail investment is more than 50 per cent. greater in real terms than it was in 1979, and one and a half times greater than in 1969. British Rail has given priority in its current programme to infrastructure and signalling, but in recent years there has been a substantial investment in rolling stock—something like 90 per cent. of rolling stock in the regional railways is less than eight years old—and that must be taken into account when looking at the priorities.

**Mr. Waller:** My right hon. Friend may be aware that go-ahead is anxiously awaited for the leasing scheme for rolling stock on the Leeds-Bradford, Airedale and Wharfdale lines. Will he note that the go-ahead for that scheme would provide a valuable boost for the British train manufacturing industry and anxiously awaited new trains for a line, which is well used and would otherwise have to use 30-year-old stock?

**Mr. MacGregor:** I am aware of the situation. My right hon. friend the Minister for Public transport has taken a

very close interest in the matter. There is to be a debate on the subject on Wednesday and my right hon. Friend will give a full reply then.

**Mr. Prescott:** Does the Secretary of State accept that the blame does not lie with British Rail or the engineering company but with the Government, because they have accepted a tendered contract for the north-west line and Network SouthEast, which finished in December last year? The Government ordered a review and re-tendering. That delay has led to hundreds of workers being put out of work. Perhaps he will tell us how much more the re-tendering will cost the Government. Will it be between £10 million and £100 million?

**Mr. MacGregor:** No. If the hon. Gentleman is talking about the two alternatives for the £150 million rolling stock—the ICC 225s for the west coast main line and the Networkers—that is a new order. If the hon. Gentleman has in mind the decision on the ICC 225 or 250, the 225 was chosen. That reflects the fact that there has been a substantial decrease in British Rail's revenue as a result of the recession, which is probably more to do with present rolling stock investment than anything else. But there are also advantages in going for the ICC 225, because it has been impressed on me by rolling stock manufacturers that long runs of existing locomotives can often be a much more cost-effective way to deliver new orders.

**Sir Roger Moate:** Can my right hon. Friend confirm reports that his Department sees a strong economic case for both those contenders for the £150 million in the Network SouthEast programme and the west coast main line and that the £150 million is to be seen as the first stage of a continuing ordering programme, because that is what travellers on British Rail want and what the industry needs?

**Mr. MacGregor:** Of course, one would wish to undertake several areas of investment, and my hon. Friend is right that one would wish both to be done as soon as possible, but for the £150 million it will be a choice between the two tenders. My hon. Friend must realise that I cannot predict the outcome of future public expenditure rounds. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) must realise that one has to take into account overall public expenditure when making any decisions where public money is involved. However, we shall have to consider whether there would be an opportunity to repeat that kind of leasing operation or whether we should look entirely to the private sector which will finance future orders.

### Air Pollution (Ferrybridge)

2. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received details of the study to measure air pollution in the Ferrybridge area along the roads of the A1 and M62; and if he will make a statement.

**The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Key):** The air pollution study has been commissioned to start later this summer when traffic flows will be at their peak. It will last for several weeks and preliminary results should be available before the end of the year.

**Mr. O'Brien:** May I welcome the Minister to his new post and hope that with a new Minister we shall get some fresh ideas on highway development in the Ferrybridge area? The study to which the Minister refers is very important because there is a plan for a 16-lane motorway to go through a conurbation 250 yd from a large junior and infant school, with a large mixed estate of council and private houses to the east, and a large housing estate to the west, less than 200 yd from the motorway. Does the Minister accept that an in-depth study is needed, and will he agree that that study will be made available for public consultation? If the proposals put forward by the Department of Transport are allowed to go ahead, we shall have the most polluted mile of motorway in the United Kingdom. Will the Minister assure me that the consultation document will be made public?

**Mr. Key:** First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his welcome. It is a pleasure to do business with him again. It takes us back to the golden days of the Local Government Finance Bill, when we enjoyed so many happy hours.

The hon. Gentleman would expect me to have done my homework on this matter. He has been a strong advocate on behalf of people on the Darrington and Limetrees estate in that corner of Pontefract. There has already been substantial investigation into the matter and the air pollution study is yet another investigation. We expect to publish draft orders in the next 12 to 18 months, which will give another opportunity to look at the matter. The preferred route, which has been announced, provides the best value for money, the least environmental impact, the greatest traffic relief to residents of Ferrybridge and Brotherton, and is supported by the majority of residents there.

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** Does my hon. Friend agree that, on the general point of controlling and reducing air pollution, the Government's commitment to catalytic converters, the greater use of unleaded petrol, and new proposals to get more freight off the roads and on to the railways is absolutely clear?

**Mr. Key:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He has catalogued a number of the Government's successes. He may have omitted one or two, however. I remind him of the tighter emission limits for new heavy duty diesels from 1 October 1993. Neither should we forget noise pollution which, from new motor vehicles, has been reduced by up to 10 decibels through tighter standards between 1980 and 1990. That is just for starters.

### Merchant Fleet

4. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to encourage the growth of the British merchant fleet; and if he will make a statement.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Steve Norris):** The Government remain committed to creating a trading climate in which the United Kingdom shipping industry has the opportunity to compete fairly. In support of that, in the recent past we have taken a number of initiatives within the European Economic Community and in the International Maritime Organisation.

**Mr. Waterson:** Does my hon. Friend accept that many of us involved in the British shipping industry welcome the recent initiatives taken by him and his colleagues? At the

same time, does he accept that the British merchant fleet is still at a significant fiscal disadvantage compared with many of its competitors? Will he make representations to the Economic Secretary about such matters as first year capital allowances and rollover relief?

**Mr. Norris:** I am grateful for my hon. Friend's remarks about the sterling work that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has undertaken, and I am sure that the Economic Secretary will have noted his remarks about capital allowances and rollover relief. When one considers the economic framework within which British shipping has to compete, it is worth noting that corporation tax rates in Britain are the lowest of all the G7 countries and that low interest and inflation rates contribute towards creating a climate in which British shipping can compete.

**Ms Walley:** Does the Minister realise that the British merchant fleet is now as low as 291? For all the commercial reasons to which he has referred, is there not also a strong defence reason for keeping a merchant fleet? Instead of paying lip service to stopping the merchant fleet from sinking, will he join us, and ensure that his colleagues join us in Committee, to ensure that something will be done to stop the merchant fleet sinking?

**Mr. Norris:** The hon. Lady will want to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport because it was during his presidency of the Transport Council that resolutions were put forward allowing the Council to reach agreements on a common policy on safe shipping at the Luxembourg meeting on 7 June. That is a major step forward because sub-standard shipping is an urgent problem in terms of the safety of human life and the environment. That is where important results will occur, not least in narrowing the gap between the cost currently borne by the British shipping industry in enforcing high standards and the lower costs currently borne by countries that enforce regulations less rigorously. The hon. Lady may like to pay a little more attention to that.

**Mr. Wolfson:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for spelling out the successful actions that the Government have taken to ensure safety in the merchant fleet. Does he agree that, however right it may be in principle, the policy of trying to achieve a level playing field with our European competitors has not yet delivered that for our merchant fleet? That is why Conservative Members also support fiscal measures to give the British merchant fleet a competitive position.

**Mr. Norris:** If we followed my hon. Friend's argument and offered as much state aid to our fleet as is offered elsewhere, we would enter the inevitable spiral of ever-increasing state aid to industry. That would not benefit our economy or any other economy. The answer must be to eliminate the state aids in other countries which currently distort the market.

### East Coast Main Line

5. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has held with local authorities in north-east Scotland relating to InterCity services on the east coast main line.

**The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman):** I last discussed InterCity services on the east coast main line with representatives of Grampian regional council on Wednesday 23 June.

**Mr. McAllion:** Is the Minister aware that a spokesman for Richard Branson recently announced that Virgin is investigating the cost of purchasing the east coast main line service between London and Edinburgh? Does he agree that that confirms, first, the private sector's complete lack of interest in the other part of that service—the through diesel service between London and Aberdeen—and, secondly, that companies such as Virgin are interested only in running fast trains, with few stops, for the cream of the customer load? Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that if he persists with the market testing of railway services, the only and inevitable result will be fewer trains, worse services and the break-up of the national railway network?

**Mr. Freeman:** The hon. Gentleman well knows that we are not intending to franchise the east coast main line on the basis of only the service between London and Edinburgh. I have made it abundantly clear that all British Rail's services to Inverness and Aberdeen will be franchised. Frankly, the hon. Gentleman would do a great deal more for the cause of electrification of the east coast main line to Aberdeen if he started supporting the economy of Scotland and stopped supporting the job wreckers at Timex in Dundee.

**Mr. John Marshall:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the fears expressed about privatisation of the east coast main line are precisely the sort of fears that were expressed about other industry privatisations—yet those have led to better services, not worse——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The question is about what discussions the Minister has had with local authorities in north-east Scotland.

**Mr. Marshall:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that the local authority in Aberdeen has even privatised its bus service? Is it not clear that local authorities in Scotland recognise that privatisation leads to better services at less cost to the consumer?

**Mr. Freeman:** I confirm that those local authorities to which I have spoken welcome the prospect of improved quality and quantity of services that our reforms will bring.

**Mrs. Ewing:** Does the Minister accept that as well as meeting representatives of Grampian regional council he must also meet representatives of the Highlands regional council and the surrounding districts? The lines to which he referred are vital to the economy of that area, given that Aberdeen is the oil capital of Scotland and Inverness is the tourist and whisky capital and the fact that there are also fish and food processing exports? The freight aspect of the line is vital to the area's future economy, and no doubt it is also of importance to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

**Mr. Freeman:** I hope to meet representatives of Highland regional council in September to discuss our proposals for the railway industry in its part of the world. The prospect of introducing additional private sector

capital means that there is an opportunity to enhance rather than reduce services in the hon. Lady's part of the world.

### Motorways

6. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of drivers (a) regularly use motorways and (b) never use motorways.

**Mr. MacGregor:** Surveys indicate that about half of drivers never or rarely use motorways.

**Mr. Taylor:** That interesting statistic illustrates why it is important that the 50 per cent. of drivers who use the motorways regularly shou'd be asked to contribute more so that those roads can be improved. Our experience of the success of the Dartford crossing, where private venture capital was used, shows that private finance in motorway construction can play a great role in ensuring that we get the roads that people want and that traffic moves properly and does not go on to the side roads.

**Mr. MacGregor:** As my hon. Friend knows, I am canvassing those issues in relation to the Green Paper on better motorways and the possibility of charging a toll. My hon. Friend is right in the sense that no decision has been taken, but one of the issues put forward is whether we can accelerate the improvement in motorways. That is not least because, in this country as in others, we run the risk of greater congestion with an increase in traffic. Therefore, we wish to accelerate the improvement by widening motorways and improving the services on them through additional finance raised by a modest charge.

My hon. Friend is right to say that the charge needs to be modest to avoid diversion on to local roads. One of the arguments for that is the fact that about half of all motorists hardly ever or never use the motorways.

**Mr. Prescott:** Will the Secretary of State confirm that his absurd policy of cutting the investment level for both British Rail and underground services by nearly £1 billion, and the reinvestment of that money on the M25, will result in that road being widened to 14 or even 20 lanes to cope with the extra cars created by that stupid transport policy?

**Mr. MacGregor:** The hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong to describe the policy as stupid. Presumably he means that he wants to restrict people's use of cars and heavy goods vehicles by fiat from Whitehall. That does not make any sense. Otherwise, what does a centralised transport policy mean?

The hon. Gentleman is also wrong about the balance of Government expenditure. Although 90 per cent. of all inland passenger and freight traffic goes by road, we are spending about 56 per cent. of Government expenditure on roads and 44 per cent. on public transport—including rail—this year. That is a clear indication that Government expenditure is, if anything, skewed heavily towards public transport and rail.

### Selby Bypass

7. **Mr. Alison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what scope exists for expediting the publication of the necessary draft compulsory purchase orders for the construction of the Selby bypass.

**Mr. Key:** Bearing in mind the total amount of work in hand, preparation of this scheme is progressing towards publication of the draft compulsory purchase order as quickly as possible.

**Mr. Alison:** As there has been some slippage in the Selby bypass project, will my hon. Friend confirm that that project is now irreversible and will not be subject to either cancellation or postponement due to any internal departmental budgetary reassessment?

**Mr. Key:** I certainly hope that it will not, as the scheme has been in the programme since about 1984. I well understand my hon. Friend's concern, but we are continuing preparations for the scheme. I shall use my best endeavours to keep up the momentum and I look forward to discussing the matter further with him when we meet on 12 July.

### West Coast Main Line

8. **Mr. Kilfoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail to discuss services on the west coast main line.

**Mr. Freeman:** I met the senior management of the west coast main line in Birmingham on June 18 and I reaffirmed my support for improvement of the west coast main line, infrastructure and rolling stock for the whole of the route.

**Mr. Kilfoyle:** The managing director of the west coast main line, Mr. Ivor Warburton, has told the west coast main line all-party group that without substantial investment during the next 18 months there will be a "catastrophic failure" of track and/or signalling on that route. In the light of the Minister's letter of 23 June to the chairman of the all-party group, how does he propose to maintain the rail links to and from Europe for the industrial heartlands of the west midlands, the north-west and as far as Glasgow if the private sector fails to provide the necessary capital investment to effect the improvements?

**Mr. Freeman:** The hon. Gentleman will know that British Rail is to start design work for improving the signalling on the west coast main line this year, and will commence the work next year.

I agree with both the hon. Gentleman and Mr. Ivor Warburton about private sector investment. A satisfactory formula for private sector investment—particularly in signalling, which does not count as public expenditure—would be welcome. I hope that by early autumn we shall have resolved a correct formula for the introduction of private sector capital. British Rail and Railtrack will then be able to place a contract for investment in the line. That will advance the date on which we can say truthfully that the west coast main line is the premier route in the country.

**Mr. Dickens:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm to the House that in bygone years the Great Western railway was the very best in the country? If one travelled on the Great Western, one travelled first class in every department. Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we mean business about attracting the Olympic games to Manchester, we need a good west coast main line with good rolling stock? Does he agree that it is important that the InterCity 225

rolling stock is obtained for the western line? Will my right hon. Friend continue his good work and ensure that the money comes to the west coast main line?

**Mr. Freeman:** Clearly, some of the rolling stock on the west coast main line—in particular, that which is now 30 years old—is badly in need of replacement. That is why, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, British Rail is considering placing an order. Whatever the results of that exercise, my hon. Friend knows that I am committed to work with British Rail for further orders so long as they comply fully with the Treasury guidelines on what is an operating lease. The Treasury gave the criteria for such operating leases in the latter half of last month. I hope, therefore, that it will be a question not of Networkers or 225s but of both.

**Mr. Harvey:** Given that we know that west coast main line passengers must expect franchised services at some stage, will the Government take this opportunity to clarify the welcome but rather ambiguous undertaking given during the Report stage of the Railways Bill that franchise agreements will require

"participation in discount schemes for senior citizens, the disabled and young people"?

Is that not in marked contrast to the specific commitment that railcards for disabled people would be

"on broadly similar lines to present arrangements"?—[*Official Report*, 25, May 1993; Vol. 225, 762-63.]

Given the worries that have been expressed since then by British Rail and other groups, will the Minister clear the matter up for us? Will participation be at about the same cost and bring about the same benefits as existing schemes and will the schemes be universal?

**Mr. Freeman:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport made it plain on Report—*[Interruption.]* He did. My right hon. Friend made it plain that the franchising director would require all franchises in Great Britain to include discount railcards for the disabled, young people and elderly people. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman should be in no doubt that the great advantage of those discounts—which we firmly believe that the market will provide—will be retained. We decided to require the franchising director to write that requirement into each franchise.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** I thank my right hon. Friend for the excellent letter of 23 June to which the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) alluded. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, among many important points, the letter says that when cross-subsidisation between rail lines no longer exists, there will be revenue support for such main lines, as required?

**Mr. Freeman:** I can certainly confirm that routes—for example, possibly the west coast main line—will qualify for support by the franchising director if they require subsidy. At present, InterCity has a commercial remit. Profitable routes such as the east coast main line cross-subsidise others such as the west coast main line. The Conservative party believes that where public money is to be used, we should all know precisely where that money goes. We have given every assurance that whether the service is InterCity, Regional Railways or Network SouthEast, it will continue to receive support if it is socially desirable.

**Mr. Wilson:** Would not the people who use the west coast main line and, indeed, those who use other main lines in need of investment be better served if the Government instructed or allowed British Rail to invest in the future of those lines instead of constantly spending money on restructuring? Will the Minister confirm that, by next April, having recently undergone a major reorganisation, British Rail will have to divide itself into no fewer than 65 companies comprising 26 train companies, 10 rail track companies, 16 infrastructure companies, three train leasing companies and 10 commercial service groups in order to meet the Government's privatisation plans? How much will all that cost? Will the right hon. Gentleman express that figure as a percentage of the £170 million that British Rail has apparently lost in the last year? Will the Minister bear in mind that whereas workers at Timex face a £60 a week loss, he has just given Railtrack's three-day-a-week chairman a £100,000 increase?

**Mr. Freeman:** The chairman-designate of Railtrack, Mr. Bob Horton, is excellent value for money. He is already planning with his staff for the commencement, subject to Parliament's approval, of Railtrack on 1 April next year. As to British Rail's organisation, the hon. Gentleman should realise that British Rail already runs its passenger operations on the basis of 26 profit centres; there are another nine freight profit centres, and so on. That is how modern industry is organised. As I travel the country—sometimes ahead of the hon. Gentleman, sometimes behind him—visiting profit centres, I find that morale among senior British Rail managers is excellent now. They are getting on with the job of preparing the rail industry for its reorganisation and improvement.

## Trunk Roads (Maintenance)

9. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to reduce delays caused by maintenance work on the trunk road network during the summer months.

**Mr. Key:** All our programmed maintenance work is carefully planned and co-ordinated to minimise delays, using lane rental contracts wherever possible.

**Mr. Lidington:** Is my hon. Friend aware that those of my constituents who use the M40 and Western avenue have to tolerate extremely long delays caused by major and minor road works? Will he do everything in his power, including using lane rental and other incentives, to ensure that delays are kept to the absolute minimum?

**Mr. Key:** Yes, I certainly will. Contractors must display signs explaining the presence of cones where no work appears to be in progress. My hon. Friend's constituents can help to achieve the objective that both he and I want to achieve. Under the citizens charter, a system exists for cone hotlines, whereby if members of the travelling public see lengths of motorway or road coned off unnecessarily, they have only to telephone 071 276 3000 and a written explanation will be available.

**Mr. Pike:** Although there have been some improvements in the way in which road works are undertaken, misleading signs still appear and, despite the Minister's remarks, many motorists will be unable to act in the way that he suggested. The appearance of signs giving misleading information leads to genuine speed limit and

other warnings being disregarded. It is the Department's responsibility to ensure that accurate speed limit and other restrictive signs are used and that it is made clear when they no longer apply.

**Mr. Key:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right, and we are here to help. If the hon. Gentleman's constituents and other members of the travelling public see misleading signs, I hope that they will contact us. I do not understand why the hon. Gentleman imagines that the travelling public do not have access to the telephone system—although not necessarily from their cars. It is important to work on the problems together. It is no use blaming someone else. Let us try to sort out those problems sensibly.

### Jubilee Line Extension

10. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when a start can be expected for the Jubilee line docklands extension.

16. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects that work will be completed on the Jubilee line extension.

**Mr. Norris:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will authorise the start of construction once negotiations between London Transport and the parties involved with the financing of Canary Wharf on the basis of their contribution to the Jubilee line extension have been satisfactorily concluded. It is planned that the line will be operational 53 months after the start of construction.

**Dr. Spink:** Will my hon. Friend confirm the Government's commitment to the scheme and urge all the parties involved to reach agreement on the funding package so that the start can be brought forward to the earliest possible date, for the obvious economic benefit of docklands and of my constituents, who hope to be involved in the line's construction?

**Mr. Norris:** Yes, I can confirm that the Government are fully committed to their contribution, once negotiations with the private sector on its contribution are complete.

**Mr. Banks:** It is not much use the Minister saying when he thinks that the line will be finished when he cannot even tell us when he thinks that work on it will start. We have been waiting for that for ages and ages. It is about time that the Minister got his finger out and gave a date for the actual start.

Is the Minister aware that there is a phrase for people who always tempt but never get around to delivering? They are called political teasers. The Minister should stop dangling the prospect in front of us and tell us when work on the Jubilee line extension will start.

**Mr. Norris:** That is yet another inviting prospect from the hon. Gentleman, but in all seriousness he knows the answer to the questions that he poses. The Government have clearly stated that the private sector should contribute a substantial amount of money towards that line because of the considerable value that is conveyed by it to those property owners who are contributing. I think that the whole House will accept that that means that about £400 million, which is to go into the scheme, is coming from those who will benefit as developers of property rather than from hard-pressed taxpayers.

It seems to me that the hon. Gentleman is inviting us to forget that and simply to say that the Government will find the entire contribution. That is lamentable. No Government can act so irresponsibly. These negotiations have taken time, but I trust that they will be satisfactorily concluded. When they are, the Government are committed to making their contribution, to ensure that the line can be constructed.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Market Testing

31. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what comparisons he has made between the costs arising from the implementation of market testing over each of the last two years and the savings arising therefrom.

**The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave):** Annual returns from Departments indicate that in previous years savings arising from market testing have typically been around 25 per cent. of the original cost, even when the activity has remained in-house.

I shall report on the costs and savings arising in the current period, which runs until September 1993, as soon as possible after that date.

**Mr. Fabricant:** I thank my right hon. Friend for his helpful answer. Does he not think it extraordinary that although certain Labour-controlled councils take on competitive tendering with great gusto, which results in enormous savings, the Opposition Front Bench has no enthusiasm whatsoever for market testing?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My hon. Friend is right. Labour authorities thoughout the country have found, after resisting a great deal at the beginning, that there is great benefit for their local taxpayers and for those who use local services in buying in services that can better be provided by the private sector.

**Mr. Garrett:** Does the right hon. Gentleman intend to market test the jobs of grades 1, 2, 3 and 4 civil servants, or is market testing a mandarin-free zone?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I look forward to discussing those matters with the hon. Gentleman in the Select Committee. No one knows better than the hon. Gentleman that an increasing number of grade 1 and 2 jobs have been put out to open tender. We have thrown it open to competition. Two people, of permanent secretary rank, have come in by that route.

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** Could my right hon. Friend extend market testing to ensure that when civil service jobs are about to be moved from one constituency to another area, the civil servants who are doing those jobs are given the opportunity to bid for them under private management?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My hon. Friend makes an interesting and constructive point. It is part of the policy that we should enable civil servants to show, as they often can, that they can do the jobs very well, both by management buy-outs, which sometimes they have achieved, or by straight in-house bids, and sometimes by transferring successfully—as, for example, at Devonport dockyard—to private sector contractors and working very well with those private sector employers.

**Ms Mowlam:** The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has announced that he believes that there is a cost saving of about 25 per cent. in the civil service as a result of market testing. Can he confirm that there is no evidence to suggest that that 25 per cent. cost saving is the result of internal efficiency—as would be the case with many Labour local authorities, if they were allowed to make the decision at local level, as opposed to being dictated to by central Government at Westminster—but that it is solely as a result of cutting wages and changing the terms and conditions of civil servants? That is the result of the right hon. Gentleman's market testing. There has been no increase in the quality of service.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I think that the hon. Lady has got her brief back to front. The wages issue is normally raised by local authorities. Labour local authorities have got used to compulsory competitive tendering. I can give the hon. Lady one example. It happens to be the latest. RAF Finningly has stated that it expects to achieve savings of £3·5 million in the first year, 1993, and £29 million over 10 years through efficiency savings, including market testing of the technical maintenance of aircraft. That represents between 20 and 25 per cent., which is exactly the point that the hon. Lady does not understand. She will find that it has nothing to do with pay. It is the result of greater efficiency in the organisation of the function.

## Citizens Charter

32. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total number of civil servants engaged in activities subject to citizens charters.

**The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis):** The charter approach is integral to the delivery of public services. Many civil and other public servants are now involved with the charter programme as part of their normal duties. The citizens charter unit in the Cabinet Office has 32 staff.

**Mrs. Gorman:** I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Is he, perhaps like me, concerned that our business community will soon need its own charter to protect it from the growth in the inspectorates that are now visiting it almost daily: environmental health inspectors, agricultural inspectors, safety at work inspectors and weights and measures inspectors—you name it, there is an inspector for it? Does he agree that it is very important that we as a Government, and he as a Minister, keep an eye on the growth of that sector of the civil service, because otherwise we shall kill the goose that lays the golden egg?

**Mr. Davis:** I agree entirely about the need to reduce the regulatory burden, especially on small companies. The citizens charter and deregulation go hand in hand; they are not alternatives. They are both about providing a better quality of service to users and improving efficiency. I agree with my hon. Friend that we must ensure that unnecessary regulation is avoided and that new regulations are not excessively onerous for the business community. In that context, it is no coincidence that the policy to deregulate London Buses was mentioned in the citizens charter White Paper.

**Mr. Cryer:** Instead of wasting civil servants' time on these useless public relations exercises that are called charters, why does not the Minister do something sensible for a change and transfer civil servants to the disability living allowance unit at Blackpool, where applications for mobility allowance and attendance allowance are still weeks behind? People are living in great difficulty because of the delays, which result from the Government not providing enough civil servants for the job.

**Mr. Davis:** That is an extraordinary statement. The hon. Gentleman should have read the ombudsman's report on the disability living allowance, in which he identified the charter as a very important tool in achieving better terms, improvements and recompense for people who had suffered under the scheme.

33. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much has been expended on citizens charters since their inception.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The charter applies to all public services, which is reflected in their individual expenditure programmes. Centrally, the charter unit spent £1·6 million in 1991-92 and £2·14 million in 1992-93.

**Mr. Banks:** Would I be right to assume that the global figure is much more than £2·14 million? An extraordinarily large amount of taxpayers' money is being wasted on what most people regard as nothing more than propaganda puffs to give the appearance that the Government are actually doing something, when we know they are incapable of doing anything. These charters are a joke—a very expensive joke. It is little surprise that they give most people the impression that the country is being run by a bunch of train spotters.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Perhaps that would be better than being run by the panel game on which the hon. Member excels. All public services should give clear information to the people who use them. That is a proper use of the resources that are voted by the House for public service. I find it extraordinary that the hon. Gentleman, with his background, does not understand that it is an essential part of public service to let people know what their rights are.

34. **Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received about complaints procedures in the public services as part of the citizens charter; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. David Davis:** I announced the citizens charter complaints task force on 10 June. As part of its work, it will be seeking the views of public service and other organisations and, of course, those of members of the public.

**Mr. Banks:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Is he aware that many people still find it a bureaucratic nightmare to make a complaint to and about a public sector organisation? Can he assure me that the complaints task force will draw up a set of principles to make it easier to make a complaint and to encourage public service organisations to treat complaints more positively and as a means of ensuring their own effectiveness?

**Mr. Davis:** I am happy to give my hon. Friend just such an assurance. He is right to state that complaints systems must be easy to use and that complaints must be responded to by the people who operate those systems. I cite an example: just such an attitude is engendered in the Department of Social Security's OTIS system. It stands for

"opportunity to improve service", and the evidence so far is that improving services is exactly what it has done, precisely because it is simple and quick and enables the service to analyse complaints and to respond to them effectively and speedily.

**Mr. Hall:** May I refer the Minister to a complaint that I received about the Cheshire family health services authority, which gave some of my constituents five days' notice that their doctor's surgery was about to close? I checked the citizens charter, which states that patients have a right to be consulted about their services, but when I checked with the family health services authority, I found that there was no law to ensure that they were. The Cheshire family health services authority closed the surgery regardless of the views of my constituents. Will the Minister take on board my ten-minute Bill, which would amend the law to ensure that in future patients are consulted about doctors' surgeries and the services that they receive?

**Mr. Davis:** Naturally, I should be happy to consider the matter if the hon. Gentleman would write to me or give me some notice, rather than bouncing it and trying to score political points. If he cares to write to me, I shall deal with the matter.

35. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which other Governments have contacted his Department for information about the implementation of the citizens charter.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** At least 15 other Governments have been in contact with me or my Department to find out more about the citizens charter. Last year's service to the citizen conference attracted delegates from 21 countries, and we expect that the next event will attract even more.

**Mr. Bates:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. Will he confirm that among the 15 are the new French Government, who are committed to introducing a form of citizens charter? Does not the international interest prove that, just as Britain led the world in introducing private enterprise into tired and inefficient nationalised industries in the 1980s to make them more competitive, Britain is again leading the world in the 1990s by dispelling the myth that the only way to improve the efficiency of public services is by throwing more money at them?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The previous French socialist Government sent a speaker to our conference last year, and I am happy to say that the new French Government retain that interest. Throughout the world, Governments across the political spectrum are having to reassess the way in which public services are run so that people's legitimately higher expectations can be met against the background of very tough resource decisions. Everyone faces the same issues.

## Technology Transfer

36. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what specific measures he will take under the Technology Foresight programme to increase technology transfer.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The Technology Foresight programme will promote technology transfer through a new partnership between science and industry. Improvements in working relationships between academics and industrialists have been a major feature of foresight processes overseas. This programme will help the Government to determine their own priorities for spending on science and technology.

**Mr. Gunnell:** I think that the Minister would agree that the Technology Foresight programme looks constructive on paper, but that, as in science itself, translation from theory into practice is not always easy and requires resources and imagination. In view of the transfer of responsibility from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Office of Science and Technology, can the right hon. Gentleman assure me that funds have followed the transfer and that he has the necessary funds to launch and promote the programme? What measures has he taken to encourage to join his steering committee people with the creativity, imagination and commitment to ensure that the programme translates from theory into practice?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The hon. Gentleman makes a very fair point. It is perfectly easy to describe the process, but what really matters is to get it established well and working well. My Department is now involved in a series of regional visits across the country, discussing how best to take forward the programme—officials have doubtless been to Leeds to discuss it with the relevant players there. It is essential that we have the involvement of those working at the laboratory bench and those in industry who really understand markets.

**Mr. Batiste:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the more industry is involved in the Technology Foresight programme, the more likely it is that industry will pick up the fruits of that programme and carry them through to the marketplace?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My hon. Friend makes an essential point. The Technology Foresight programme here must be like the successful programmes abroad and not be dominated by Whitehall; it must be led by practitioners in the field including scientists, engineers and industrialists. We at the centre should simply be the secretariat for the process. That is the intention.

## Citizens Charters

37. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to introduce further charters during 1993; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. David Davis:** Thirty-two charters have been produced so far. New charters during 1993 will include the further and higher education charters. In addition, the Benefits Agency charter and parents charter will be updated and improved.

**Mr. Greenway:** I particularly welcome the further and higher education charters. May I ask for more action on schools charters and particularly the publication of league tables for school attendance, allowing for a proper value added section? Is not it legitimate and right that parents should know which schools achieve high attendance? Is not the charter a good way of achieving that? In my right hon. Friend's opinion, why does the Labour party oppose providing information about schools? The Labour party does not care about parents' right to know.

**Mr. Davis:** I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The proposal to produce league tables will be one of the motivating forces for improving our education service. That is true whether it relates to educational achievement in its academic sense or to truancy. In respect of the latter point, I note that a report was published today which is very helpful.

With regard to my hon. Friend's point about value added tables, of course we believe that they would be the best kind of tables to have. However, as my hon. Friend will understand, it will take time to develop a database for those tables to work. In the meantime, we see absolutely no reason to deny parents the kind of information that would allow them to take the proper action in the best interests of their children's education.

**Mr. McCartney:** Will the further and higher education charters include the right for students to claim housing benefit and income support during summer recesses? Some of my constituents will have less than £5 a week to live on this summer after they have paid their rent during the college recess. That is an unacceptable imposition of poverty on our youth and on the development of their educational potential in respect of industry. If the further and higher education charters are to mean something, there must be a right of access to housing benefit and income support for students when they are not at college.

**Mr. Davis:** Absolutely not. Housing benefit and income support are designed for people who need them because they are in poverty or in poor circumstances of one kind or another. They are not designed as a giveaway for students in our society. I believe that it is a very bad idea to start young people off on a dependent mode as they begin their careers.

### Science and Engineering (Wales)

38. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last visited Wales to discuss science and engineering issues; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I discussed science and technology issues when I replied to the excellent debate at the Welsh Conservative party conference on 12 June.

**Mr. Richards:** I thank my right hon. Friend for coming to Wales to make the first speech on science and engineering at a party conference for many years. Does not that reflect the importance that the Government attach to science and engineering—unlike the Labour party, which attaches very little importance to that subject?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I note that the Welsh Conservative party lead on that matter as, doubtless, it leads on others. I also note that there is no proper spokesman for science and engineering in the shadow Cabinet and that is a matter of regret. I also note that in Wales there are major developments in this area. For example, the Agricultural and Food Research Council is now concentrating most of its work on grassland research in Wales and that is quite proper.

### Investors and Risk Takers

38. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what intitiatives his Department has taken to encourage the investors, entrepreneurs and risk takers of the United Kingdom to produce scientific products for the world market.

**Mr. David Davis:** Partnership for the creating of wealth lies at the heart of the White Paper on science, engineering and technology. As markers of that—there are too many aspects to go through in one question—each research council will have a mission statement that reflects that aim, and the Technology Foresight exercise will be identifying generic aspects of technology and research that are most useful for the United Kingdom's industrial base, a policy which has already proved to be successful in Japan. In support of that, the Department of Trade and Industry's innovation budget to assist small business will be increased by 15 per cent. this year.

**Mr. Dickens:** Is my hon. Friend aware that trade and industry are delighted with the emphasis that the Government are now placing on the research councils' drive for wealth creation? That is just what industry and commerce want, and it is just what the doctor ordered.

**Mr. Davis:** I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. He is supported by several people, not least Richard Freeman, ICI's chief economist, who, referring to science and technology, said:

"A central feature of the White Paper is the commitment to the greater focus of S&T policy on United Kingdom competitiveness and wealth creation. Within more explicit guidelines . . . research is to have regard to its relevance and potential for appropriation by industry and other users. These are changes to be greatly welcomed."

I agree with him entirely.

### Rolls-Royce

40. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had with the chairman of Rolls-Royce about his White Paper on science, engineering and technology.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I expect to meet Sir Ralph Robins next month and I am looking forward to discussing the White Paper with him. I was greatly encouraged by the letter from him and 12 other senior industrialists in *The Times* on 1 June welcoming the White Paper.

**Mr. Knapman:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that Sir Ralph Robins letter was also signed by the chief executives of Glaxo, British Aerospace and many others? Does not that show that the vast majority of British industrialists fully support my right hon. Friend's White Paper on science, engineering and technology?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My hon. Friend is right. There has been a very broad welcome for the White Paper. As sometimes happens, the spokesman for the Labour party in the House of Lords, who had perhaps read the document before responding to it, got it right in welcoming it, whereas its spokesman in this House had not read it and did not welcome it.

# Iraq

3.31 pm

**Mr. George Robertson** (Hamilton) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Nations Security Council's consideration of the United States attack on targets in Baghdad.

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd):** On 26 June, United States forces launched a military operation against the headquarters of the Iraqi intelligence service in Baghdad. That action follows discovery by the Kuwaiti authorities of a plot to assassinate ex-President Bush in Kuwait city in mid-April by detonating a car bomb. The consequences if the bomb had detonated would have been devastating and would have led to great loss of innocent life.

On 27 June, the Americans immediately reported the action to the Security Council as required by article 51 of the charter and briefed it on the evidence of Iraqi involvement in the plot and the threat presented to the United States by Iraqi terrorism. That operation was a justified and proportionate exercise of the right of self-defence, and a necessary warning to Iraq that state terrorism cannot and will not be tolerated.

That act of terrorism by the Iraqi regime has to be seen in the context of a pattern of attempted defiance and obstruction by Iraq of the United Nations.

Iraq also continues to detain illegally nationals of Kuwait and other countries. Three British citizens—Paul Ride, Michael Wainwright and Simon Dunn—have been given grotesque prison sentences, along with nationals of the United States, Sweden and Germany. We are doing everything that we can to secure their release.

The international community has achieved progress in dismantling the Iraqi regime's capacity to attack its neighbours and in deterring attacks on its own citizens; but the attempt to kill ex-President Bush is a reminder that the Iraqi state is still a sponsor of terrorism. We believe that only through firmness can Iraq be persuaded to conform to the standards of behaviour required of it and others by the international community.

**Mr. Robertson:** I thank the Foreign Secretary for his answer, but I tell him that the American action yesterday was dubious in legality, questionable in morality, haphazard in its military impact, and potentially devastating in diplomacy. It should therefore never have been supported by the British Government.

No one doubts the appalling nature of Saddam's regime, least of all those Labour Members who have campaigned for many years, and no one doubts the need collectively to face up to the threat that he poses both to his own people and his neighbours.

How can it be said that the raid is justified as falling under article 51 of the United Nations charter when the alleged assassination attempt failed anyway? It took place some three months ago, and the trial of the accused people has not been completed. How can it be said to be measured and appropriate, when the target building was in a busy city centre and at least three of the missiles almost predictably failed to hit that target and killed innocent civilians?

How can the action be said to be effective when it has alienated our Arab allies and united Saddam's friends? How can it be said to have enhanced international law and order and the influence of the United Nations when the decision was taken unilaterally by the United States, involved no real consultation with this Government beforehand and went to the Security Council only after it had taken place?

Did our Prime Minister ask President Clinton to take the issue to the Security Council and seek prior authority for it? Did President Clinton tell our Prime Minister what yesterday's target would be? Was the United Nations Secretary-General consulted in any way before the attack happened? Did our Government take into account sufficiently its effect on the British prisoners who languish in Saddam's gaols at present?

Does the Foreign Secretary accept that those of us who are friends of the United States, President Clinton and his Administration—especially those of us who are their friends—are dismayed and troubled by what happened yesterday and believe that the attack should not have taken place? If there is to be a new world order—we all hope that there will be one—it cannot be based on unilateral action taken by any one state, however powerful. If that new order that we all yearn for is to have any chance at all of succeeding, it must be firmly based on international law and the clear authority of the United Nations.

**Mr. Hurd:** I am surprised by the nature of the hon. Gentleman's response. It seemed to be a throwback to the old days from which I thought the Labour party had recovered. It showed little understanding of the sort of problem that the President of the United States faced when he considered the mounting evidence before him.

I shall try to deal with the hon. Gentleman's specific questions. Article 51 prescribes:

"Force may be used in exercise of a State's inherent right of individual or collective self-defence,"

and that that exercise must be reported immediately to the Security Council. Force may be used in self-defence against threats to one's nationals if: (a) there is good evidence that the target attacked would otherwise continue to be used by the other State in support of terrorist attacks against one's nationals; (b) there is, effectively, no other way to forestall imminent further attacks on one's nationals; (c) the force employed is proportionate to the threat. That is the state of international law as we understand it. However, it must be viewed against the political context, which the hon. Gentleman would not deny.

The Iraqi state has shown time and time again a propensity to engage in state terrorism, so there must be considered to be a constant threat of further attacks. Unless the hon. Gentleman and the Labour party understand that position, they are not understanding the realities with which President Clinton had to deal.

The second question related to consultation. For several weeks since the middle of May, we have been told that, as the United States, and especially the FBI, examined the nature of what occurred, they were considering what further step they would have to take in response. The Americans made it clear that this was to be, if it took place, a United States action, that they would not ask for allied participation in it, but that they would ask for allied understanding and political support. That was the nature of it. We have been kept fully informed as the action continued.

The main gap in the assumptions of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and in his questions to me was the assumption that, before the right of self-defence can be exercised, there needs to be a specific mandate from the United Nations. I ask the hon. Gentleman, "Please think carefully before you put that forward as a received doctrine of an Opposition party."

**Mr. John Smith** (Monklands, East): He did not say that.

**Mr. Hurd:** Well, that was the implication of everything that the hon. Gentleman said. It is simply not possible to lay that down as a doctrine. It must be right, as the United Nations charter recognises, that states preserve and have the right to exercise the right of self-defence without a specific authority each time from the United Nations, provided that they immediately report, as the United States did, on that action to the Security Council. I believe that that is absolutely fundamental to the nature and prospects of world order.

**Mr. David Howell** (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that state-inspired or state-condoned terrorism is one of the most dangerous and evil threats to the stability of the world today, and that it points a dagger at our own societies here in Europe, as well as spreading throughout the middle east and along the north coast of Africa?

Will he therefore agree, as I am sure he will, that, although the loss of innocent lives in any operation of this kind is deeply to be regretted, far fewer have died in this case than have died, are dying and will die if state terrorism of this deliberate kind is allowed to proceed unchecked by a decisive response, such as the response that the Americans have employed?

**Mr. Hurd:** I agree with my right hon. Friend. I especially agree with what he says about civilian deaths. I do not believe that the targeting can be regarded as disproportionate, given the nature of the target and the nature of the offence. I disagree with the criticism by the hon. Member for Hamilton on that.

I further agree with what my right hon. Friend says about state terrorism. All of us, and Iraq in particular, are required by paragraph (32) of Security Council resolution 687 to give an undertaking not to support state terrorism. That undertaking was given, but has not been honoured. Against the background that I have described, it is legal and reasonable that this measure should have been taken as a response to the assassination attempt and as a signal for the future.

**Sir David Steel** (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The Foreign Secretary noticeably did not quote the part of article 51 of the charter that makes it clear that the article is intended to be used when there has been an attack on a member nation pending the ability of the Security Council to restore international peace. It was not intended for retaliation against an abortive attack two months ago when the Security Council had not considered the matter.

Surely the right hon. Gentleman must accept that the right course would have been to present the intelligence evidence to the Security Council, together with the evidence from the Kuwaiti trial when it had been completed, and to take action against Saddam's intelligence headquarters as a threat to international peace. That is the orderly way in which to proceed.

As it is, surely the right hon. Gentleman must accept that there are damaging consequences. The Gulf coalition has been broken. The Arab Governments who are under threat from Islamic fundamentalism now find that it is fuelled by the American action. The action also undermines the authority of the United Nations itself. The right hon. Gentleman must tell President Clinton that "might is right" is not the new world order.

**Mr. Hurd:** I have tried to set out to the right hon. Gentleman and to the House how article 51 stands as regards attacks against the nationals of a member state. I do not accept, as I have said, that it is an inevitable restriction on the rights of member states of the United Nations under article 51 that they should have to receive a specific authority and approval from the Security Council before they exercise that right.

I advise the right hon. Gentleman, as I have advised the hon. Member for Hamilton, not to start to lay that down as a principle of international order. There would be a dangerous state of paralysis if it were accepted.

**Mr. Ray Whitney** (Wycombe): The Labour party's reaction, far from being surprising, is entirely predictable and, indeed, Pavlovian. Does my right hon. Friend agree that a vigorous response to state terrorism is essential, and that the action of the United States was very necessary—in particular, to show that the change of Administration in Washington had not changed the resolve of the United States Government to force the Iraqi regime to behave in an internationally acceptable way?

**Mr. Hurd:** My hon. Friend is right. It is very important that Iraq should understand that the change of Administration in the United States, or any other development on the international scene, will not lessen the weight attached by the international community to the need for Iraq to discharge its obligations, including the obligation against state terrorism. The signal for the future is crucial.

It was predictable that the action which was taken would be criticised in some quarters. I am sorry that the Labour party has joined in that criticism, as it shows misunderstanding of what the world needs, which is strict compliance with international law. However, the world requires also firmly shown proof, particularly from the United States, of a willingness to deal with state terrorism.

**Mr. Tony Benn** (Chesterfield): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that two of the people who died in Baghdad on Saturday night included a little baby of 18 months, who was held by its shopkeeper father, and whose mother is critically ill in hospital? Does the right hon. Gentleman know that this act was perpetrated by a country that launched the Bay of Pigs attack, invaded Grenada, invaded Panama, and has itself been guilty of many acts of state terrorism?

Does the right hon. Gentleman know—indeed, he almost confirmed it—that the real motive was to give President Clinton a reputation at home for being tough? The British Prime Minister supported the action, as he is accused of indecision in this country. Before the right hon. Gentleman frames his answer, I should tell him that the brother of the man who was killed—the uncle of the baby—is here today to hear his reply and the first apology for the killing of innocent people in this murderous attack on Baghdad.

**Hon. Members:** Say you are sorry.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Hon. Members will resume their seats.

**Mr. Hurd:** A few minutes ago, I expressed regret for the loss of civilian lives. No doubt I was simply saying what a representative of the President of the United States had said already. If the right hon. Gentleman is saying that there should be no response to such attempts at state terrorism—this attempt, if successful, would have resulted in the deaths of a very large number of people not in any way involved in the Gulf war or the argument—he is putting forward an argument for paralysis, which we cannot accept.

**Mr. Cyril D. Townsend** (Bexleyheath): While totally deploring the alleged attempted assassination of a former United States President—a friend and ally of this country—may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he realises that, over the next decade, we shall need the support of some Arab countries if we are to contain Iraq and Iran? Does he agree that Hizbollah and Hamas will have been greatly strengthened by the events of the weekend? If he were a moderate in the Arab world, encouraging democracy and respect for human rights—let alone a Palestinian negotiating with the Israelis—his position today would be fragile.

**Mr. Hurd:** I understand my hon. Friend's point. It is one that was made throughout the Gulf war. It was said constantly in many parts of this country by experts on Middle East affairs that, if the United States and the rest of the west were to take a firm line, there would be flaking away of support for the coalition. This was constantly written and otherwise reported at the time of sanctions and Desert Storm.

It is a risk, and my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to it. I suspect that what happened before when these warnings were given will happen again. Although those concerned feel doubts and express criticisms, on reflection they will feel safer and more satisfied that the United States is once again prepared to show leadership against an evil from which we and especially those states suffer—that of state terrorism.

**Mr. Peter Shore** (Bethnal Green and Stepney): While there are real difficulties in dealing with the provocations and crimes of an outlaw regime such as that of Saddam Hussein, surely, in the exchanges between the President and the Prime Minister, it was pointed out to the President that the American case would have been far stronger if action had been deferred until the conclusion of the Kuwaiti trial.

**Mr. Hurd:** The United States deferred action until the nature of the responsibility was clear from its own investigations. The evidence is there—it was in Mrs. Albright's speech yesterday—that that responsibility lay where the missile attack was directed.

**Mr. Patrick Cormack** (Staffordshire, South): As one who agreed entirely with what my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said about state terrorism and who believes that the Gulf war should not have ended until Saddam Hussein had been deposed, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he agrees that, if we are to have an internationally respected world order, we must be even-handed? Does he agree that those who orchestrate, plan and perpetrate genocide should be treated at least as harshly as those who plan the deaths of presidents?

**Mr. Hurd:** My hon. Friend has been persistent over months in advocating a more interventionist policy in the former Yugoslavia. That is what he is referring to. We do not have an established world order: we have attempts to create one and a series of tragic situations in which, in one way or another, such order is being breached.

The international community must seek case by case—all these cases are different—the best remedy that it can afford. The two situations—the attempted assassination of ex-President Bush and the war in Bosnia and the crisis alongside it in Croatia—are as different as could be. There is no established world order that would provide equal remedies for each.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that many people in this country are simply nauseated by the alacrity with which the Prime Minister endorsed the American criminal action? What did the Secretary-General of the United Nations say about this?

The Foreign Secretary has the reputation, rightly, of being a humane man. Has he any idea of the sheer horror in places such as the Amariya where missiles struck during the Gulf war? In that place, my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), Tim Llewellyn of the BBC and I saw carbonated arms on a ceiling. As in Pompeii, mothers were burnt holding their infants when the missiles arrived.

In such circumstances, can the Foreign Secretary be surprised that the many Iraqi graduates we met who were doubtful about the Ba'athists are now firmly behind Saddam Hussein? This kind of action entrenches the regime.

**Mr. Hurd:** The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to bried me after his visit to Iraq. I entirely accept the good faith in which he and his hon. Friend undertook that visit. However, in several respects, the characteristics of a totalitarian regime enabled the two hon. Members to be thoroughly misled about the situation there. I respect the hon. Gentleman's bona fides and his sincerity, but not his conclusions.

I do not believe that, in the end, the cause of humanity—which is what the hon. Gentleman is pleading—is served by allowing attempts of this kind to go without response. I do not believe that it is safe. We can argue about particular targeting and particular procedures, but I disagree profoundly with the hon. Gentleman's main assumption: that regimes like that of Saddam Hussein—given its record and the knowledge that we had of its intentions—should be spared and left alone simply because a response inevitably carries with it the risk of innocent casualties.

**Mr. David Sumberg** (Bury, South): Is not the correct historical comparison not with the Gulf war but with the action that the United States took against Libya a few years ago? Should it not be made equally clear to Saddam Hussein, as it was to Colonel Gaddafi, that state-sponsored terrorism is entirely unacceptable?

**Mr. Hurd:** My hon. Friend puts the gist of it very well. I agree with him.

**Mr. George Galloway** (Glasgow, Hillhead): Does the Secretary of State accept that he cut an uncharacteristically unconvincing figure when he made his opening remarks? The Secretary of State, who knows the middle east very well—and the British Foreign Office, which knows it even better—will know the consequences of 23 Tomahawk cruise missiles landing on an Arab capital. One of the collateral damages was the death in her sleep, with her husband and family, of Leila Attar, a very famous Iraqi painter, who was revered throughout the Arab world.

The Foreign Secretary knows that that raid has detonated a fracture among the Arab allies of this country and the United States, and set in train a further twist to the pattern of fanaticism, extremism and despair which is felt throughout the Arab area, and which imperils the very regimes to which he and the Foreign Office are so close.

Does the Foreign Secretary accept that the Arab world will see that raid, as his hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) said, not just as a dramatic comparison with the paralysis over the Bosnian Muslims, but as a tawdry, shabby attempt by a pathetic President of the United States of America to divert attention from his miserable failures at home?

**Mr. Hurd:** That is not what the historian will record when he looks at the American papers. I have had enough knowledge of this over the last few weeks, from discussions in Washington last month, to know the way in which this was tackled and the way in which the plans for this operation were postponed, put aside and withheld while an authentic and serious investigation took place. That is what the history books will show.

The hon. Gentleman's main point, which is understandable, is similar to the one made by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South. The hon. Gentleman rightly records the risks and criticisms from the area, but running alongside them, and eventually overcoming them, will be a feeling of relief that there is the possibility—nay, the certainty—of firm action against the evils of state terrorism, from which the countries about which he has spoken have been and may well be the chief sufferers.

**Mr. Julian Brazier** (Canterbury): Would my right hon. Friend take it from me, as someone who has lived and worked in the middle east, that the people I know are much more concerned about firm allies at this dangerous time than legal niceties? Can I also put it to my right hon. Friend that the next time that western interests are in serious danger in the middle east, the Americans may, for one reason or another, be less willing to intervene? It is essential that the countries of western Europe, which in practice means Britain and France, do retain a capacity to intervene ourselves, if necessary.

**Mr. Hurd:** In this case, the Americans acted; they asked for our support, not our participation. They were entitled to that support, and they were given it.

**Mr. Geoffrey Hoon** (Ashfield): The Foreign Secretary sought to justify the American action according to the concept of self-defence under international law. He will know that there is a clear distinction in international law between self-defence and reprisal. Is not self-defence essentially a defensive action against the threat of attack, while a reprisal is a punitive action to punish a past unlawful incident? Given those definitions, is it not clear that what we have witnessed is punishment, a reprisal, and not self-defence?

**Mr. Hurd:** Of course, the hon. Gentleman is right that that distinction exists, but he is obscuring or ignoring the fact that the threat remains. I told the House about our understanding of the state of international law when there has been an attempt at state terrorism; the threat quite clearly remains, and is a serious one.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. We are now going to move on to the statement.

# Police Reform (White Paper)

3.59 pm

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard:** With permission, I should like to make a statement about the future of the police service in England and Wales.

I am today publishing a White Paper which sets out the Government's proposals for police reform. Those proposals will lay the basis for the police service of the 21st century and deliver the promises that we have made under the citizens charter.

We are rightly proud of our police service and of our tradition of policing with the consent and support of the community, but the present administrative arrangements can handicap the police in getting on with their job. There is not a clear enough distinction between the respective roles of the chief constable and the police authority. There is too much paperwork, and the police are not given a clear enough set of priorities. The aim of the White Paper is to enable the police to focus far more than they can at present on waging war against crime.

There are four main elements to my proposals. First, we need to forge the strongest possible partnership between the police and the public. The concept of such a partnership is not new; it can be traced back to the roots of British policing. However, we now need to revitalise community support for the police.

The police cannot succeed on their own. We all have a responsibility as individuals to give our help and support. There are many ways for people to get involved, for example as members of neighbourhood watch schemes, or by joining their local police consultative group. Even more importantly, we need to help the police to prevent and detect crime by passing on information that may be of use to them.

Service as a special constable is the most active way in which ordinary people can help the police. Special constables provide a valuable link between the police and the community. I therefore propose to set a fresh target of 30,000 for the number of special constables—an increase of 10,000 on the present strength of 20,000.

Secondly, I intend to strengthen local police authorities. They will set their own budgets. They will be required to develop local policing plans and strategies for partnership between the public and the police. They will be expected to consult closely with the public in drawing them up. They will be required to tell local people how well their force has done, so that they can compare its performance with that of other forces. They will be clearly responsible for ensuring that policing meets both local and national priorities, and they will be held to account for the results.

I intend that local police authorities should have access to a wider pool of local experience and ability in carrying out those tasks. Police authorities will all be independent bodies made up of local people. Each police authority will have 16 members: eight local councillors, three local magistrates and five local people appointed by the Home Secretary. One person from among the overall membership will be appointed by the Home Secretary to chair the authority.

Thirdly, we shall make it easier for chief constables and local police commanders to deliver a service that provides what local people want, in accordance with citizens charter principles. We want to streamline management within police forces to devolve responsibility to the lowest possible level. The main responsibility for local policing should go to the local commanders who are in touch with their local communities.

Central Government grant to the police will in future be cash-limited. That will allow us to give detailed controls on police manpower and capital expenditure. We shall no longer determine centrally how many police officers there should be in each force. It will be for local police authorities and police forces to decide for themselves on the mix of police officers, civilian staff, equipment and other resources that they need. They will not need the permission of the Home Secretary if they want more police constables instead of senior managers.

Fourthly, we want to give the police a clear sense of priorities. I propose that, in future, the Home Secretary will publish a brief statement each year of the key objectives for the police service. That will provide a framework for assessing police performance. Those objectives will reflect the Government's belief that fighting crime and the protection of the public should be the top priorities in police work.

The police must be freed as far as possible from the burden of paperwork, so that they can concentrate on the key objectives of fighting crime and protecting the public. That is why we have commissioned a swift study by consultants to examine the paper administration of the criminal justice process from arrest by the police to disposal in court. I attach a great deal of importance to this exercise. I want to see a significant reduction in paper pushing. The public want the police to concentrate on fighting crime. So do the police, and so do I.

I now come to my proposals for London. My predecessor, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), said in a statement to the House on 23 March that he would consider how the new format for police authorities might be changed to take account of the special circumstances of London. Since my appointment, I have given this careful consideration.

The Metropolitan police have unique national responsibilities. I have therefore concluded that the national interest in the work of the Metropolitan police makes it right that the Home Secretary should remain the police authority for London. But in discharging these responsibilities, I shall no longer rely solely on advice from the Home Office.

To help me oversee the performance of the Metropolitan police, I will be forming a new body. I shall appoint to it people from a wide variety of backgrounds with the skills and experience to make a major contribution to the work of the police in the capital. It will, for example, help me draw up local London objectives for the police taking account of Londoners' views. I have no doubt that these new arrangements will be of great benefit to the people of London.

These are the main elements of a much broader programme of reform. The White Paper also sets out a range of other measures to provide the police service with the best modern management systems.

On Wednesday, I expect Sir Patrick Sheehy to announce the results of his inquiry into police pay, conditions of service and rank structure. We need arrangements which will ensure that we can recruit and retain high quality officers and which allow for the widely differing responsibilities of individual officers

There will be new procedures to ensure that poor performance by individual officers is dealt with fairly and effectively. There will also be new separate arrangements for dealing with misconduct by police officers. Existing procedures are often long drawn out. This is not satisfactory from anyone's point of view, not least the police. Speedier decisions should result from the new arrangement.

I hope to bring forward legislation as soon as possible to implement all the elements of the reform programme. I want to see them all in place by April 1995. The changes that do not require legislation will be introduced sooner, and many are already in hand.

This is a programme of reform to lay the foundations of policing well into the next century. The reforms will lead to a better service for the public and greater job satisfaction for police officers. With the support of all of us, the police service will be more effective in its ability to wage war against crime. I commend these proposals to the House.

**Mr. Tony Blair** (Sedgefield): As I did in March, may I welcome the part of the Home Secretary's proposals that deal with greater flexibility in financing? Will he confirm that this is just the removal of a central Government inhibition on local finances and could be done by a simple one-line amendment to the Police Act 1964, and that it is distinct from all the other proposals in relation to police authority?

As the Home Secretary announced in *The Daily Telegraph* on Saturday, he says that he will increase the number of special constables from 20,000 to 30,000. Will he confirm what appears in the White Paper, that there is already a plan to increase special constables to 25,000—that makes his announcement today slightly disingenuous—and that the figure that he has announced is simply a target, not a firm commitment? At present, even the target is nowhere near being met. Will he also confirm that he is keeping the freeze on new police officers, which is hampering many local police authorities that want more police officers back on the beat in local communities?

One startling omission from the Home Secretary's statement was any mention of the proposal for amalgamating police forces. We might therefore have supposed that he has dropped it. Will he confirm that the White Paper contains a whole chapter on amalgamations? I do not know why he did not mention that. Is it because that chapter makes it clear that the Home Office believes that the number of existing authorities is questionable and because it wants to reduce them and amalgamate them considerably?

The White Paper states on page 42:

"But the Government does not propose to launch an immediate programme of compulsory force amalgamations."

It then states on page 43:

"Where in future police force amalgamations become desirable, the Secretary of State will be able to prescribe new police force areas."

It sets out a new procedure for amalgamation that leaves out many of the aspects of public consultation.

Will the Home Secretary come clean and say what his intentions are for larger police forces? All the evidence shows that smaller forces have better cost-effectiveness, a higher percentage of operational officers and a better clear-up rate.

On London, was not there the clearest possible commitment in March to a proper police authority for London, as there is in other areas? Is it not the height of absurdity to justify reneging on that commitment on the ground of the unique work of the Metropolitan police, when the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has, during the last few days, given his full support to a proper police authority in the interests of better policing? Is not the truth that what has changed are not the views of the police, still less those of the people of London, but the response to the clamour of a few out-of-touch, unrepresentative Tory Back Benchers who want to deny Londoners a proper voice in how London is policed?

On the structure of new police authorities, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that that is opposed by virtually all chief constables and by Tory, as well as Labour, local councillors? He claims that it is necessary to remove local councillors from a large part of the police authority to depoliticise the police, but does he understand that the effect of his proposals will be not to depoliticise police authorities, but to transfer political control from local people who are locally elected to serve local communities to Government appointees who are accountable only to Whitehall?

There is a deep and growing concern in this country, across a range of issues, about the vast number of local services from health through to policing, involving billions of pounds of public money, where the chairmen and chairwomen of the controlling bodies now hold office at the Government's pleasure and the fact that their first loyality will not and cannot be to local people, but only to the Tory party in government.

Are not the Home Secretary's proposals, taken as a whole, the clearest sign of the utter bankruptcy of the Tory party as the party of law and order? Is that not shown by the fact that he should announce, as his first measure, not a new initiative on crime, drug abuse, violence, car crime, burglary or even crime prevention, but a misguided piece of prejudice against local policing? What this country wants is not a vendetta against local government, but a crusade against crime—and it is the Labour party that will wage it.

**Mr. Howard:** The first question was whether it would be possible to detach some of our elements of reform from others and enact them separately. Of course, the answer is in the affirmative. I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman should ask such a question.

On the issue of special constables, I had hoped that the hon. Gentleman would tell us whether he too was in favour of an increase in the target figure for special constables, and whether he thought that they had an important part to play. He remained silent. He was not prepared to say on that issue, as on any of the other issues that he raised, whether he was in favour of our proposals, against them or, as is so often the case, simply sitting on the fence.

The hon. Gentleman asked about amalgamation. As my predecessor announced, we are introducing more streamlined arrangements to replace the present cumbersome ones, where amalgamation is thought desirable. I shall consider any proposals for amalgamation on their merits.

On London, what it comes down to when one sits, listens to and penetrates the hon. Gentleman's bluster, is that he and the Labour party remain as determined as ever to put left-wing Lambeth Labour councillors, who are still not prepared to participate in the work of the local police consultative committee, on any local police authority for

*[Mr. Howard]*

London that Labour would set up. That is what lies behind the hon. Gentleman's bluster about London, and we will have no part of it.

The hon. Gentleman repeated the old litany of criticism about police authorities outside London. Is he seriously suggesting that only councillors and magistrates can make an effective contribution as members of a police authority, and that no one else has anything to contribute? That is the import of the hon. Gentleman's criticism.

We say that 50 per cent. of the membership of police authorities should continue to be councillors. Three members should be magistrates, and five should be appointed by the Home Secretary. Those five can bring to bear their wide experience of the problems that are faced by police authorities, and make an effective contribution to the authorities' work.

We heard from the hon. Gentleman what we hear all the time from the Opposition, day in day out, in the House. "Things," they say, "are dreadful as they are. Let us keep them exactly as they are."

**Mr. John Greenway** (Ryedale): I warmly welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's statement—particularly as it relates to special constables—and I remind him, the House and the country that it was Special Constable Goodman who was murdered by the IRA in North Yorkshire. That proved that special constables can be as brave and courageous in the policing of Britain as full-time police officers.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that local accountability and contact between the police and the community both exist through the consultative committees, and not through the police authorities which have a small number of members?

**Mr. Howard:** I am grateful for the support of my hon. Friend. He is, of course, right to pay tribute to the bravery of Special Constable Goodman and, indeed, of other special constables, who, together with the police, are prepared to risk their lives for the rest of the community, day in, day out.

I agree with my hon. Friend about the important contribution that local police consultative committees can make. I am sure that they will continue to make an effective contribution under the new arrangements that I have proposed.

**Mr. Robert Maclennan** (Caithness and Sutherland): If the Home Secretary is to assume sole responsibility for the appointment of the chairman and five members of the local police authority, for setting the key objectives of every police force and for capping their expenditure, is he not on the road to making the police answerable only to himself and not to the communities with which partnership is essential for effective policing?

Is it the Government's intention to follow the pattern that has been set in health, in which the Government have taken on doctors, dentists, nurses and even patients in attacking the problems? Are the Government prepared to pit themselves against the entire police service with the proposals?

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood our proposals. We are not proposing to cap the expenditure of local police authorities, as he will find out when he looks at the proposals in detail.

It is difficult to take the hon. Gentleman and his party seriously on law and order. The only debate on the subject at the most recent party assembly was a motion to legalise brothels. When the hon. Gentleman's party takes law and order seriously at its party conference, we will take seriously what he says in the House.

**Mr. David Martin** (Portsmouth, South): Will my right hon. Friend assure me that the reforms are designed to help the police concentrate on what the people of Portsmouth really care about—the prevention and detection of violence, burglary, vandalism and so on—rather than on those matters that are so beloved of the Labour party, and particularly their local councillors, which make police officers into virtual social workers?

**Mr. Howard:** I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that he wants. I hope that the people of Portsmouth will take full advantage of the opportunities that the proposals contained in the White Paper will make available to them. They will be able to have their say in setting the priorities of their local police force—and, indeed, will be able to play a full part in helping their local police force to do its job more effectively.

**Mr. James Molyneaux** (Lagan Valley): Is the Home Secretary aware of the perception that the pendulum has been pushed too far against the police and the courts, and that there would be widespread support for any measures that restored the pendulum to at least mid-distance? May we look upon his announcement today as a modest beginning?

**Mr. Howard:** I am certainly aware of the perception to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. The proposals are a first step on an important road and will, I hope, go a long way to removing that perception. We have a unique opportunity to tackle the problem to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, and I intend to do everything in my power to tackle it effectively.

**Mr. Michael Shersby** (Uxbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his announcement about strengthening the partnership between the police and the public will be warmly welcomed, as will his comments about eliminating unnecessary police paperwork—which was imposed by the House when it passed the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984?

Is my right hon. and learned Friend further aware that the police service will have substantial reservations about his decision that he and his successors as Home Secretary will in future appoint half the membership of the new-style police authorities? How will their members be chosen, and who will vet them?

As to the increase in the number of specials, will my right hon. and learned Friend consider making their work a form of voluntary national service—so that young men and women who become specials can take part in police work and help everyone to become more aware of their civic responsibilities?

On the question of the Commissioner's advisory body——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. A number of hon. Members are seeking to ask questions. I ask hon. Members to put one question each, so that we may get through as many as possible. Mr. Secretary Howard.

**Mr. Howard:** My hon. Friend speaks with particular authority on these matters, and I am grateful for his opening remarks. As to police authority membership, I shall appoint five of the 16 members—fewer than one third of the membership. I shall look for people who can bring their experience and expertise to bear effectively, to ensure that the new authorities give the relevant leadership required in their local areas. I note my hon. Friend's remarks about special constables, and I certainly view service as a special constable as service to the community in a very real sense.

**Mr. Neil Gerrard** (Walthamstow): The Home Secretary said that the Metropolitan police has unique responsibilities, but he could have considered the option of taking away those responsibilities. Some of us believe that they take up far too much of Metropolitan police resources. As for the Home Secretary's cheap crack about Lambeth as a reason for keeping local councillors out of London's police authority, has the right hon. and learned Gentleman forgotten that, under his own proposals, local authority representatives would not even be in the majority on the police authority?

**Mr. Howard:** The Metropolitan police's special responsibilities are indivisible from its other responsibilities, and it would not be at all sensible to hive them off in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests. For that reason, I reached the conclusion that I outlined in my statement. I well understand the Opposition's sensitivity towards the behaviour of Lambeth councillors, but they are elected as Labour councillors, and the Opposition cannot disown them.

**Mr. David Lidington** (Aylesbury): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that a key objective of the White Paper is to ensure that police in Aylesbury and throughout the Thames valley area spend less time filling in forms and more time out of the office and on the beat, detecting and catching criminals?

**Mr. Howard:** I hope that we shall be able to achieve the objective that my hon. Friend identifies. As I said, a study is being made of the amount of police paperwork. I hope that we shall be able to reduce it as a result of that study, and that the consequence will be more policemen on the streets and on patrol, fighting crime—as my hon. Friend and I would like.

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): The Secretary of State said that he thought of the special circumstances of London when he took office. Can he tell us how those special circumstances had changed when his right hon. and learned predecessor came to the Dispatch Box a few months ago and said that there would be a new police authority for London?

When the Secretary of State abuses councillors in London, will he remember that he is abusing not just Lambeth councillors but Tory, Labour and Liberal councillors? How will the advisory committee for London be appointed? Will the London Boroughs Association and the Association of London Authorities be able to make nominations? What does he intend to do about the City of London, which still has its own police authority in the middle of London?

**Mr. Howard:** I think that the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) identified the relevance of the special responsibilities of the Metropolitan police to the decision that I have made. As to the membership of the new authority, no one will be able to make nominations to it, but I shall be open to suggestions from any quarter. When the hon. Gentleman grows excited about these matters, it behoves us all to remember his words in 1986, when he described the police as

"all that is rotten in our society."

**Mr. Tony Banks:** At Wapping, as you know!

**Mr. Howard:** As long as I remain Home Secretary, the smaller the extent to which people who hold the views of the hon. Gentleman on the police have any influence on the police, the better.

**Mr. Bob Dunn** (Dartford): Can the Home Secretary make it plain that, when amalgamations of police forces take place, they will take place after consultation with local people? Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, whatever happens, nothing will be done that affects the integrity of the police force of the county of Kent?

**Mr. Howard:** My hon. Friend will understand that I have a particular interest in the well-being of the police force of the county of Kent, so I shall bear his remarks in that context very much in mind. I can assure my hon. Friend that no amalgamations will take place without consultation, but the process of consultation will be very much more effective under our proposals than it is at the moment.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): Can the Secretary of State tell us who the consultants are and how much they are being paid? Can he guarantee that none of the principals, or the consultancy, has given money to the Tory party? Can he also guarantee that, when he appoints these people to the local police authorities they will not consist simply of Tory stooges?

**Mr. Howard:** I can certainly give the hon. Gentleman the assurance for which he asks. We shall have as members of the police authorities those people who can make the most effective contribution to the work of those authorities. If it is indeed the view of the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues that the only people who can make such a contribution to the work of police authorities are councillors and magistrates, he ought to examine the position afresh.

**Mr. James Paice** (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Does my right hon. and learned Friend acknowledge and appreciate that most people are fed up with the namby-pamby approach to law and order, and will welcome his move towards giving the police much more control over their own resources so that they can target them where they are needed? As part of my right hon. and learned Friend's campaign against paperwork, will he talk to the Lord Chancellor about the Crown Prosecution Service? An immense amount of police time is wasted on cases that never go to court, which is frustrating for the police and tormenting for the victim.

**Mr. Howard:** My hon. Friend is right to identify that as a matter of concern. I share his concern. I hope that it will be possible, in the light of our response both to Sheehy and to the royal commission, which is expected to report next week, to address that concern in a very effective manner. I shall certainly bear my hon. Friend's point in mind.

**Mr. Chris Mullin** (Sunderland, South): In the interests of reducing the paperwork, what plans does the Home Secretary have for putting an end to a little racket that has been going on in more than half our police forces for many years, whereby police officers tour the nation's gaols to persuade convicted felons to own up to offences on the unsolved book, which they then count towards their clear-up record?

Is the Home Secretary aware that, in Liverpool, for example, this practice accounted, according to the last figures I have seen, for more than 40 per cent. of the clear-up rate? It discriminates, of course, against honest police forces that do not employ this practice.

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. Gentleman will discover when he reads the White Paper, as I know he will, that one of its proposals is to enable local people to make recommendations to their local police authority on the objectives of the force. That is the kind of factor that they can take into account in setting what they think the objectives should be, and the police authority will be in a position to set them.

**Mr. Winston Churchill** (Davyhulme): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that not only the police but the country will welcome enormously the fact that we have a Home Secretary who is prepared to put some elbow and some muscle behind the police, to give them the equipment that they want and now to give them the reinforcements that they so badly need? What he said today about strengthening the special constabulary will be very welcome, especially in my constituency. What special measures does he propose to ensure that they are brought fully up to establishment at the earliest opportunity?

**Mr. Howard:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I know that he has taken a close interest in the special constabulary, and in the important role that it plays. I am proposing a targeted campaign to maximise the recruitment of special constables.

I think that there is a mood abroad in the country that people want to play a part in helping the police. They are fed up with feeling frustrated and helpless and they all want to play a part in the war against crime. Becoming a special constable is one of the most active ways in which they can help. The targeted recruitment campaign will evoke a much more successful response than previous campaigns, and I shall certainly do all I can to ensure that it succeeds.

**Mr. Paul Flynn** (Newport, West): Will the witchfinder-general please withdraw his odious and offensive remark against my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), which he knew was highly misleading? Will he confirm that, in appointing members to police authorities, especially the London authority, he intends to pack them with what have become known as "TWEMs"—Tory white establishment males?

**Mr. Howard:** I was particularly careful to quote accurately from what the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said in 1986, and I note that neither he nor the hon. Gentleman suggested that I got the quotation wrong.

**Mr. Richard Tracey** (Surbiton): I very much welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement, especially the fact that he has come down against the policing of London being the same as the rest of the country. He has responded to the view of many Conservative Members that a police authority would be quite wrong for London. Indeed, that view is shared by local authorities. Will he confirm that, in making a change in London, there will be no need for fresh legislation?

**Mr. Howard:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for welcoming my decision on London. I think it likely that we can achieve the new arrangements for London without legislation.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): Why does not this poor man's Jack Benny have the guts to admit that what this Tory Government are all about it taking away powers from democratically elected local authorities? They have done it with education, in part; they have done it with housing, in part; and they are already privatising lots of services.

The idea of shifting police authorities to be run by Tory spivs is part and parcel of getting more power at the centre of Government and taking it away from elected local government. As for being more effective, if the police were not effective, how did they manage to arrest 9,000 miners in 1984? They trampled the streets of north Derbyshire——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Mr. Secretary Howard.

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. Gentleman does not seem too happy with the police under the present arrangements. I should have thought that he might be prepared to look rather more kindly on new and improved arrangements that will ensure that people other than councillors and magistrates can serve on police authorities and make use of their expertise and experience.

**Mr. Tim Devlin** (Stockton, South): When my right hon. and learned Friend comes to appoint members of the police authorities, especially in places such as Cleveland, will he make it his top priority to appoint people from the community who have a positive contribution to make and who will help to build a partnership against crime, not Labour county councillors who have been found fighting in the library or arrested or other offences?

**Mr. Howard:** I shall not appoint members of police authorities on the basis of their political affiliation to whichever party they happen to belong, but I do not envisage appointing those who have been apprehended in the type of activity to which my hon. Friend referred.

**Mr. Elfyn Llwyd** (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I welcome the important phrase that we need

"to revitalise community support for the police",

but may I warn the Home Secretary that it will not come about by wholesale amalgamation via the specious league table idea?

Reference has been made to a cash limit which, if it is unreasonable, will merely perpetuate under-establishment. For example, my force in north Wales is grossly

under-established, I think to the tune of 70 members. If the cash limit is unreasonable, there will be no co-operation and the whole thing will be a waste of time.

**Mr. Howard:** Let me assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no question of wholesale amalgamation. Let me also assure him that the result of the changes envisaged in the White Paper will give much more control to the chief constable and local commanders, which will enable them to make decisions about the appropriate number of officers to a much greater extent than at present. I hope that, when the hon. Gentleman has had time to study the White Paper, he will find that his anxieties are allayed by its proposals.

## Points of Order

4.34 pm

**Mr. David Sumberg** (Bury, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that during last week's debate on party political funding, the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), to whom I have given notice of this point of order, made a serious allegation to the effect that the President of the Board of Trade had been involved in trying to obtain foreign Governments' money to support the Conservative party. It has emerged over the weekend that the allegation was made at the behest of a newspaper simply for the purpose of ensuring that it was on the parliamentary record. Is not that a disgraceful abuse of our procedures and a clear breach of parliamentary privilege?

**Madam Speaker:** Very often, points of order are abuses of our procedures too, especially those that do not relate to the Chair and for which I have no responsibility.

I ended questions on the private notice question and on the statement reasonably early, because two minority parties have the right to be heard. I hope that hon. Members who wish to raise points of order will make absolutely certain that they are genuine.

**Mr. William O'Brien** (Normanton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you received a request or notice from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that he wishes to make a statement about something that he said in County Down last Saturday night? When questioned about bombings in Northern Ireland, he said that, thankfully, no one had been killed but in the opera they all were killed.

**Madam Speaker:** Had there been a statement, it would have been on the annunciator and we would all have known about it by this stage.

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

**Madam Speaker:** With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

### VAT (Supply of Services)

That the Value Added Tax (Supply of Services) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1507) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

### Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) (No. 7) Order 1993 (S.I.) 1993, No. 1606), be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

*Question agreed to.*

# Orders of the Day

## OPPOSITION DAY

[15TH ALLOTTED DAY]

## Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

**Madam Speaker:** I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.38 pm

**Mr. Simon Hughes** (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to move,

That this House believes that, as evidenced by the hardening of international opposition, there are increasingly strong economic, environmental and proliferation reasons why it would not be in the interests of the United Kingdom or the rest of the world for Her Majesty's Government to bring the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield (THORP) into operation; notes that the last public inquiry into THORP took place more than fifteen years ago, since when all relevant circumstances have substantially changed; and therefore urges Her Majesty's Government to investigate and make public all relevant aspects of THORP and alternative processes for dealing with spent fuel including dry storage, to ensure full disclosure of the terms of all contracts for the use of THORP and of the calculations supporting its economic justification, and to ensure that all information is available for public comment, independent appraisal and proper cross-examination before any decision is taken.

In *The Observer* at the weekend, there was a three-line NIB—news in brief—entitled "Small Tremor". It stated:

"An earth tremor measuring 3·0 on the Richter scale hit south Cumbria and north Lancashire."

Perhaps it was the Almighty reacting to the fact that, for the first time in 15 years, there is to be a debate in the House on the future of THORP.

The thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield is a very important project. It was commissioned, and approval for it was sought, by British Nuclear Fuels plc back in the late 1970s. BNFL saw THORP as a means of treating partially used nuclear fuel, from home or abroad, from advanced gas-cooled reactors or light-water reactors and, by that reprocessing operation, separate out uranium and plutonium and separately place the waste.

The inspector who held the inquiry in the late 1970s was the very eminent judge, Mr. Justice Parker. It was very clear to him that he was making a decision based on the evidence at the time. It was clear to him that the evidence and circumstances might change and the matter might have to be reconsidered. From the beginning, it was clear that everyone who participated in the debate regarded the decision as conditional.

There were two debates on the matter, one very shortly after the other. The first debate was on a motion for the Adjournment of the House and it was initiated by the Government. The then Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) commended THORP to the House. During that debate, and in the debate in May 1978, many hon. Members on both sides of the House made the conditionality of the project clear.

The second debate was initiated by the then Leader of the Liberal party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel). He initiated the debate by praying against the order that provided planning permission for the Windscale proposal. He said:

"In my view, the arguments on both sides are finely balanced and contain many uncertainties. It is because of that that I believe the burden of proof ought to lie quite firmly on the side of those who are pressing this order and who argue that we should now be taking this firm step into the plutonium economy."

My right hon. Friend ended his speech by saying:

"This House has a straight choice between looking at the longer-term results of a decision that we take tonight against the undoubted economic value of the Japanese and other contracts which we could acquire. I believe that the onus must lie heavily on the Government, who have brought forward the order, to persuade us that we are wrong. If they do not persuade us beyond a reasonable doubt, it will be right to vote in favour of the order being withdrawn."—[*Official Report*, 15 May 1978; Vol. 950, c. 111-18.]

In the event, the order was approved by the House, though not without many hon. Members, including the present Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, making it very clear that it might not be, and should not be, the final decision on the matter.

Today's debate has produced great benefits. We have flushed out where other people stand. We have flushed out the Government's position which—there is general agreement on this—had been secret for several months. The Government received advice, as they were bound to under statute, several months ago. BNFL, the operators, and the opponents wanted to hear a decision about that. However, until the end of last week, not a peep was heard.

Not only have we forced the Government's hand today—and therefore I hope that today's debate is welcome, no matter what view people take on the issue—we have also flushed out two other things. We have flushed out an announcement, which has been made in the past hour, about how the Government intend to respond to the two reports that have been given to them. We have also flushed out the advice provided by the body that advises on radioactive material.

In addition, we have flushed out the Labour party's position. We have forced Labour's hand and it has made a decision. Labour is going to abstain, just as it did in respect of Maastricht——

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): Not all of us.

**Mr. Hughes:** Well, perhaps not all Labour Members. However, the official Labour position is that it is not for THORP and it is not against it. It is not for a public inquiry and it is not against one.

I challenge Labour Members to tell us what words in the motion they disagree with and why. I challenge them to tell us how, after all this time for deliberation, they cannot either endorse the project which they started in the 1970s or oppose it because circumstances have changed. As with Maastricht and income tax rises or public expenditure cuts, the Labour party is neither for them or against them. Yet again, the Labour party is sitting on the fence.

**Dr. Michael Clark** (Rochford): The hon. Gentleman is talking about flushing out the views and opinions of a variety of people, particularly hon. Members. Does he accept that the work force at Sellafield are one of the best-trained work forces in the country? Is he aware that he could have flushed out the view of that work force if he had been on College green at lunchtime when the work

force made their views known? They want THORP to continue. They believe that it is safe. It is their work and they want it to be allowed to be commissioned.

**Mr. Hughes:** Of course they do, and understandably so. My hon Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) said last week that the workers at Rosyth wanted their work to continue, and, as the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) will be aware, many miners wanted their work to continue last October and this March. However, at the end of the day, the Government and the Conservative party could not endorse that.

Of course the work force argued their case, and the hon. Member for Rochford has raised very proper concerns about that work force and their future in Cumbria which has significant unemployment, if not the highest in the country. I respect the view of the work force. I have spoken to some of the shop stewards and I hope to meet them again when I visit Sellafield in about 10 days' time. I have undertaken to meet the shop stewards and the work force as well as the management.

The hon. Member for Rochford is well versed in these matters and his point alludes also to the fact that there is a quite reasonable debate about the issue and an understandable and honest entitlement to a difference of view. Complex issues such as the general debate about nuclear power and about nuclear weapons, do not necessarily drive to a unanimous conclusion along party lines. People in the Conservative party hold different views about the desirability of THORP and about a public inquiry, as they do in the Labour party and in my party.

Hon Members such as the hon. Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) have proper constituency views and we would expect them to speak on the matter. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who represents Dounreay, has made no secret of his views over the years. There is an honest disagreement of views.

Since my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale spoke in the late 1970s, it has been my party's policy to oppose THORP, because we were not persuaded about it, and to argue that the only basis for supporting reprocessing is when it is necessary on safety grounds. That was the position on which we went into the last general election and to which we are committed as a party.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): I do not only take a constituency view: I am a believer in nuclear power.

**Mr. Hughes:** I may have been unfair to the hon. Gentleman. I tried to make the point that there is a difference in respect of the fundamental issues and that hon. Members are quite properly entitled to take a constituency view. The hon. Member for Workington has argued his views. I hope that he welcomes the debate, as he and I were in a meeting recently when we were asked to try to facilitate such a debate and I have now provided that opportunity.

My colleagues and I do not intend—and it would be improper—for this to be a debate about the future of nuclear energy in Britain. That is a huge and wide subject. We may complain about the fact that we have not had such a debate. We do complain about the fact that the way in which we debate energy policy in this place is nothing short of mad and we complain that the logical sequence of events should not have been what we have seen, are seeing and are about to see: a debate on coal in the late autumn of 1992 and the spring of 1993; a debate about THORP today; a debate about the national Audit Office view on the economics of the nuclear industry before the Public Accounts Committee on Wednesday; a possible announcement about the nuclear review originally heralded to be made by the Minister for Energy at a meeting tomorrow night, although he will no doubt tell us that whether that will be the case, but certainly with a timetable envisaged to be announced before we break for the summer recess——

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** It might come today.

**Mr. Hughes:** It might even come today.

**The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar)** *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Hughes:** The Minister says no, so it will not. And there will be a debate about renewables some time later.

The only point that I want to make about the energy debate is that it is a mad system which does not look at Britain's strategic energy needs first and then decide what the implication is for each of the component parts—for example, whether we should have a nuclear industry, how much coal we should have, whether we should have opencast coal, and so on. *[Interruption.]* As my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland says, having previously spoken on the subject while holding this brief for our party, it does not help when we have a Government who do not believe in an energy strategy.

Workers at Sellafield, like us and, indeed, the management at Sellafield, wish that the Government had had a clearer strategy on these matters for a long time. There is consensus that the way the Government are acting is no way to run a country, and, with or without the President of the Board of Trade present—we wish him a speedy recovery—it is certainly no way to decide an energy policy.

There is one obvious linked point. What happens at THORP and the contracts at THORP are relevant to the economic viability of nuclear power and nuclear energy. A very timely article in today's issue of *The Guardian* made that point very clear. I do no more than allude to part of that article, but it makes it very clear that there is a battle royal going on between BNFL on the one hand and Nuclear Electric and Scottish Nuclear on the other about who underwrites the risk. Unless we make that clear, it could make all the difference to the viability of the nuclear energy industry. Indeed, there is a strong argument from the nuclear energy industry to take the THORP equation —the reprocessing issue—out altogether. Some believe that they would be better served if that were not part of the equation.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Some of us were the guests of Robin Jeffrey and James Hann of Scottish Nuclear. We asked them, and they were quite clear that there was no animosity of any kind whatever along the lines that the hon. Gentleman suggests. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Hughes:** As my hon. Friends say, they would say that, wouldn't they? The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is eminent in these matters. It is clearly a matter of controversy where the liability lies. One of the

*[Mr. Hughes]*

things that are apparent from the contracts as they were originally drafted and as they have been in the public domain—one criticism is that they are not generally in the public domain—is that it is not clear exactly where liability lies. The hon. Member for Linlithgow is entitled to challenge that point, and, if he is correct, I hope that the Government will tell us whether that matter has been resolved or whether there is still a dispute. The Minister is in a better position than anybody else to tell us that.

**Mr. Dalyell:** I am sorry to interrupt once again. That was said in the presence of the former Chairman of the Energy Select Committee, the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark). It was only 10 days ago. Frankly, the hon. Gentleman has to accept it.

**Mr. Hughes:** I was making the point, with which the hon. Gentleman will agree, that the finances of the nuclear industry will be different if we include or exclude the prospective financial benefit to Britain of the THORP process. That is an uncontroversial point and I hope that the hon. Member for Linlithgow will accept it.

**Mr. Richard Page** (Hertfordshire, South-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Hughes:** I will give way one more time and then I want to make the substantive part of my speech.

**Mr. Page:** At the time of the Parker inquiry, I had the privilege to represent Workington, and I am also a member of the Public Accounts Committee. Leaving to one side the aspect that it could cost 2,000 jobs and the cost of £2 billion, I hope that, when the hon. Gentleman does his economic calculations, he will take into account the compensation that this country might have to pay if we do not go ahead with the THORP process: that has been estimated at £5 billion. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Hughes:** That would be a very good point if, as the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) says, we had seen the contracts. If the contracts were in the public domain, as the Government committed themselves to doing at Rio in respect of environmental information, we could see the compensation clause. With respect, as someone whose job used to be commercial contracts before I came to this place, I know that what they do and do not include is highly relevant, and they can make a difference of billions of pounds; but they are not in the public domain and until they are the figures will be speculative. Also, it is not acceptable for Parliament to accept the view only of BNFL, which clearly has a vested interest, as the hon. Gentleman will accept.

**Mr. Page:** I made the point that I am a member of the Public Accounts Committee. The report came forward with the endorsement of the National Audit Office. Is the hon. Gentleman calling into account the National Audit Office's integrity on this matter?

**Mr. Hughes:** The National Audit Office, as the hon. Gentleman knows, has just produced a report which is to go to the Public Accounts Committee on Wednesday. It makes it clear that the costs of decommissioning are uncertain, to put it neutrally, and it certainly does not endorse the figures that have been put forward by BNFL and others. In answer to the point about the Committee's earlier report, what is not clear—the NAO did not say that it was clear—is what the automatic compensation entitlement would be.

I will tell the hon. Gentleman why it is not clear. First, it is not clear in what form the waste might be able to be sent back within the contract. There is a debate about substitution, and I shall refer to the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee report in a minute. Secondly, it is also not clear whether the contract would be fulfilled if BNFL—Britain—held on to the waste and put it into dry storage as opposed to reprocessing it.

There are many ways in which the contract might be able to be honoured without any compensation having to be paid. As the former hon. Member for the relevant seat, the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) might like to persuade the chairman of BNFL to give us a copy of the contract. We could all then take legal advice and we would all be the wiser. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will use his good offices——

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Hughes:** No.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** For the last time; it is very important.

**Mr. Hughes:** No. I have given way once.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The hon. Gentleman knows what is coming.

**Mr. Hughes:** No, I do not know what is coming. I have given way once. I anticipate that the hon. Gentleman will be called if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Simon Burns** (Chelmsford): The hon. Gentleman is frit.

**Mr. Hughes:** I am certainly not frit. We put the subject on the agenda, for heaven's sake.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Why does the hon. Gentleman not give way?

**Mr. Hughes:** Because I have even better points to make, and I am about to make them.

In our motion, we make one general point and three specific points, and we call for one specific conclusion. We make the general point that there is growing international opposition to the reprocessing of spent fuel in a way that increases the amount of uranium and plutonium in the world. My hon. and learned Friend for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) will address that matter, too. It is very clear that, over 10 years, the process will add about 60 extra tonnes to the global plutonium surplus of which there is already plenty.

I cite nothing less than the most radical and non-Conservative document, *The Economist*, and an article written only earlier this month. It is clear that the risk of proliferation, particularly in the former Soviet states, is now considerable and that article argues strongly against it. Not only the Administration in the United States but two senior members of Congress are now putting into Congress Bills a provision to make sure that there is a control that could, at the time of the renewal of the non-proliferation treaty in 1995, actually make the

THORP process illegal. I ask the Minister to address that matter. When the Euratom treaty is renegotiated, the process itself may offend against international law.

There is that growing international opposition, but there is growing international opposition much nearer home. Earlier this month, in Berlin, the member states of the Paris commission on prevention of marine pollution from land based sources met to consider what to do about the Sellafield plant. By a majority of nine to two, including four countries that have customers of BNFL within their borders, they voted, including other matters, to request

"information on the need for spent fuel reprocessing . . ."

a full environmental impact assessment;

"the demonstration that the . . . discharges are based upon the use of the Best Available Techniques"

and that they be consulted before THORP goes ahead. Only in the past fortnight, a motion was tabled in the European Parliament asking for a public inquiry.

There is increasing evidence in Japan—one of the big customers—that there is growing public discontent. That is not answered by a newspaper advertisement this week, which appeared to answer the protest from the Japanese last week. We discover that the advertisment was placed not only by the Japanese utilities but, apparently, in association with BNFL. That is hardly an impartial response. Finally, it is only one year ago this month that the Prime Minister signed us up to principles in Rio, especially article 10 of the Rio declaration which stated that we were committed to full environmental information.

There is growing international concern, and I break it into three areas—I can only be brief, because the debate obviously must allow hon. Members fully to participate. Those three areas are economic, environmental and proliferation. I have alluded to proliferation and I do not intend to elaborate on that now. It is a fairly obvious point that if a process produces uranium and plutonium, and that plutonium is available to be used, even though there may be legal constraints for nuclear weapons, one has increased the danger of nuclear escalation in the world.

I shall deal with the economic point. The figures are difficult to work out because we have not seen the contracts and the market for the product is not nearly as buoyant as it was in 1978. They are also difficult to work out, because, although there may be contracts for the next 10 years, THORP is meant to have a life of about 25 years, and considerable extra costs of decommissioning are added once one starts to operate the plant.

A lot of money has been spent on building the plant and getting it ready for operation, but there is a history of white elephants in Britain and other countries. The argument is not how much we have spent and whether we can afford not to go on, but whether it is the wonderful earner economically for Britain, that BNFL has told us that it will be. Unless the figures are in the public domain and can be examined, and people can cross-examine on them, the economic case cannot be clearly made out.

An important part of the economic case relates to jobs. It is not clear how many jobs at Sellafield might be at risk. I accept that it is in the order of between 1,500 and 2,500. Any job lost is a job that one certainly should try to preserve. I tell the people of Cumbria directly that those of us who advance this argument do not do so with no care whether people should have work—I say that as the Member representing a constituency with double or more the unemployment level of either Workington or Copeland —but we ask whether there is an acceptable alternative.

Well validated figures suggest that, if we take the dry storage option, which is much less environmentally damaging, we could have many more jobs on that site than we would have through the reprocessing option. We could have many more jobs and many less dangerous ones. That is another question which needs to be examined, because some people have been taken on ready for the site to be up and running and will be laid off in any event as they will probably not be able to be kept in construction or operating jobs in the interim period if there is further delay, as the Government announced today that there will be.

More importantly, one must distinguish between the number of people whose jobs will be operating such a plant and the prospective thousands of jobs that there would be over a period of up to 10 years in constructing a dry storage facility to honour our international obligations or national contracts. In all probability, according to much of the evidence, such a facility would give much more work than is currently envisaged for West Cumbria or Sellafield in particular.

**Mr. Keith Mans** (Wyre): The hon. Gentleman has asked for a lot of evidence relating to contracts and other matters. Can he outline his evidence that suggests that a dry store facility would employ more people than the reprocessing plant? On top of that, can he tell us what one does when one has stored the specific materials for some time? Is he suggesting that the materials should be stored for ever?

**Mr. Hughes:** I shall deal with the first question first. Many people have done studies of the alternative job implications for a dry storage facility. I have taken advice from at least three sources about what the alternatives would be. I shall give the hon. Gentleman the best answer that I can now, and I will be happy to pursue the matter with him later.

In option 1, commissioning THORP—the proposal supported by the Government—BNFL estimates that the number of jobs in the THORP division would be about 850, probably plus a few. Jobs related to the THORP operation but in the Magnox division would probably be in the order of 500. That is a total of 1,350. Abandoning THORP and building a dry storage facility, and management of it, would provide about 520 jobs plus about 500 support jobs and thousands of construction jobs in the foreseeable five years or more.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** They are juggling around with my constituents—throwing them in the air.

**Mr. Hughes:** We are absolutely not throwing the hon. Gentleman's constituents in the air—we are trying to give them much more long-term employment than they might get from a process that may have no takers at all in 10 years' time. *[Interruption.]* I quoted the former Chancellor of the Exchequer. We believe in long-term economic solutions, not short-term ones, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman's constituents agree.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Hughes:** No, I will not.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Name your sources.

**Mr. Hughes:** I will finish my point, then answer the question. The third point is the environmental one. That point is made best by, first, a Minister writing in the last month and, secondly, a report that has come out only today.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Who are your sources?

**Mr. Hughes:** The hon. Gentleman can bellow all he likes. I told him that I will answer his question but finish my point first. This is my speech for a change. We get many more chances to make speeches on subjects of our choosing than he does because of the unfairness of the system. However, that is an argument for elsewhere.

On 25 May, Baroness Cumberlege, an Under-Secretary of State for Health, endorsed by letter—I have a copy here—the comments of the committee that gives advice to the Government on the medical aspects of radiation in the environment. That committee considered the draft authorisations for discharges from Sellafield and said that it had not had adequate time to consider the discharges and was not satisfied that they were safe. The Minister explicitly set out the position almost exactly a month ago. She said:

"I attach a copy of the text of COMARE's response to the authorising Departments on this matter. The Department of Health, which was also invited to comment on the proposals, has endorsed COMARE's comments."

Only today, we have flushed out—this is another achievement of my hon. Friends and myself—the advice—*[Laughter]*—Conservative Members should not laugh. It is true.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** It is true.

**Mr. Hughes:** I am grateful for that support from the hon. Gentleman. The advice of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee to the Government was in my tray at 3.15 pm today. It says:

"RWMAC had originally been requested to provide advice to the Secretary of State by July 1992 but was unable to meet this deadline because insufficient information was provided by BNFL . . . The advice submitted by RWMAC to the Secretary of State is not as comprehensive as RWMAC would have wished because information that was requested from BNFL is still outstanding."

Waste equivalence is an important point to do with substitution and the question whether it can be converted and compacted so that only the high level is sent back and the intermediate or low level is retained, or vice versa.

"The radiological basis chosen by BNFL for calculating waste equivalencies has not yet been agreed by BNFL and its overseas customers."

The RWMAC advised that until there is agreement between BNFL and its overseas customers on the technical basis of substitution, the BNFL substitution exercise should not be approved. That recommendation was made not 20 or 10 years ago, but today, 15 years after the plant was approved.

The RWMAC made two other points:

"The substitution scenario proposed by BNFL depends on the Nirex repository being available to accommodate the foreign intermediate-level waste and low-level waste resulting from the reprocessing by 2005 and is based on a best case return time of the ground water from the repository to the surface environment".

Nirex has said that the repository will not be commissioned before the year 2007 at the earliest and the RWMAC has said that waste is unlikely to be disposed of before 2010, if the repository is sited in Sellafield.

"As the site will not be available in 2005, it will be necessary to evaluate the implications for both the UK site currently used for the disposal of low-level waste"——

next door at Drigg——

"and for various interim ILW stores."

The RWMAC advised the Secretary of State that until the studies are complete, it was not in a position to be able to comment fully on the radiological and environmental impact for the United Kingdom of the introduction of substitution.

There is some final advice to BNFL that is relevant to the Government. The RWMAC also advises that BNFL should

"examine to case for the return of intermediate-level waste to determine whether the return of foreign waste in this form, rather than the return of equivalent quantities of vitrified high-level waste is viable."

The RWMAC suggests that BNFL should

"document its case demonstrating that retention of foreign intermediate-level waste resulting from reprocessing will not cause health or safety concerns to the UK population. . . . There should be a trial return of high-level waste."

The RWMAC advice sets out a number of issues which the committee believes needs to be addressed by BNFL and the Government before the substitution of high-level waste by intermediate and low-level waste should be approved. The RWMAC

"looks forward to receiving this additional information and at that time would hope to be in a position where it could advise more fully on the BNFL proposals for substitution".

That is not scaremongering from political parties, but information from the Government's official advisers on the medical effects of radiation, endorsed by Health Ministers, and information from the relevant advisory committee which says that it does not have the facts.

Not long ago, the controversial proposal for Torness in Scotland was the subject of a public inquiry. The inspector made it clear in his report that dry storage was not only a possible option and a viable option, but a reasonable alternative option. My friends in Scotland, who have campaigned for many years against the Torness plant, would agree that as it now appears that Government policy—on the advice of inspectors—is not universally and unilaterally in favour of reprocessing, but considers that there is an alternative, the entire logic of THORP is questionable.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Is the hon. Gentleman aware, when he quotes the numbers of jobs that would be available in dry storage, that, at the recent public inquiry into the proposed dry storage at Torness, Scottish Nuclear Ltd. said that the store would require only 10 to 15 staff during loading and that thereafter, staff requirements would reduce to those required for occasional monitoring and maintenance? In that light, how can the hon. Gentleman talk of 1,000 jobs in dry storage?

**Mr. Hughes:** That would be a fair—*[Interruption.]* That would be a fair and relevant comparison if the size of the two plants were equivalent.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Is the hon. Gentleman saying that it is 100 times as large?

**Mr. Hughes:** No. They are not equivalent. We know what the contracts currently placed for THORP are, and we know the contracting party and the amount of work involved. The hon. Gentleman quotes figures, which I

quoted, for the far smaller element in the debate—maintenance of the dry storage operation—but has left out the amount of people needed for the construction.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Sub-contractors.

**Mr. Hughes:** Yes, but many of the jobs that have been created in Sellafield have been sub-contractors' jobs, for building.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** They come and go.

**Mr. Hughes:** Of course, but by and large, they are local employees.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** We are talking about long-term jobs at THORP.

**Mr. Hughes:** We are talking about some long-term jobs. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that such facts need to be the subject of a public debate. That is why the Liberal Democrats are specifically proposing a public inquiry. It is no good the Minister laughing, because, by law, he may be obliged to hold one. He may not have been in the House—he is a contemporary of mine and I was not present either—in 1960, when the Radioactive Substances Act was passed. He may not have followed the amendment process to that Act in the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Under sections 11 and 12 of the 1960 Act, it seems that there is a strong case that, once the reports have been given to his two right hon. Friends who are the determining authority—the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for the Environment, for whom the inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution acts—there is an obligation to consult on that report.

Surprise, surprise, today at last, the Government have responded to that request. In a written answer from the Secretary of State for the Environment to the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson)—it may be a planted question—[HON. MEMBERS: "He is not here."] The hon. Gentleman is not here. The question was tabled a couple of days ago, and only after it was announced that we were having today's debate. The Secretary of State for the Environment said that he had received the report and that he and his colleague had considered it. He makes an earth-shattering proposal:

"My right hon. Friend and I propose that there should be a further round of consultation".

I pause to tell the workers in Cumbria that the Liberal Democrats are not saying that there should be further delay, but that the Government are saying that there should be a further round of consultation. In that consultation, the questions raised by the response to the HMIP draft authorisations should be considered. I might add that 108 local authorities, as respondents, are opposed to the operation of the plant.

The Secretary of State's officials are writing to BNFL seeking further information. The written answer continues:

"I shall make their reply available for public comment, together with other material. My right hon. Friend and I do not propose to take final decisions on the exercise of our functions under the Act until after this further consultation."

There we have it: the stories in the press were true. The Government were not going to make a decision. The arguments put to them, from advice given by leading counsel to Greenpeace among others, about the legal case, have resulted in the Government's agreeing that they have to have further consultation. They propose simply to write to BNFL, to seek information, and to make their reply available for public comment, together with unspecified other material. How on earth can there be an objective assessment of jobs, of the economics issue and the environmental issue, unless the people and their evidence are put in the public domain and cross-examined?

We do not want a long delay. There need not be one. Mr. Justice Parker's inquiry took 100 days. An inquiry could be held and a decision could be made before the end of the year, providing that the Government and the system move quickly. There would then be an up-to-date appraisal of the facts this year, as was suggested might be necessary in 1978.

One does not embark on a process that has hidden additional costs of decommissioning before the cost of doing that is known. One should evaluate the radiological impact and wait for the judgment of the case where families have brought an action against BNFL alleging that leukaemia results from discharges from Sellafield. I am reliably told that the judgment is likely by the autumn. One can get the facts. My hon. Friends and I put a simple proposition to the House. We want the facts, and we propose the most independent way in which to get them.

I shall answer the question that I was asked, and I shall then make the case for the Government to reconsider. I answer now the hon. Member for Linlithgow to whom I can show the figures, and I am happy to go through them with him. The best advice that I was given on the calculations for the job prospects was by Friends of the Earth, which did the first analysis, and by Media Natura, which did the second analysis. I also received advice from the third analysis, which was done on the basis of local research into job prospects in Cumbria. I can go through the documents with the hon. Member for Linlithgow. I have them here and they are available in the House this afternoon.

My hon. Friends and I believe that what the Government have not done by their answer is preclude the option of a public inquiry. The Government have not ruled out a public inquiry. It is a bit like the public expenditure review, in which nothing is ruled in and nothing is ruled out. There is still a chance for the Government to take that course. If they do not, they risk protracting the commissioning of THORP or the decision not to commission it even longer.

The Government know as well as I do that there is strong legal advice that, on the basis of planning guidance, of our obligations under the Rio convention, and, more explicitly, of the requirement for an environmental impact assessment for this project under the directive passed by the European Community in 1985, which is now law here, and, above all, of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990, they have an obligation to ensure that the facts are put into the public domain. If the Government do not go down that road now, they will prejudice the very jobs that they seek to protect, they will risk the project that they support and, worse, they will allow Britain to go ahead with the development of a project which the rest of the world increasingly regards as undesirable and uneconomic.

We argue for jobs and sanity. We hope that the Government do not press their amendment. If they do, we hope that that is not their final word, because we believe that they are wrong.

5.21 pm

**The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar):** I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'congratulates the management and workforce of British Nuclear Fuels plc on the completion of its high technology thermal oxide reprocessing plant (THORP) for the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel at Sellafield; welcomes the 3,000 jobs, mainly in the North West, which the plant supports; recognises that around 90 per cent. of its £1,850 million capital cost was spent with British industry; notes that the plant is needed to fulfil the customers' requirements for reprocessing, represented by contracts already won worth £9 billion; recalls that it is a major example of international inward investment which the chairmen of the ten Japanese nuclear power generators strongly endorsed last week; expresses confidence in the non-proliferation arrangements that underlie the plant's work for all the overseas customers; and, subject to receipt by BNFL of such consents as are required by law, supports the commissioning of the plant at the earliest practicable date.'.

The choice of debate today by the Liberal Democrat party is interesting. It can choose four half-days of debate this Session. Not for the Liberal Democrats a debate on the issues about which they claim to care really passionately. There is no debate about proportional representation. There is no debate about local income tax. There is no debate about the economy, nationally or locally. There is none of that.

What do they choose to debate? They choose to table a motion which, if passed, would lead directly to the loss of 3,000 jobs, net of dry storage considerations. If passed, the motion would lead to the closure of a high-technology plant. If passed, it would lead directly to a loss of confidence by overseas investors and by our major trading partners. That says a lot about the priorities of the Liberal Democrats.

Despite the length of the speech of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), I turn briefly to the general tone of his remarks. What did he do? He took a series of comments out of context. He deliberately misconstrued Government reports and responses. He relied extensively—as, to be fair, he admitted—on the briefing of such eminently objective organisations as Friends of the Earth. It was a pretty shoddy performance even by the standards of his own party.

**Mr. Paul Flynn** (Newport, West): Does the Minister agree that the most shoddy part of this afternoon's event was his own laughter at the suggestion of a public inquiry? Why does he find the idea of a public inquiry on this most important of issues funny?

**Mr. Eggar:** It is instructive that the hon. Gentleman is the first to jump to the defence of the Liberal Democrats. Perhaps he should join the Liberal Democrats. The hon. Gentleman should reflect on this point. Is it not typical of the Liberal Democrats that they go at length into the difficulties of the issues? They put forward an analysis, bogus though it may be, and then come back with the magic solution—a public inquiry.

What do they want? Do they want government by public inquiry? That may make sense to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, but he knows perfectly well that it does not make sense to Liberal Democrat Front-Bench Members—and, to the credit of the Labour party, it does not make sense to the Labour party either. What the Labour party and the Conservative party want are firm decisions in accordance with the legal constraints and the legal framework within which we operate.

I welcome the chance to set the record straight today. In the past few months, a great deal has been said about THORP by unelected pressure groups and by people speaking at the prompting of such groups. My right hon. and hon. Friends may like to know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has today answered a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson). In that answer he outlines the steps that he and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are taking on BNFL's request for revised discharge authorisations for the Sellafield site. As the House knows, there are copies of the relevant answer in the Vote Office.

It is important that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey listens to this, because he went some way to misconstrue the answer, which explains that my right hon. Friends intend to undertake further consultation before—I stress the word "before"—taking final decisions on the authorisations. The answer states:

"the inspectorates have concluded that no points of substance have been raised that should cause them to reconsider the terms of the draft authorisations, save for some minor amendments/corrections. In their judgment, the provisions of the draft authorisations would effectively protect human health, the safety of the food chain, and the environment generally."

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Eggar:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will repeat that point. I wish that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey had also referred to it in his remarks.

As the House would expect, in addressing the matter of the Sellafield discharge authorisations and their relevance to THORP, the Government are careful to ensure that their general functions in relation to the nuclear industry are properly distinguished from the specific statutory responsibilities of my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

What Conservative Members say today does not constrain the statutory discretion of my right hon. Friends. They have to make their own decisions, although I am sure that they will take note of today's proceedings. It would be wrong to seek to constrain or to prejudge them in the exercise of their functions. Certainly nothing that I say should be construed as seeking to do so.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** As this is an important issue, neither of us should quote selectively. I add to the quotation given by the Minister by quoting the third short paragraph. The answer says:

"However, a substantial number of the responses raised questions as to the justification for the operation of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant (THORP), and therefore whether that part of the site's total discharges arising from this plant should be allowed. Other respondents expressed their support for THORP. These questions were not dealt with by the inspectorate because of the wider issues raised."

That is one of the considerations. Logically, because it is also part of the answer which has led to the conclusion, there must be a further round of consultation.

**Mr. Eggar:** Yes, of course those issues are relevant, and my right hon. Friends have to take into account the legal background against which they operate. They have made

clear what the next steps will be. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I do not propose to take final decisions on the exercise of our functions under Radioactive Substances Act 1960 until after this further consultation. There is no disagreement.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I should like to go back to the paragraph which says:

"However, a substantial number of the responses raised questions as to the justification of the operation of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant."

Why were these matters not dealt with six or nine months ago? During the course of the consultations, such representations were received as early as January. Ministers knew in August or September that arguments about that aspect of the matter were being raised. Has there been a cock-up, preventing these matters from being dealt with? Did Ministers fail to give the right remit? Is that the cause of the delay?

**Mr. Eggar:** Bearing in mind the legal position of my right hon. Friends, I have to be careful in this area. Because of the judicial implications, the precise decision of my right hon. Friends is a matter that the hon. Gentleman should refer to them.

**Mr. Dalyell:** As one who is dismayed that there is not to be an announcement that THORP should go ahead straight away, without further consultation—as I believe it should—may I put two questions to the Minister? I am told by my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that the delay is costing £2 million per week. Do the Government's own figures confirm that? Secondly, is it true that compensation of up to £5,000 million could be claimed? That figure has been given in the debate already. Is it the Government's figure?

**Mr. Eggar:** The estimate of £2 million per week was provided, I believe, by British Nuclear Fuels plc. I think that I can confirm that that is the company's figure.

**Mr. Flynn:** What is the true figure?

**Mr. Eggar:** There is no point in the hon. Gentleman's yelling, from a sedentary position, "What is the true figure?" The figure was provided by BNFL.

With regard to the £5,000 million to which the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) referred, I understand that in certain scenarios, under the terms of the contract, compensation of that order could be due to BNFL's customers if THORP were cancelled and were never to go into operation. The Liberal party ought to stop and think about the consequences of urging such action.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** Let us see the contracts.

**Mr. Eggar:** That remark from the hon. Gentleman is a typical and classical cop-out, as he knows. He knows perfectly well that the summary of those contracts was made available at the inquiry a number of years ago.

**Mr. Hughes:** I have copies.

**Mr. Eggar:** If the hon. Gentleman has copies, I do not know why he doubts the figures.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** One answer would be to let us see the contracts. However, there is another way. The Comptroller and Auditor General is an officer of Parliament. If he were prepared to look at the contracts and to assure us that his interpretation of them is the same as that of BNFL, would the Minister be prepared to accept his word?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. Several hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), are hoping to catch my eye during this debate. If these long interventions continue, the hon. Gentleman may not be successful.

**Mr. Eggar:** I am rather enjoying being a spectator during my own speech.

There is today, I suspect, a sense of deja vu as we talk about THORP. In 1978 the two major parties in the House of Commons supported the construction of THORP, while the Liberals opposed it. Now, 14 years later, the plant has been built and is ready to operate, advance orders amounting to £9 billion have been placed and staff have been recruited and trained. Despite all this—despite the clear evidence of the success of the project—the Liberal party calls for a public inquiry.

Let me qualify what I have just said about the Liberal party's call for a public inquiry. There is a glaring omission from the list of names of those who have signed this motion. Where is the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan)? He is not even here to listen to the debate. Why is that? The hon. Gentleman understands the motion's implications for his constituents and for the nuclear industry. I believe—though, as he is a very discreet individual, I cannot know for sure—that he would rather absent himself from the debate than be forced to disassociate himself from the case being made by his hon. Friends.

In a short debate last December the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) supported the plant, subject to the views of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on the disharge authorisations. I am happy to agree with that approach. I agree also with the views of the director-general of the Confederation of British Industry who, when he visited the plant in May, said:

"The case for commissioning is an extremely strong one, and I have been very impressed with what I have seen and heard today."

I agree, too, with the author of a letter to the *Financial Times* which described BNFL and THORP as a flagship for Britain. The Liberal Democrats might do rather better if they listened rather more to that author—Sir Ian Wrigglesworth. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) raises his eyes to heaven. How typical that is. A former leading and very widely respected member of his party has now stated his view very publicly, but the hon. Gentleman dismisses it with a lift of his eyes to heaven, as though it were of no account whatever.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** The hon. Gentleman is a Minister now, and not a member of the Cambridge union, as he was when I first met him. That being the case, he should rise above such an approach. I stated explicitly that on this issue there is proper, honest dissent in all parties. Unlike the hon. Gentleman's party, my party has conferences and debates. We take decisions by majorities. I have enunciated the policy of my party. I do not dismiss Sir Ian Wrigglesworth's views or those of my hon. Friend. I was honest enough to admit that there is a difference of view, and to suggest that politicians may know less than inspectors at independent inquiries.

**Mr. Eggar:** I would have rather more respect for the hon. Gentleman's views if he had bothered to visit the plant, as the hon. Member for Clackmannan and I have done. The hon. Gentleman subscribed to the manifesto and has drafted this motion. He has been throwing people's jobs in the air as though they mattered not at all, but he has not bothered to go to the plant. He does not have the guts to go and see for himself. What is more, he has been invited.

**Mr. Hughes:** And accepted.

**Mr. Eggar:** And accepted. That is typical. The hon. Gentleman will go there after subscribing to the Liberal party's manifesto and mounting this debate. He will sneak up there, and I suppose that he will go round the plant and say that his view has not been changed. I challenge him to give some of his time to the work force. Let him have a talk with the unions. Let him argue his case.

**Ms Clare Short** (Birmingham, Ladywood): Like the Minister?

**Mr. Eggar:** I have on numerous occasions met the BNFL unions, as the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) knows perfectly well. I should like to hear the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey argue how other people's jobs are to be redistributed round the economy. Let him explain the advantages to the skilled workers—how they would be employed in dry storage. Let him for once expose himself to the difficulty of making decisions.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** The Minister does not listen. I said in my speech that I had accepted the invitation before the motion was tabled and before I knew that there was to be a debate. I also said that I had had some discussions with the work force and the management and that I had agreed to have more. There are more people unemployed in my constituency than in that of the Minister. I do not throw jobs around, but the Minister condemned 30,000 miners to lose their jobs. We did not do that.

**Mr. Eggar:** I look forward to the hon. Gentleman's report of his meeting with the unions at BNFL and to his seeing the THORP plant, after which I hope that he will reflect carefully on his position.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Eggar:** I am willing to give way, but I am conscious of the time and the fact that other hon. Members wish to speak.

**Mr. James Molyneaux** (Lagan Valley): I am grateful to the Minister for allowing me to express the view from the other side of the Irish sea. All Northern Ireland Members are concerned about the effects of THORP on the Irish sea. I impress on the Minister the fact that few people in Northern Ireland will be satisfied or will have their concerns allayed until every fact is known and every possible safeguard is put in place.

**Mr. Eggar:** I am aware of that concern. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that, under section 37 of the Euratom treaty arrangements, proper investigation has been carried out into the radiation effects of THORP. I think that the right hon. Gentleman is aware of the scientific findings, which should alleviate concern on the other side of the Irish sea.

The plant has been completed and all those who have seen it have been greatly impressed, not only by the plant but by the commitment of the work force and its preoccupation with safety. The hon. Member for Clackmannan spoke about that. There has been much debate about the importance to the area of the 3,000 jobs which flow from and are associated with the plant. Some 2,000 of those jobs are in west Cumbria alone.

The plant was built to meet the needs of its proven United Kingdom and overseas customers. Those needs are not customer aspirations but binding contracts totalling £9 billion, and half the contracts are from overseas. That in itself is a major export achievement by BNFL. In addition, THORP is a major example of inward investment. Some £1·6 billion has been advanced by overseas customers towards the capital cost of the plant, and £1 billion of that came from Japanese customers. The Government greatly value the long-standing nuclear co-operation between this country and Japan which made that investment possible.

**Mr. Dalyell:** May I confirm that there is no reason whatever why the debate cannot continue until 10 o'clock and that only custom and convention limit it to 7 o'clock? That is my information from the Clerk, so we are not short of time. Does the Minister recall the occasion on which he and I spoke from the platform of the Trade Unions for Safe Nuclear Energy, under the chairmanship of Bill Morgan of the Amalgamated Engineering Union? The Minister said at that time that general relations with Japan were affected by the THORP decision. Will he expand on that important matter?

**Mr. Eggar:** The hon. Gentleman's initial point is a matter for the business managers. I remember the event that the hon. Gentleman mentions, and I look forward to speaking again at the union's annual dinner later this year. On the occasion to which the hon. Gentleman refers, I spoke about the major inward investment by the Japanese and said that the plant was probably the single largest export element of our trade with Japan. I said that, if there were serious problems about the start-up of that plant, it would almost inevitably have implications for Japan's perception of the United Kingdom as a trading partner and as a place in which to invest.

Some hon. Members have argued that somehow those major customers of THORP were misguided to enter into these contracts, which are inappropriate. If there was ever any truth in that allegation, it has been completely disproved by the advertisements in *The Times* on Wednesday by the 10 Japanese electric power companies —*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) seems to dismiss that on the grounds that in some way BNFL was associated with that advertisement.

Does the hon. Gentleman think that the chairmen of the major electricity generating companies in Japan would append their names to an advertisement just because somebody wanted to organise it? Of course not. They must have considered the matter extremely carefully and would have wanted to make a clear statement of their views because people such as the hon. Gentleman and the Liberal party were misconstruing their stance. Those Japanese companies felt that it was time to make their views clear.

As the Government have made clear, it is for the owners of spent nuclear fuel to make the commercial decision

about whether to reprocess. In recent months, various pressure groups have been telling the world that those customers are somehow wrong and that they should not want the reprocessing. Some of the pressure groups have gone so far as to suggest that BNFL should take the initiative and tell its customers that their choice is wrong.

What sort of business practice is that? It is rather like telling customers in a car showroom that it is immoral to buy a car and that it would be better to ride out of the showroom on a bicycle. Such a policy may be appropriate for the Liberal Democrats, but it is totally unrealistic in today's commercial world.

The lobby groups have recently started to go down a new track. They are going through the pretence of showing concern for the economic success of the industry. I say "pretence" because, of course, the real agenda of the lobby groups is purely and simply to shut down the nuclear industry. Those groups suggest that the United Kingdom and its overseas customers would all be better off if there were some kind of deal to abandon THORP.

It has always been open to THORP customers to tell BNFL that, on reflection, they do not want the plant to operate and are prepared to make other arrangements. What have they done? In 1989, almost all THORP's overseas customers took up BNFL's offer of additional reprocessing capacity. The chairmen of the two major German customers, RWE and Veba, recently wrote to BNFL to confirm that they would fulfil the contracts into which they had entered. I have already mentioned last week's advertisement by Japanese customers.

Much has been said recently about the dangers of plutonium. It is worth commenting on the nature of plutonium and its creation because there has been much misinformation. Plutonium is created when nuclear fuel is burnt in a reactor. It is not created by reprocessing, which extracts the plutonium from the spent fuel together with the unused uranium. When that has been done, both materials are available for recycling, which can be undertaken in most existing water-moderated nuclear reactors. The operator can load up to about a third of the reactor with a mixed uranium-plutonium fuel known as MOX fuel. When the plutonium is recycled as part of MOX fuel, much of it is used up. The use and planned use of MOX technology is increasing world wide and BNFL already has a number of orders or letters of intent to manufacture MOX fuel.

The spent fuel and plutonium have to be managed irrespective of whether there is reprocessing. The Government believe that reprocessing is a proven and safe option. If the plutonium is not managed centrally at Sellafield until recycled, it will have to be dealt with as part of the stored spent fuel. It is for the owners of the spent fuel, having regard to their contractual commitments and the appropriate regulatory requirements, to make the choice.

**Mr. Alan W. Williams** (Carmarthen): Why do Britain and Europe need THORP? What useful product will it provide? In the 1970s, that need was justified on the ground of the plutonium that it would produce, which was needed for the fast breeder reactors. The Government have now abandoned that programme and Europe has turned from it, so the demand for plutonium has gone. THORP provides no useful product.

**Mr. Eggar:** I know that it is a difficult concept for the hon. Gentleman to take on board, but we need THORP because customers have signed contracts and want it. They want to make use of the process carried out at that plant. The customers can decide whether they wish to take the plutonium and store it for future use in fast breeder reactors of for MOX fuel. They are exercising their right to choose what they do with their spent fuel. That is the simple answer to the hon. Gentleman.

It is typical of the hon. Gentleman and his like to want to decide what commercial customers should do with their product. It is clear from the hon. Gentleman's question that he wants to deprive the United Kingdom of huge export orders and many thousands of people of jobs in west Cumbria and elsewhere. He should be under no illusion about his motives.

**Dr. Jeremy Bray** (Motherwell, South): Is the Minister so sure that customers want the fuel, or do they want to avoid responsibility for the cost of cancellation of the contracts? Is he so sure that there is a genuine demand for MOX fuel relative to the fuel costs of enriched uranium?

**Mr. Eggar:** Customers always have the right to go to BNFL and make alternative proposals. If they decided that they did not want to make use of THORP, costs would be associated with that decision. Customers not only signed up to the original contracts, however, but almost all of them signed up to additional contracts as recently as 1989. A number have expressed interest in signing additional contracts, once THORP has an operating record, beyond the 10 years agreed.

BNFL believes that there will be a demand for a Mox plant, but whether that plant proceeds will depend not only on authorisation from Government, but on customers' willingness to enter into contracts to ensure the economic viability of the plant. The answer will depend, critically, on the attitude of customers. I am sure that BNFL would not proceed unless it was confident that there was a market for the plant and its product.

**Mr. Dalyell** *rose*——

**Dr. Michael Clark** *rose*——

**Mr. Eggar:** I should like to press on, but I will give way —for the last time—to my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark).

**Dr. Clark:** Has it ever occurred to my hon. Friend that, if he had come to the House and suggested that spent nuclear fuel should be put in prepared sites in the ground and covered over—and the process had been given the fancy name of dry storage—there would have been an outcry from everyone in the House and probably throughout the country? I am sure that people would have argued for a proper scientific process to be followed whereby the waste fuel was taken to a proper processing plant and the high radioactive material isolated from the low radioactive material. They would have argued that the fuel that could be reused should be made available for that purpose and that the peril should be concentrated rather than left in the ground in dry storage. Has he ever thought that that might have happened if he had suggested dry storage in the first place?

**Mr. Eggar:** As ever, my hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head. Apart from what he has said, at the end of the

*[Mr. Eggar]*

dry storage process, what then? After 50 years, the chances are that a process would be needed, not unlike the THORP one, to deal with the material.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford has recognised only too well, much of the argument against THORP is not an argument against it as a plant or against BNFL, but one aimed at the destruction of the nuclear industry. The opponents of THORP know perfectly well that if they can stop the plant functioning they will deal an effective blow to the underpinning of the nuclear fuel cycle and the operation of the nuclear electric industry. No one should be under any illusions about the motivation of the opponents of THORP. To be fair, for once, to the Liberal Democrats, they know that they share that motivation.

**Mr. Geoffrey Dickens** (Littleborough and Saddleworth): They are disappearing from the Chamber.

**Mr. Eggar:** My hon. Friend is right.

Whatever the cost in jobs, and whatever the costs in additional charges to electricity consumers, the Liberal Democrats are opposed to nuclear power—and they admit it. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey would have been rather more honest if he had not finished his speech by saying that he wanted a public inquiry. He should have said that the Liberal Democrats are opposed to the nuclear industry and will do everything that they can to stop its development.

I commend our amendment to the House.

5.56 pm

**Mr. Chris Smith** (Islington, South and Finsbury): I welcome the opportunity for a short debate on THORP. Unlike the Minister, I believe that it is entirely right and proper for the Liberal Democrats to select this important and controversial issue for debate.

I suspect that the one achievement—I would not necessarily describe it as such—of the Liberal Democrat motion will have been to precipitate the Government into a firm decision. At least the Government appear to be taking a firm decision to proceed, if their amendment is anything to go by. They have, however, also revealed in a parliamentary answer that was tabled after lunch that they are proposing a further round of consultation.

What sort of consultation can that possibly be, when they have already announced to the entire world in the amendment to the Liberal Democrat motion their view about whether THORP should proceed? The Government are, in effect, saying that they have made up their mind, but that they will consult because, legally, they must be seen to do so. That is not a real, proper, considered process of consultation. It cannot possibly be, because the Government, by what they have said in the amendment, have prejudged it.

It is important for everyone to acknowledge that much has changed since the Parker inquiry. There were five original reasons for embarking on the THORP process: first, plutonium was to be produced for the fast breeder programme; secondly, uranium was to be recovered for re-use; thirdly, it was regarded at the time as the best and, perhaps in some instances, the only means of dealing with spent fuel; fourthly, financial benefit was to be gained from the reprocessing operation; and, fifthly, employment opportunities were to be garnered.

The employment considerations remain as compelling as ever. The impact of any decision taken on the future of Sellafield and the economy of west Cumbria need of course, to be taken carefully into account. Two of the original reasons for proceeding with THORP have, however, lapsed with time.

The fast breeder programme has now been abandoned at national and European levels. We already have a stockpile of some 30 tonnes of plutonium in the United Kingdom from the Magnox reprocessing procedures. THORP would create an additional 30 tonnes a year. There is a world stockpile of some 300 tonnes. What on earth can be the use of extra plutonium now being generated?

Moreover, the recovery of uranium is no longer a competitive exercise. Large quantities of directly mined cheaper uranium are now available and will certainly be so over the 25-year period of THORP's predicted existence.

There is consensus on those two points about plutonium and uranium. Where the debate begins in earnest is over the issue of the right option in waste management in environmental terms for dealing with spent irradiated fuel. That has now become the central nub of the THORP issue.

The Government clearly said in their response to the Environment Select Committee report in 1986 that reprocessing was their favoured option for the disposal of spent fuel. That position now seems to have changed. The Minister for the Environment and Countryside answered a question to me on 24 June. I had asked him:

"what is his policy on the preferred option for the disposal of radioactive spent fuel from advanced gas-cooled reactors, as between reprocessing and dry storage".

The answer, on which the Minister for Energy touched this afternoon, was:

"It is for the owners of spent fuel to decide on safety, technical and economic grounds whether to reprocess spent fuel from advanced gas-cooled reactors or place it in dry storage."—[*Official Report*, 24 June 1993; Vol. 227, c. *246*.]

From that answer and an answer given in June 1989 by the then Under-Secretary of State for Energy, the Government appear to express no preference in principle between the reprocessing and dry storage options.

That attitude of no preference from the Government has again been exemplified in the evidence given to the inquiry at Torness into the construction of dry storage facilities there. Giving evidence before the Scottish Office, Mr. Hetherington told the inquiry that he

"accepted that circumstances had changed since the Government had made its response to the select committee in 1986. The relative economic advantages of obtaining uranium from reprocessing rather than direct mining had changed, and dry storage of spent fuel had emerged as a practicable possibility."

He went on:

"The reprocessing route did not appear to offer any immediate and significant advantages, from a waste management point of view."

So the Government, both in their answers to the House and in the evidence that Government officials have given at Torness, are saying that there are no advantages either way between reprocessing and dry storage. It is interesting to note that the United States, Sweden, Canada, Finland and Spain are all committed solely to the mechanism of direct disposal. They abjure the reprocessing option.

According to the evidence given by Scottish Nuclear Ltd. to the Torness inquiry, BNFL proposes to offer dry storage facilities in conjunction with the Costain

Construction Group. Dry storage is clearly on the practical agenda, BNFL's agenda, as well as on the agenda elsewhere.

**Mr. Dickens:** I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman understands that dry storage gives the management two options: either to reprocess or to destroy completely—*[Interruption.]* well, hon. Gentleman know what I mean. Clearly, those options exist if there is a dry storage facility. If for instance, the fast breeder reactor in Monju in Japan is as successful as the Japanese hope, and as we expect, plutonium may suddenly come back into fashion. Therefore, those options are extremely important. It is a choice between disposal—that is the word that I was looking for—and reprocessing. That is what dry storage offers for future generations.

**Mr. Smith:** I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman corrected himself, because radioactive waste can never be totally destroyed, at least not for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. He fails to recognise that there must be disposal of something at the end of the day, whether reprocessing or dry storage is chosen. Because reprocessing creates a substantial quantity of intermediate-level waste, it cannot simply be dumped in the ground at Drigg, where low-level waste tends to go, but must be properly disposed of in a monitored fashion. Whether we choose reprocessing or dry storage, we have the problem of ultimate disposal.

**Mr. Dalyell:** In case there is any misunderstanding, it should also be put on the record that Scottish Nuclear has a major fixed price contract with THORP, and Robin Jeffrey and James Hann made it clear that they thought that THORP was very important.

**Mr. Smith:** My hon. Friend, for whom I have great respect although I do not necessarily agree with everything that he always says on this issue, is right on this point. Scottish Nuclear has a contract for reprocessing at THORP and, as far as I am aware, intends to make use of it if THORP goes ahead. It is also exploring the option of dry storage as an alternative for some of its future spent fuel. It looks very much as if, for the spent fuel beyond the initial contract with THORP, it is likely to opt for the dry storage route.

The Government therefore appear to have no distinct preference between the two options. What, then, is the best waste management option? A number of considerations must be borne in mind. First, reprocessing certainly reduces the amount of high-level waste that is created, but it increases substantially the quantity of low-level waste that is generated. That is confirmed in RWMAC's 11th report, which states:

"Reprocessing increases the volume of radioactive waste and the amounts of radioactive material released into the environment".

Secondly, the Select Committee on the Environment noted from paragraph 186 of the report by Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. in Manitoba, that

"if anything oxide fuel was more stable and more leach resistant than vitrified waste".

Thirdly—it is the point to which the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) alluded—eventual deep direct disposal must be entertained as an option, whatever intermediate route is chosen, either reprocessing or storage.

Fourthly, it is crucial to know the precise arrangements for substitution of the waste generated if THORP goes ahead and what the waste stream actually generated will be. I submit that that crucial matter, even with the publication, after a seven-month delay, of the RWMAC advice to the Minister, remains in doubt. The RWMAC report says that issues are still outstanding in relation to future disposal facilities and that those issues need to be determined properly before a final decision can be taken.

The chairman of RWMAC, Professor John Knill, told *The Independent:*

"the full range of evaluations has not yet been done. We have asked for them and have not seen them. It is necessary that this should be done before Thorp goes into operation".

It is clear from RWMAC's agenda for its 1 July meeting that some of its members have remaining doubts and questions beyond what is expressed in the report.

I do not believe that a proper decision can be taken on the crucial question of the best environmental waste management option, whether it be reprocessing or dry storage, until the report published today has been properly considered, its arguments analysed and—this is crucial—any additional comments have been sought from RWMAC.

The other principal environmental issue at stake is that of emissions. HMIP published its draft authorisations last year. Although it is true that it proposed lower overall emission authorisations for Sellafield, it envisaged higher discharges. In fact, the projected discharges will be about 75 per cent. of the proposed authorisation limits. Again, we know from the report published this afternoon that the original authorisations will be substantially agreed, but there are still some questions that I must ask.

First, when will the full HMIP report be made public? The Government have committed themselves to that and we want to know when it will emerge. Secondly, how do the proposed discharge levels compare with those that currently exist at Cap La Hague, where I understand that discharges of both alpha and beta activity are substantially lower than anything envisaged at Sellafield.

Thirdly, in reaching its conclusion, has HMIP taken into account the new recommendation from the National Radiological Protection Board that 0·3 mSv a year of radiation impact on the general public should be used as the yardstick against which to judge emission authorisations? It is clear that HMIP's report will have to be seen in full and considered by the public before a final decision can be taken on the environmental impact of the plant.

The environmental considerations, the best waste management options and their different impact and the full effects of emissions and discharges must take primacy of place in reaching a conclusion on how, when and if THORP should go ahead. Therefore, a full environmental impact assessment is needed, coupled with wide public debate. Indeed, the Paris commission meeting on 16 June made that a virtual necessity.

**Mr. Eddie McGrady** (South Down): Some time ago, an all-party committee said that the Irish sea was the most polluted sea in the world. What is the hon. Gentleman's response to the suggestion of a ten fold increase in both atmospheric and maritime discharges of radioactive materials? That pollution of our environment must be ended, especially in respect of the Irish sea.

**Mr. Smith:** The hon. Gentleman is right to identify one of the problems of opting for reprocessing, which

*[Mr. Smith]*

generates large quantities of intermediate and low-level waste. A great many of the low-level discharges go straight into the sea, which is why a proper environmental impact assessment of the discharge pattern from Sellafield is required.

**Mr. Dalyell:** What reply would my hon. Friend give to our right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who says that THORP already has £9 billion of secure orders? Our right hon. Friend, who is the local constituency Member of Parliament, also says that delay is causing losses of £2 million a week and that that money is needed to help boost investment in west Cumbria. What answer would my hon. Friend give to his shadow Cabinet colleague?

**Mr. Smith:** I am aware of the legitimate constituency arguments that our right hon. Friend has always made —[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] He is abroad on official duties; nevertheless, he is taking a keen interest in our debate. The figure that my hon. Friend quoted is slightly inaccurate, because BNFL puts the loss at £2·4 million a week. I accept that with every week that passes there is a loss of income to BNFL, but that should not prevent us from ensuring that we get the decision right.

It is important that we make the right decision because the moment that THORP is brought into operation, the entire decommissioning costs will be incurred. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that the decision to open THORP is absolutely right. Even on BNFL's figures, the decommissioning costs are, at current prices, about £900 million. A few weeks of delay may be necessary to ensure that we make the right decision.

My hon. Friend's intervention was timely, because there is a continuing question over the financial consequences of a decision either to proceed or not to proceed with the plant. BNFL has told us of the projected earnings of the plant—a profit of £500 million over 10 years, with direct employment for 1,200 people and, perhaps, 3,000 in total. Those are not to be dismissed lightly. However, the decommissioning costs must be borne in mind. We know from the National Audit Office report that some of the estimates of decommissioning costs within the nuclear industry are open to some challenge, to say the least. If the decommissioning costs for THORP are even 60 per cent. greater than currently envisaged, that would entirely wipe out the projected profit from the operation.

In addition to the decommissioning issue, a mystery surrounds the exact content of the contracts for the reprocessing of spent fuel from abroad. We are told that there are severe penalties for cancellation by either side, but we cannot know whether that is right, because none of us has seen the contracts. At the very least, the proposal that the contracts should be shown to the Comptroller and Auditor General should be taken up because it is impossible for the public to make a judgment about the penalties that might be imposed. Surely greater transparency about the contracts would assist the public to make that judgment. Surely also, the Touche Ross report on the overall economic prospects for THORP should be published so that everyone can make his own assessment rather than leaving it to the managers of BNFL to tell us.

We should also know the outcome of the dispute reported in *The Guardian* this morning between the nuclear generators and BNFL over who should be laible for any unforeseen additional costs that might arise and that are no longer underwritten by the Government. We must establish clearly, in the public doman, some of the important issues about the likely financial future of the plant. As I said, once THORP opens, its entire decommissioning costs will be incurred. We must be as reasonably certain as possible about what that cost will be and what benefit will be derived in return.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I have listened with interest to my hon. Friend's speech, and I agree with much of what he says. I understand that if the uranium processors were opened up at THORP, which would take the first two or three months, the decommissioning costs would be only £250,000 up to a certain point in the development process. The company has offered to pay the bill. If that is the case, my hon. Friend may want to temper his remarks in that light.

**Mr. Smith:** I am somewhat puzzled by the figure given by my hon. Friend. The decommissioning cost that he has given sounds rather small for any portion of such a plant of any size. However, I suspect that, if that were to happen, we would have another case of the tail wagging the dog in three, six or 12 months. We would be told that, because things had started, they might as well continue. It is important that we get the decision right at the outset.

A range of unanswered questions have arisen about the emissions and discharges from the plant, the nature of the waste stream and the waste management consequences of alternative options, the future decommissioning costs and the content of the spent fuel contracts, and the employment implications of any decision that is taken. The RWMAC report has been published this afternoon and needs careful analysis. The Touche Ross report should also be published. A proper environmental impact assessment should take place. It would be foolish to leap to a conclusion either way before the issues are properly and openly determined.

The Government keep telling us how committed they are to freedom of environmental information, the precautionary principle and environmental impact assessments. None of those is evidenced in their amendment. They say that they are launching a new—if truncated—consultation process, yet their amendment shows that they have already made up their mind. Our environment deserves better.

6.25 pm

**Mr. Michael Jopling** (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Listening to this afternoon's debate, my mind has gone back to the debates in March and May of 1978 referred to by other hon. Members. The debates followed the Parker inquiry, which itself lasted 100 days.

I remember taking part in the first of those debates. The THORP project was created as a result of the two debates. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) who has been in the Chamber for a good deal of the debate and, of course, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) led for the Government in those debates. I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney is no longer in the Chamber, because his speech during the debate was one of the most

courageous and compelling that I have heard in the House in 28 years. It is a speech for which he deserved the greatest credit at the time.

As has been said in the debate, things have moved on since those 1978 debates. The plant is complete. The staff are trained and ready. The material for reprocessing is in the ponds of the site waiting for the gate to go up and for the containers to be moved into the reprocessing part of the plant. I was taken through the plant four weeks ago. I went into the chamber where the separation of uranium, plutonium and other materials will take place. It may be only a few weeks or months before that chamber is finally sealed up.

I represent a Cumbria constituency and my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) represented Workington in 1978. He also spoke during the two debates. On that occasion, all the Cumbrian Members of Parliament from all parties joined together to vote in favour of the plant going ahead. It is a vital project for Cumbria.

**Mr. Page:** My right hon. Friend has mentioned the importance of employment. Is not it a fact that, if BNFL does not get the go-ahead in the near future, it will have to lay off valuable and trained staff? If the dry storage option is taken, it will mean another public inquiry, a delay of several years and even more people will be laid off. We must go ahead with the project immediately.

**Mr. Jopling:** I agree with my hon. Friend. Of course the project is important for Cumbria, because it provides 2,000 jobs in that part of the county. My hon. Friend is right and BNFL has told me that if the project does not get the green light soon, some jobs will have to go. Some have gone already because of the delay. The House should be aware of that. The project is important to Cumbria. The investment already amounts to £1·85 billion. It is worth noting that a further £900 million has been invested by BNFL for additional plant and environmental protection infrastructure. It is important to realise how massive the investment has been.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman** (Lancaster): The project is of extreme importance also to my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd) and to me. A previous Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale and I were at the original inquiry and have supported the project ever since.

**Mr. Jopling:** I am well aware of my hon. Friend's support, and I remember that she joined me and others in that debate in May 1978 to support the project.

As has been said, the project has been profitable for the United Kingdom. I am told by BNFL that, in the worst case, the project's profits will amount to £500 million in the first 10 years of operation. The Touche Ross report, I understand, says that the economic benefit to the United Kingdom will be about £900 million. It is also important for Cumbria, as I have said. The delays and the possibility that the project will not start up at all, to which opponents of the project referred, are also important. The massive cost of the delay of £2 million a week is a serious matter. If, by any chance, the project did not start up, there could be compensation of £5 billion. The economic case is overwhelming.

The number of my constituents who work at Sellafield is not enormous, so I am conscious principally of the environmental matters. Those are paramount. I have always said that however powerful the economic case, which I have just stated, it must be set aside if the safety elements of the plant are not entirely satisfactory.

I remind the House that I refused to vote in the March 1978 debate. I said that I could not agree to the opening of the THORP project until the two Secretaries of State had explained the safety provisions. They eventually did so, in the second debate in May 1978. Given the undertakings that they gave, I added my support to THORP going ahead.

It is worth noting that, since 1978, the emissions from Sellafield have been dramatically reduced. If the then Secretary of State had told the House that, by the mid-1990s, the emissions into the sea from Sellafield would be about one hundredth of what they were at their height in the 1970s, no one in the House would have believed him. He would have been laughed at.

But the emissions have been reduced by that amount. I have been given some graphs which demonstrate on a yearly basis the extraordinary reduction of emissions into the sea to one hundredth of what they were. It has been the most remarkable success story. It is a pity that no one has referred to that so far in the debate.

**Mr. McGrady:** I note the point that the right hon. Gentleman makes about the reduction in emissions and in the pollution of the Irish sea over the years. But he must admit that the early emissions were way above the safety standards which had been set and entirely unacceptable in terms of modern science. We also know that, apart from the revealed pollution, pollution of the Irish sea has taken place which has not yet been revealed. Does not the right hon. Gentleman recall that a quarter of a tonne of pure plutonium was dumped into the Irish sea?

The right hon. Gentleman will be more familiar with the debate in 1978 than I am. I understand that one of the findings of the Parker inquiry was that the necessary cleansing equipment should be installed for the removal of krypton 85. That is not being done, and krypton 85 will be released into the atmosphere, with climatic and other consequences which the right hon. Gentleman has not even mentioned.

**Mr. Jopling:** Now that the hon. Gentleman has made the speech that he obviously intended to make, I shall proceed with mine. I shall refer to the krypton element in a few moments.

As I drove to London last night, I played again the two-hour debate on THORP which Radio Cumbria broadcast some time ago. The debate was held in Whitehaven. Listening to it, I was struck by the local support for THORP in west Cumbria. I was especially struck by one panellist, a local trade union leader, who made the point that the work force, who had wives and families living in the area, would hardly give their support—it is full hearted support—to THORP if they felt that the plant was in any way unsafe.

I am not surprised that there is such overwhelming support for the project among the work force when I read the statistics. In a statement, BNFL said:

"the individual BNFL worker who received the highest radiation dose in 1992 will receive less than the residents of some 25,000 homes in Devon and Cornwall would receive from natural background."

That is a significant statement which puts the whole debate in its proper perspective.

*[Mr. Jopling]*

I understand why some of those who are passionately opposed to anything that has a nuclear tag—we heard from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes)—use every opportunity they can dredge up to try to stop the project going ahead. They opposed the project in the Parker inquiry. They were unable to convince either the judge or his expert assessors. They have opposed every step which has been taken. Now they are using the final argument, that they want another inquiry.

I think that it was a trade union leader who made the comment that, if a second inquiry was obtained, one could be sure that, once it was over, people would find reasons for a third. We are familiar with those tactics. If people do not like something, they ask for an inquiry and create delays.

**Mr. Alan W. Williams** (Carmarthen): The earlier inquiry was held in 1978, when we were preoccupied with world oil supplies and oil prices, and when we were in the middle of a world energy crisis. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, by 1993, 15 years on, environmental arguments are much stronger, the energy situation is different and, most significantly, the demand for plutonium that was envisaged as significant has not materialised?

**Mr. Jopling:** We have not heard much in the debate about the pollution effect of coal-fired electricity generation. If the hon. Gentleman reads about the possibilities of mixed oxide fuels, or MOX, projects he will realise that there is a possibility of using the material. There is already an order from Switzerland for this type of fuel.

Opponents of THORP keep talking about dry storage. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West asked me a question about it. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey understandably made it his business to refuse to answer the second question that was put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans). My hon. Friend asked whether the hon. Gentleman realised that dry storage was purely a short-term, transitional solution, which leaves the major problem of what to do with the material at the end of the day.

If the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey believes that dry storage is the option to take, will the Liberal party and all his friends who are opposed to THORP agree to it without a public inquiry or any further delays? We know perfectly well that it is simply a plot, and that they will oppose dry storage just as strongly as they have opposed everything else.

**Mr. James Wallace** (Orkney and Shetland): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Jopling:** No. I must get on, because the debate is due to end shortly.

The problem of krypton was another favourite worry which was spread around. People said, "Ah, but what about the krypton? This is the serious matter." At the beginning, I was anxious about the krypton factor. However, when I inquired into it, I was astonished to be told that the radiation from krypton emissions in the area in a year for the worst affected person was equivalent to eating a quarter-pound bag of brazil nuts, or four seconds of sunbathing in the United Kingdom. That demonstrates the absurdity of some of the arguments which have been put up to try to convince us that the project should not go ahead.

The amendment tabled by the Government is entirely correct. I hope that the plant can open at the earliest practicable date. But, of course, that must be subject, as the amendment says, to receipts by BNFL of such consents as are required by law.

The Government have decided that there will be a delay, and we must use it to make sure that the plant is entirely safe. That decision reflects great credit on the Government, even though it causes much irritation to many people. They should be given credit for making doubly certain that the plant is safe. Once that has been done, I hope that the project will continue, and that it will produce significant wealth and employment for this nation.

6.39 pm

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): One unfortunate aspect of this debate is that the Liberal Democrats have cast themselves as the villains of the piece, whereas the Government, because they have dithered and delayed, are the real villains.

Before I produce evidence of that, I repeat my earlier remark: that the Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir John Bourn, is an independent officer of the House of Commons. Before this debate ends, the Liberal Democrats —and my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith)—should be prepared to state that, if Sir John Bourn says that his interpretation of the contracts is the same as that of British Nuclear Fuels, they will accept it.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** The preferable option is that we should see both the contracts and reports such as that produced by Touche Ross. If such a conclusion were reached by someone who is an independent officer of the House, that would be a satisfactory outcome, and acceptable—but all the documents must be submitted, and that independent officer would have to make a full report.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman concedes that, because environmental groups have repeatedly used the same line as the Liberal Democrats—which is that, without seeing the contracts, British Nuclear Fuels cannot be trusted. I hope that that argument is settled—and if Mr. Lowry is listening, I hope that he will also take note of what is said by the Liberal Democrats in the House tonight.

**Mr. Page:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, when the Public Accounts Committee and the National Audit Office produce a report, it must be agreed by the Department under scrutiny and by the National Audit Office, so that there is no dissension when it comes before the PAC? Therefore, the agreement to which the hon. Gentleman referred is in place.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Yes, I can go that far. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I spent 11 years on the Public Accounts Committee, and we all know what happens in private session. A slight difficulty arises, but it is an agreed report.

In the first two to three months of THORP's life, there will be a process entitled "the commissioning of uranium".

Thereafter, the plant could be decontaminated at a cost of £250,000 to British Nuclear Fuels, which it has offered to pay. I fail to understand why that process cannot begin now. If the plant were to be commissioned at a later stage, a number of months would be saved.

I want to make it clear that I am pro-nuclear and pro-THORP, and have lived in Cumbria most of my life. I was in west Cumbria at the time of the 1957 fire. I am the son of an engineer who worked in the nuclear industry, but regard myself as a constructive critic of the industry.

I supported Greenpeace during the 1973 demonstration over the Sellafield pipeline and subscribed to its legal costs —and was criticised locally for that action. I did so in order that, one day, the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) would be able to say in the House exactly that which he did say. The hundredth multiplier in terms of reductions and discharges of which the right hon. Gentleman spoke arises in part as a result of that incident. I was proud to have been at the forefront of supporting environmental groups.

I have been in a number of public and private scraps with British Nuclear Fuels over the years, primarily in respect of employment, discharges, public relations, waste management and—most recently—krypton emissions. I have argued ad nauseam with the company against its legal actions against environmental groups, which I believe are nonsense. I hold the view that it should never bring such legal actions.

On this occasion, however, the industry has a substantial case and should be supported. Although BNFL is located in Copeland, it is the largest employer of my constituents. It currently has 13,500 people on site, including contract staff. THORP will provide 2,100 permanent jobs in west Cumbria. If it failed to open, that would be an unmitigated disaster for my constituency. The impact would be five times that of the imminent job losses at Rosyth, and the local economy would be devastated.

When a Labour Government proposed and planned the THORP project in the late 1970s, much of the debate centred on employment in the west of the county. Last July, we were told that a timetable had been agreed to allow THORP to begin operations at the beginning of this year. That date was never met. Seven months later, the Department of the Environment is demanding further consultation.

A parliamentary reply from the Secretary of State for the Environment made available today, which clears the air as far as I am concerned, states:

"the Inspectorate have concluded that no points of substance have been raised that should cause them to reconsider the terms of the draft authorisations, save for some amendments/ corrections. In their judgment, the provisions of the draft authorisations will effectively protect human health, the safety of the food chain, and the environment generally."

What more could we want? How much more consultation must there be before the project goes on stream?

All the matters raised today were dealt with in the Parker inquiry and in the course of hundreds—perhaps thousands—of parliamentary questions and repeated interventions during numerous energy debates on all aspects of the industry over the past 13 years.

**Mr. Alan W. Williams:** I have every respect for my hon. Friend's professional background and integrity, but in the Parker inquiry and in the 1978 debates, the main reason given for commissioning THORP was to isolate plutonium for the new generation of fast breeder reactors. That was the energy scenario presented for the 21st century. Now that that no longer holds true, there is no valid energy reason for proceeding with THORP.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I understand that there is a large order book. It is not I who am saying that there is a demand. The utilities of Germany, Japan, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, Netherlands, Canada and Italy all tell us that there is a market for the product. It seems that the statements made at the Parker inquiry in 1978 are very relevant, and led to the creation of a substantial market.

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): Does not the tendency on the part of those countries to buy British tell the hon. Gentleman something about the product and about their anxiety to get it out of their countries?

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The hon. Gentleman has made a very interesting point. I went to a meeting the other day with my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams). A Japanese lady was at that meeting. The Japanese are not prone to giving us business when they can turn out products themselves.

I am told that the Americans, by treaty, prevented the Japanese from developing certain nuclear technologies and that, if it had not been for the existence of that treaty, we should not have the THORP plant in West Cumbria today. I am grateful to the Americans for that. It adds to the point made by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond). It may be that the Japanese wanted the business, but the existence of the treaty prevented them from getting it.

The truth is that a strong and articulate lobby of opponents of nuclear power wants to phase out the nuclear industry. It wants THORP stopped at all costs. The Government appear to be conceding some of their arguments, with the result that BNFL is now losing £2·4 million a week in lost profits. The Government's amendment is extremely ambiguous. Although it expresses support for THORP, it fails to reveal the Government's dithering over approval. I believe that there has been dithering and a lack of decision-taking in Government Departments.

I understand that Mr. Guinness is here to observe our proceedings, but he would have done well to come to politicians long before he did so. I understand that there is much criticism in the industry that we were not approached far earlier, so that representations could be made to us about ensuring that the right decisions were taken at the right time, with a final decision being taken earlier than now appears to be likely.

Why should the credibility of British industry be put at stake? We have signed a number of binding contracts. We did so having debated all the issues that are now being questioned. The £9 billion BNFL order book comprises eight overseas companies, many of which are now expressing open concern about what is happening. Why? Because we built the plant with their money. They paid for that plant. Therefore, they want it to be commissioned.

The largest Swiss electricity utility, NOK—a BNFL customer—has recently stated:

NOK has invested in this plant more than £90 million without taking into account the accrued interest on construction. With deep sorrow we noticed articles in the British Press . . . stating that the start-up of THORP could be further delayed up to one year. Such a development would

*[Mr. Campbell-Savours]*

badly hurt our business interests but (also) our confidence (which, we put up to now into the performance and excellency of British Industry, especially BNFL."

NOK is not alone. Hon. Members will have seen the advertisement in the national press last Wednesday by the 10 Japanese electricity companies, emphasising their support for the plant. German customers, too, have expressed concern. One company, GKN, worriedly stated only recently:

"We have made a big contribution to that facility. We assumed, that after the public inquiry years ago, there will not be basic doubts on THORP's operation."

The reality is that we are letting down our customers with this delay. So why the dithering? Why do we need this further process of consultation? All these issues have surely been dealt with in recent years. Why can we not have the decision now and let BNFL take its chance on judicial review, in the event of Greepeace bringing the case it has talked about?

These overseas customers have provided up-front payments to finance the large majority of the THORP construction costs of £1·85 billion, 90 per cent. of which was spent with British industry. I wonder how many jobs in the constituencies of hon. Members in all parts of the House were created as a result of that up-front payment by foreign contractors?

**Mr. Ian Bruce** (South Dorset): Was the hon. Gentleman in the House when the Government announced that they were not going to go ahead with the fast breeder reactor programme? Does he know how many Liberal Democrats protested, because of job losses in their constituencies?

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I do not want to go into the question whether the Liberal Democrats protested on that occasion, but we can be sure that jobs in every constituency have been affected by the THORP project. I protested about the rundown of the fast breeder reactor programme. To be fair to the Liberal Democrats, the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) protested about it at that time, I believe.

I have already said that 90 per cent. of all this money was spent with British industry. All in all, it has brought £1·6 billion-worth of inward investment to west Cumbria. It represents the biggest inward investment in our history. We shall never again experience anything like it.

These contracts, which were negotiated with the customers, are based upon both cost-plus and fixed-price terms, with about 40 per cent. accounting for the latter. On that specific point, can the Minister confirm that, irrespective of arguments over price, reported in *The Guardian* this morning, the business for core tonnage for reprocessing at THORP from Nuclear Electric and Scottish Nuclear is absolutely secure? Is it legally watertight?

The real issue is not that the nuclear giants are on a collision course but that the Government have withdrawn their pledge to underwrite risks attached to future legislation. It may be that the prospect of future privatisation of parts of the industry features greatly in the minds of Ministers and civil servants when decisions are taken on such matters, particularly when it comes to decommissioning costs.

**Mr. Flynn:** My hon. Friend mentioned that Japan does not do its own reprocessing because the world did not trust Japan, because of its record, at the time. Does he not think that events have moved on, and that the greatest threat in the world is the proliferation of materials for making nuclear weapons? If THORP goes ahead, there will be two choices: either this country will become the nuclear dustbin of the world or plutonium will proliferate throughout dozens of countries, many of which are unstable. As plutonium lasts for ever, will it not enormously increase the danger of nuclear proliferation?

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I shall refer to that point at the end of my speech. We must certainly address the proliferation argument. As for what my hon. Friend says about waste material, he will have heard earlier in the debate the argument about material substitution, which I think dealt with his point.

Questions have been raised about the soundness of the contracts. I am told that several joint opinions of leading counsel have been received by BNFL, confirming that they are

"commercially effective and binding on the parties."

I am equally sure that, if THORP did not go ahead, all the customers, especially those with fixed-price contracts, would seek compensation. That would cost the taxpayer, as my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said, as much as £5 billion. Furthermore, it would cost BNFL £1 billion in lost profits over the next 10 years. So I say again: why the dithering by the Government?

But the buck does not stop there. If THORP does not open, the cost of Magnox reprocessing will increase, as it faces the full cost burden of otherwise shared waste management facilities. Who will be forced to pay for that? Nuclear Electric and Scottish Nuclear. However, at the end of the day, the customer, the householder, will pay for it in higher electricity prices. That has to be avoided at all costs.

I want to say a few words about safety and proliferation. The public should never measure the industry's safety record on the basis of incidents at Sellafield. They are invariably in the old plant. When the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) goes to Sellafield, he should tell the management, if they want to take him round the new plant, that he wants first to go round the old plant. I understand that management do not always take people round the old plant.

It is only when one sees the old plant and compares it with the new one that one appreciates the developments in nuclear technology over the years. That is important when one is evaluating reports on television or radio, or in the media, about incidents at Sellafield.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that an episode as minute as the misplacement of a used glove counts as an incident? One reads in the newspapers that such incidents are increasing, when in reality they are less significant than a glove being lost in a hospital.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The hon. Lady is right. Many small incidents are reportable. However, we must not underestimate the importance of larger incidents, which, equally, are reportable.

The old plant was built in the 1950s. Subsequent plants have a far higher safety record, as their technology is invariably state of the art. Discharges into the sea following the Greenpeace incident in 1983 are now less

than one hundredth of what they were 10 years ago. If we are to evaluate the effect of radiation doses on the population, we must compare them with naturally occurring background radiation.

Although the report by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment mentions the possibility of an increased risk to the general public under the proposed authorisation in the area of the plant, such levels account for only 10 per cent. of natural background radiation. Put simply, THORP increases exposure by 25 microSieverts per person a year. That must be compared with 4,300 microSieverts in Ireland, 7,500 microSieverts in Cornwall and 2,200 microSieverts in west Cumbria.

I have, however, one reservation about discharges, and it concerns krypton, about which I have had endless correspondence and conversations with the company. I have corresponded with the Japanese authorities to establish whether the krypton removal plant attached to the Tokaimura pilot reprocessing plant should be fitted to THORP.

We are now told that the Japanese do not intend to fit such technology to their new fully fledged reprocessing plant at Rokashamura, which in effect will be the same as THORP when it is opened in 10 years' time. In my view, further work is needed on krypton, particularly as the THORP facility is designed for add-on krypton removal technology.

Proliferation is an issue, and we have to address it. The Minister should tell us today whether the Americans are exerting any pressure on the Government about the potential for proliferation arising from THORP. If the answer is yes, instead of questioning the project, surely the solution is to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency and its enforcement powers.

One must not stop the process or shut the plant, but rather deal with the problem of shipping the product around the world and with its end use. If I recall correctly, in the 1980s, when many Labour Members were unilateralists, we argued for the enforcement of its powers and for it to do its job successfully and properly.

Many of my constituents are worried about this debate and about the future of THORP. We believe that, after 15 years, the talking must stop and the plant should be allowed to open. We cannot go on in an atmosphere of concern such as currently exists in west Cumbria.

7.3 pm

**Mr. Geoffrey Dickens** (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I wish, first, to declare an interest as a non-executive director of Nuclear and General Engineering Ltd. and of Cunnington and Cooper Ltd., which both manufacture for BNFL on a considerable scale. I was previously a director of a company that manufactured for coal-fired power stations and of an oil company, so I have wide experience of energy, not merely a narrow view.

The United Kingdom has no equal in orchestrating delay—it really takes the biscuit. I am talking about Ministers, civil servants, inspectorates and local planning officers. I could go on and on. Who rubs their hands? It is the French across the channel. Why? Because they are our main competitors. They have nuclear power and nuclear processing in a big way. If we do not get cracking on THORP, we will export not only jobs from Cumbria but many jobs throughout the United Kingdom that depend on contracts for THORP going ahead very shortly.

We are affecting thousands of people. We are doing a great disservice to our engineers, scientists and inventors, who have made us leaders in nuclear processing. Labour Front-Bench spokesmen say, "It is a question of storage or reprocessing." It is not; it is a question of disposal and reprocessing, which allows management to decide whether some material is stored in dry storage. Labour's Front-Bench spokesmen have their story wrong and they are not thinking clearly enough. Management wants the choice.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) made a very good speech. However, he blamed John Guinness, who I believe is blameless because he was not chairman when many of these things were put in motion. Since becoming chairman, he has been quick to talk to hon. Members who have taken an interest in nuclear energy and to invite them to Sellafield to see things for themselves.

I referred to the United Kindom's orchestrating of delays, of which the Sizewell inquiry was a good example. We are simply handing contracts to our competitors. We have the designers, scientists and the skills. For goodness sake, let us capitalise on that and win trade for the United Kingdom.

The dangers were mentioned. People who live in Cornwall are subject to 7,500 microSieverts of radiation a year. People who live in Cumbria will be pleased to hear that they are subject to only 2,200 microSieverts a year. People who live close to the plant might be subject to an additional 53 microSieverts, but that equates to only the radiation level experienced on an aircraft trip to Tenerife and back. The radiation level for the whole of Cumbria equates to that experienced on an aircraft trip to Singapore and back.

Why are we talking about safety? If we are worried about safety, why let the French take the lead? They are only 20 miles across the water. If there is a disaster in France, we will suffer. It is absolutely stupid.

I have said all that I want to say in only a few minutes. I wish that other hon. Members would be as brief, because the speeches and stupid interventions that we have heard will serve only to hand contracts to the French. If hon. Members had something to say, why did not they stand up and make a speech? Why did they keep intervening? I reckon that I have said it all in two minutes.

7.8 pm

**Mr. Alan W. Williams** (Carmarthen): I thank the Liberal Democrats and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) for initiating the debate.

The key decisions about THORP were taken in 1978, since when there has not been a parliamentary debate on the subject. In those 15 years, circumstances have changed substantially. In the 1970s, oil prices went through the roof and our future oil supplies were uncertain. There was a world energy problem, because we did not know how long our oil and gas resources would last. There was, therefore, a projected energy gap. The answer with which we were presented in the 1970s was nuclear energy—advanced gas-cooled reactors, pressurised water reactors and, in the long term, fast breeder reactors.

*[Mr. Alan W. Williams]*

The initial justification for THORP was that we would need plutonium to solve the energy problem, and that fast breeder reactors would be the reactors of the 21st century.

Fifteen years later, it is a completely different ball game. There is no energy problem. Oil and gas resources are finite, but we are thinking in terms of 50 years and more. Oil prices are no longer the problem that they were in the 1970s. There is a glut of coal on the world market, and it is British. The market for nuclear energy has collapsed. Orders for reactors have been cancelled, and, because of the transparent economics, we now know that nuclear electricity means a £1 billion a year levy on electricity prices. There is no demand for plutonium, although there is an embarrassment of plutonium in Europe, Russia and the United States.

The Government cancelled the British fast breeder reactor programme two or three years ago. In Europe, all work on fast breeder reactors is coming to a halt, including that on the Super Phenix in France. Only Japan is proceeding with a fast breeder reactor, but, having studied nuclear matters for the past 20 years, I can safely predict that within 10 years, or perhaps even five, Japan will also scrap that work.

What is the justification for THORP? Once we had scrapped the fast breeder reactor, there was no need for it. The only justification is the £9 billion of orders for reprocessing, which were negotiated 10 years ago. We now realise that reprocessing is quite unnecessary because dry storage is a realistic, viable and far cheaper option.

The Minister said that everyone who is anti-THORP is anti-nuclear, which is generally the case. In economic terms, it would be cheaper for Nuclear Electric and Scottish Nuclear if THORP were cancelled and if they switched to dry storage, which is their preferred option. Germany is now considering removing the reprocessing requirement from its electricity utilities so the German orders can be re-negotiated; perhaps Germany would be glad if THORP were cancelled. The £5 billion-worth of Japanese orders is not a consolation prize. I am sure that the cancellation fee would be only a small fraction of that. The Japanese do not need the plutonium because there is an embarrassment of plutonium on the world market.

Why should we proceed with THORP? We do not need the uranium, which is much cheaper on the world market. We do not need the plutonium, because there is no market for it, and the radioactive waste produced is the same as that in the dry store facilities.

The future of THORP should be the subject of a full and open public inquiry so that all aspects can be considered. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said in his excellent speech, a public inquiry need take no more than 100 days; the decision could still be taken by the end of the year. I am sure that the result of a public inquiry would be completely different from that in 1978. The THORP project should be scrapped. It is cheaper to scrap it than to proceed.

7.13 pm

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (Fife, North-East): For all the passion and certainty that have accompanied so many of the speeches, perhaps the most revealing was the passage in the Minister's speech when he was at great pains—no doubt with his eye on the Strand and the High Court—to make it perfectly clear that certain statutory responsibilities devolve on the two Secretaries of State and that, however much passion and certainty we may display in the Chamber, to a large extent the decisions may fall to be taken under the discretion that legislation affords to them.

The speech made by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) was one of the most significant contributions to the debate. He expressed with great eloquence his and many other people's reservations. His analysis was faultless, but I found his conclusion difficult to justify against that analysis.

He concluded that an environmental impact assessment was necessary. I have seen a few of those in my time, and the one thing we know about them is that they are all based on assumptions. If one wants to challenge the assumptions, the only way to do so is at a public inquiry. I should declare an interest in public inquiries because some of the best and, I suppose, some of the most lucrative days of my life have been spent at public inquiries.

One important issue has not yet been dealt with: public inquiries are an important vehicle for creating public confidence. They are not merely opportunities for points to be scored by either side of the argument or for cross-examination; they are an opportunity to allay the public's legitimate anxieties. Of course, if a public inquiry were to follow in this case, it would cause delay and costs would also be involved. I agree with the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) that jobs could be at risk.

I am not one of those who passionately oppose nuclear power, to use the phrase of the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), but the issues go beyond the boundaries of Cumbria and have attracted the attention of and caused anxiety among sufficient people to justify a public inquiry.

Hon. Members should read with care the answer put on the board at 3.30 pm today. The Secretary of State for the Environment made it clear that the functions incumbent on him under, for example, section 11 of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 are not to be prejudiced by the terms of his answer. If one reads the Act, one finds that the form of the consultation that the Secretaries of State may yet determine may be that of a public inquiry. The Minister dare not say that there will be no public inquiry; if he did, he would be trenching on the discretion of those Secretaries of State, and I can assure him that it would be relied on in an application for judicial review in the High Court in the Strand. The consequence of the passion and commitment that have been displayed this evening may yet be a public inquiry. If there were to be an inquiry, I do not believe that it would be against the public interest.

I understand those who support nuclear power with great passion and enthusiasm. I also understand hon. Members who are anxious to support those who work in the industry, especially their constituents. However, before we proceed, and in view of the fact that 15 years have elapsed since the Parker inquiry, is it not right to pause and reconsider?

I do not make that suggestion on an insubstantial basis. On the subject of substitution, the document produced by the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee raises an important matter that has not yet been resolved. How is it to be resolved to the public's satisfaction other than through a public inquiry? I wanted to say a little more about the risks of nuclear proliferation, but time prevents me from doing so.

One consequence of THORP would be the production of more plutonium. To convert it to weapons grade material takes great skill and is no mean feat. The existence of additional plutonium and the risk of its potential diversion for illicit purposes should cause us great concern. I do not think that the United Kingdom is at risk of a nuclear attack from countries that were formerly members of the Warsaw pact or the Soviet Union, but the United Kingdom's interests will certainly be prejudiced, or at risk, if there is a proliferation of countries with nuclear weapons. That in itself should make us pause and think before we proceed with the programme.

7.19 pm

**Mr. Eggar:** With the leave of the House, I should like to reply to the debate.

We have had a constructive debate in which a wide variety of issues have been aired. Of course, my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will take careful note of the points that have been made. They must exercise their functions in relation to the Sellafield discharge authorisation as that is a matter for them.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) urged an environmental impact statement on the House. He was answered admirably by the hon. Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). They argued against such a statement very persuasively.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) again urged us to have a full public inquiry. He joins Greenpeace in that request. However, unlike Greenpeace, he was not honest about what he wanted. Greenpeace has stated quite specifically that it wants a public inquiry because that would delay the operation of THORP by a year or 18 months. Why did not the hon. and learned Gentleman come clean with the House and say that that was his motivation?

My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and the hon. Member for Workington spoke well for Cumbria and made clear the widespread support for THORP. As usual, my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) spoke clearly, directly and to the point.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) revealed himself once more to be a fully paid up member of the "We know it all, but we are opponents to nuclear power and we will use every mechanism we can" brigade, as that is what, in effect, he said in his short intervention.

I wish finally to consider the motion tabled by the Liberal Democrats. They state in their motion that there is a "hardening of international opposition". There is no evidence of that and customers have supported the plant yet again. The motion states:

"there are . . . strong economic, environmental and proliferation reasons"

against the plant. However, the conclusions of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, revealed in today's parliamentary answer, give the lie to that.

The Liberal Democrats also state in the motion that "all relevant circumstances have . . . changed".

Yes, relevant circumstances have changed: THORP has been constructed; people have been recruited for the plant, contracts have been signed and people are trained and ready to work. The Liberal Democrats should pay attention to that.

The motion states that alternative processes are available. However, customers are not choosing those alternative processes. The motion calls for "full disclosure" of contracts and well it might. As my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth made clear, what would that do? It would help the French and BNFL's international competitors.

The motion also calls for "economic justification" for the plant. That is exactly what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has done in his announcement today. The motion calls for opportunity for "public comment" and that, too, has been provided in the parliamentary answer today.

The points made by the Liberal Democrats have been answered. I call on the House to vote for the Government amendment to the motion.

**Mr. Archy Kirkwood** (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

*Question*, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

*Question put accordingly*, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 43, Noes 157.

**Division No. 308]** **[7.22 pm**

**AYES**

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Bayley, Hugh
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Dafis, Cynog
Denham, John
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Flynn, Paul
Galloway, George
Harvey, Nick
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mullin, Chris
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Rendel, David
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wareing, Robert N
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wise, Audrey

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Archy Kirkwood and**
**Mr. James Wallace.**

**NOES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Dalyell, Tam
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James

Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hutton, John
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. David Lightbown and**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*Question,* That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House congratulates the management and workforce of British Nuclear Fuels plc on the completion of its high technology thermal oxide reprocessing plant (THORP) for the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel at Sellafield; welcomes the 3,000 jobs, mainly in the North West, which the plant supports; recognises that around 90 per cent. of its £1,850 million capital cost was spent with British industry; notes that the plant is needed to fulfil the customers' requirements for reprocessing, represented by contracts already won worth £9 billion; recalls that it is a major example of international inward investment which the chairmen of the ten Japanese nuclear power generators strongly endorsed last week; expresses confidence in the non-proliferation arrangements that underlie the plant's work for all the overseas customers; and, subject to receipt by BNFL of such consents as are required by law, supports the commissioning of the plant at the earliest practicable date.

# Regional Development (Wales)

7.34 pm

**Mr. Cynog Dafis** (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the reduction in resources for regional development by the United Kingdom Government; notes that this is in stark contrast to the policy of the European Community, which actively promotes regional development in order to improve the infrastructure and economies of peripheral nations and regions; and calls on the Secretary of State for Wales to ensure that the whole of Wales benefits from a wide range of instruments for regional development, including assisted area status.

The timing of this debate is particularly opportune, for several reasons. We have a new Secretary of State for Wales—a Secretary of State who inevitably knows little about Wales. There is nothing unusual about that—with the Tories, of course, it is par for the course. The House will know perfectly well Plaid Cymru's remedy for that chronic situation. I shall return to that point later.

It is equally significant, perhaps, that Wales knows little about the new Secretary of State. True, his reputation has come before him—a Thatcherite, as dry as a bone, a non-interventionist free marketeer, so it is said, thus inevitably one who is less than enthusiastic, perhaps highly sceptical, about what is termed regional development policy. However, that might be a completely false impression. Among other matters, the debate provides an opportunity to begin to find out what creature the Secretary of State is. I use the word "creature" in its original and best meaning—a person created. If he wishes, this is an opportunity for him to dispel the image of him that I have just presented.

I make it clear at the outset that, when members of my party speak of regional development policy, we do not mean developing Wales as a region; we mean the development of the regions of Wales. Wales is not a region; Wales is a nation. We in Plaid Cymru say that the prime reason why almost the whole of Wales is in such need of regional development policy is that we in Wales have not taken our nationality sufficiently seriously. We have failed to bring into being the institutions, in particular a properly constituted Government accountable to a democratic Parliament, that would enable the people collectively to take Wales's future into their own hands. That is an interpretation that more and more people in Wales are beginning to accept, and with more and more conviction.

One of the factors that have brought about that evolution of opinion over recent years has been the absurdity and the incongruousness—it would be comical were it not so infuriating—of the fact that three successive Secretaries of State for Wales have been English, representatives of English constituencies and members of a Government pursuing policies that are quite unacceptable to the people of Wales.

We in Plaid Cymru and other hon. Members want national development in Wales, and that entails the economic development of Wales's regions in order to provide prosperity for our people, the material underpinning of our communities with their varied Welsh cultures, opportunities for fulfilment within Wales for our young people, and the encouragement of confidence and self-reliance among the people of Wales. The underlying chronic debilitating problem of Wales has been the continued out-migration of our young people over a long period—a continuous brain drain from Wales. Building a national future for Wales must entail tackling that underlying historic problem.

Of course, the Conservative Government have made some concessions to Welsh distinctiveness, lest, I suppose, the natives become restless. Two of the three previous viceroys have become wets, as they are called. They have made much use of Wales as a laboratory to test and demonstrate the effectiveness of relatively—I emphasise the word "relatively"—interventionist economic strategies. We have been told that that is typical of Conservative administration in Wales recently. It remains to be seen whether the Secretary of State will belie his reputation or prove himself to be of the same ilk as the previous two, or perhaps three, Secretaries of State.

That relative interventionism, as we might call it, has meant that Wales has endured a reduction in Government expenditure on regional and financial assistance of 62 per cent., compared with 79 per cent. for Great Britain as a whole. If that sounds a bit like damning with faint praise, as Pope would have it, that is exactly what it was meant to be. Funds from the Exchequer for the Welsh Development Agency stood at £87 million in 1991-92, compared with £112 million in 1979-80, at constant prices.

Notwithstanding the reduction in funding, the WDA is a powerful agency. I shall be interested to hear what the Secretary of State has to say about its future. It has been suggested that the WDA has trumpeted its own success to such a degree as to imperil its future by, first, arousing envy among the English regions and, secondly, causing some people to believe that its survival is no longer necessary. The WDA is a great success story of the Welsh economy.

That weakness—that peccadillo—of the WDA is less true of the Development Board for Rural Wales. That board has done important work in the rural areas of mid-Wales and is now targeting—as it should—the western seaboard, which includes a great deal of my constituency. That work must continue. We must ensure that the commitment to those areas in Wales is maintained.

**Mr. Jonathan Evans** (Brecon and Radnor): Before the hon. Gentleman leaves the issue of the WDA and the Development Board for Rural Wales, perhaps he will recognise that the way in which those organisations have operated recently has led to there being much more in terms of a partnership between private business and the agencies. That is different from the situation that existed at the inception of the WDA. Does he think that that shows that the agencies have a glowing future, in line with the whole approach of Government policy in terms of a partnership between the Government and private business?

**Mr. Dafis:** I have no objection at all to the principle of a partnership between public agencies such as the WDA and the private sector. Long may such a partnership continue and develop. However, it is not the same as always tying the funds that public agencies should be putting into certain developments to the availability of private moneys in connection with them. Be that as it may —a partnership of that sort must be welcomed.

It is worth considering what exactly has been achieved by regional policy in Wales, including the activities of the

*[Mr. Dafis]*

WDA over the past decade. I shall leave aside for a moment the pitiful inadequacy of the response in the 1960s and the 1970s—I make no apology for that period—to the massive structural change that the Welsh economy was undergoing. There were serious deficiencies at that time.

There were successes in the 1980s, but they were partial at best. That is not to whinge—it is simply to face the truth. It is important that we do not allow any propagandist self-deception to prevent us from looking the facts straight in the face and examining the current needs of the Welsh economy.

**Mr. Alex Carlile** (Montgomery): I agree with the hon. Gentleman's comment that the improvements have been partial. Does he agree that, if the remit of the Development Board for Rural Wales were widened somewhat so that it could take a more active part in both agriculture and tourism, its success might be rather more holistic?

**Mr. Dafis:** I am grateful for that intervention. An holistic approach is certainly what we need in rural Wales, as elsewhere. Clearly, industrial development needs to be considered, together with the state of the agricultural industry. I go further to say that such developments need to be considered in relation to cultural issues and cultural development. Recently, the DBRW has become more sensitive to such considerations, and I am glad to see that sort of development.

In what way has the achievement been partial? Inward investment has been largely limited to south-east and north-east Wales. I have the figures for the period 1983-88, but I do not think that they would be much different today. At that time, 84 per cent. of inward investment went to the three Glamorgans and Gwent alone. With Clwyd, it added up to 93·9 per cent. Effectively, inward investment has been limited in Gwynedd and it has hardly touched Dyfed and Powys. I do not think that things have changed since then.

**Mr. Tim Devlin** (Stockton, South): The United Kingdom as a whole has been lucky enough to attract nearly 30 per cent. of the total amount of inward investment in the European Community. The vast majority of it goes either to Scotland, where it is pooled by the Scottish Development Agency, or to the Welsh Development Agency. Meanwhile, the north of England, which must trundle along with the Northern Development Company, has been successful, but not to anything like the same degree as the WDA.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Ms Lait) is here to plead for the sort of assistance that the hon. Gentleman is taking much too readily for granted in southern and northern Wales. Incidentally, the people living in those two parts of Wales need regional assistance.

**Mr. Dafis:** I am here tonight unashamedly to plead the cause of Wales. That is certainly my priority. In the creaking United Kingdom framework, it is only right and proper that the national nature of Wales and Scotland should be recognised by different agencies. I am not in the business of bandying figures about or making comparisons of that sort—I am simply examining what has been achieved in terms of regional policy in Wales as a result of the activities of the WDA. I am simply saying that inward investment has touched only relatively confined parts of Wales. Even in Glamorgan and Gwent, its effect has been strictly limited in territorial terms.

The south Wales valleys are the cradle of Welsh industrial development—*[Interruption.]*—with politics of various sorts. We have all read Lewis Jones and we all know about little Moscow, the great tradition of Welsh Labour politics and the rapid growth of Plaid Cymru support in the industrial valleys. I am speaking with great affection about the south Wales valleys, which are so important to the cultural make-up of Wales. Recently, unemployment in those valleys has reached the same level as that in the 1930s. Each year, 1,000 people move from those valleys. Even in south-east Wales, the effect of inward investment and industrial development has been partial. That is my point.

There is also the problem of low pay. During the 1980s, Wales fell from fourth to ninth position among the British regions for male full-time manual earnings, from fifth to 10th for non-manual males and from seventh to ninth for professional women. Activity rates—which are a key indicator of the nature and health of an economy—among males of working age are 9 per cent. below the British average. Dependency rates, reflecting in part the migration of the young, which I mentioned earlier, are high. There are deep structural deficiencies.

Meanwhile, the economy of rural Wales, and therefore of its communities—economies and communities go together—are in a truly perilous state. That is no exaggeration. In agriculture, there has been a rapid reduction in the number of holdings and in full-time employment—a process which is not yet complete, I fear. We see the centralisation of many services, out of rural areas, and out of villages and small towns. Our nuclear power stations, which are important employers, face an uncertain future. In Dyfed, the closure of military establishments is dealing a devastating blow to many areas. There are deep and serious problems in rural Wales. There is widespread cynicism in Pembrokeshire about the Welsh Office's response to the closure of defence establishments there.

The former Secretary of State, in the run-up to the 1992 general election, established a west Wales task force which was charged with drawing up a strategy for the economic revitalisation of the area. Prestigious and able consultants were appointed, and it was announced that the strategy was to be complete and ready for action by September 1992. A seriously inadequate strategy document was made available for a meeting at Gwydyr house at the end of January 1993, several months late.

The key recommendation was that the task force should be revamped and that a new project director should be appointed. That was a key appointment. It was not until 25 April this year that the WDA was told that it was to be given the job of organising the new task force. Not surprisingly, the project director is yet to be appointed. All those months of lost opportunities have been mentioned by people working in the area. It has been a disgraceful affair from start to finish. The task force is, I believe, once more under way, and I wish it well. I have been positive in my response to the existence of the task force all along and I intend to continue to be positive, despite the serious faults in the way in which the matter has been handled.

Fundamental to the recommendations about the task force was the recommendation that the Fishguard travel-to-work area should be granted full development

area status. Here we come to an important theme in tonight's debate, which is mentioned in the motion. There must be full development area status for the Fishguard area. It will be astonishing if that is not implemented, although such implementation should not be at the expense of the parts of Wales that currently enjoy assisted area status.

Rumour currently tells us that parts of Wales, including parts of my constituency, may lose assisted area status. That is entirely unacceptable. I hope that my remarks so far have highlighted the massive task that remains to be carried out in regional development policy in Wales. We need not a rundown, but a strengthening, of regional policy. There is scope for modification, for refinement and for changes in direction. There is a need to pinpoint for special attention the areas, already mentioned, that are suffering severe difficulties. I think especially of the south Wales valleys, areas in my constituency and areas in the north which need special attention.

It is accepted by the development agencies, including the DBRW, that we need greater emphasis on indigenous businesses, on the encouraging of local sourcing and on the creation of networks between businesses within areas. We need more emphasis on skills enhancement, on innovation, and on the availability of information of the highest quality to individuals, to companies and to public authorities. We need such information to be facilitated through the development of modern technology. All those themes need to be pursued more now than in the past, in a general context of strengthening regional policy and especially of maintaining assisted area status for the areas that have it now.

This is no time for downgrading, partly because that would convey entirely the wrong signal to the European Community. That point leads me to the second reason why the timing of this debate is opportune. EC structural funds are currently under review, so the months from now until the end of the year are important. It is vital that European regional development policy should be strengthened, because without a really powerful regional policy—this is perhaps the central issue—the effect of the single European market, the move towards a single European currency and monetary union will be devastating for peripheral and disadvantaged regions such as Wales.

Free trade and open markets can serve the interests of people, in the short term at least, as consumers. Open markets, open borders and free trade can also serve the interests of large, powerful organisations and conglomerates. As such, those developments have an inexorably centralising tendency, favouring areas that enjoy a competitive advantage. People are not just consumers, thank goodness; they are also workers and producers, and they are also members of communities with roots in cultures specific to particular places. Regional policy is a philosophical recognition, among other things, of that second aspect of human need—the need for people to be rooted in communities and to be infinitely more than merely consumers of goods.

The recognition of that need at European level is one reason why resources under the European structural funds were doubled between 1989 and 1993. That is why Maastricht envisages a further strengthening and development of regional policy. Wales is looking increasingly in the direction of Europe, and rightly so. Objective 2 status for regions seriously affected by industrial decline has been important in the industrial south-east and in the north-east. I am sure that hon. Members who represent those areas will wish to elaborate on that point.

As I represent a western constituency, I refer to the crucial importance of objective 5b status for Gwynedd, Dyfed and Powys. The £100 million provided for the integrated development operations programme has made possible road improvements. Regional development fund money has contributed to further education for 10,000 students in Dyfed alone. We have had the excellent Leader programme administered on the borders of my constituency and that of the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) by Antur Teifi. It is a most exciting development. I was there not long ago at the opening of the new Telemateg centre. That programme was initiated under the Leader programme, and was a consequence of the fact that the area has objective 5b status.

The European regional development fund grant of £2 million will enable Stena Sealink to effect improvements to Fishguard harbour. That will make possible a third crossing, which is a crucial development for that port and for the southern corridor linking the Republic of Ireland through south Wales to the European continent. The fund has made an even more significant contribution to the development of Holyhead, which is crucial for the development of the central corridor.

I have given just a few examples. It is small wonder that Gwynedd, Dyfed and Powys seek to continue objective 5b status as essential to the development strategy. I support, as a person from the south, the wish of Aberconwy, Colwyn and Glyndwr to be included in objective 5b status. Clearly, those areas in the north belong to the same category. Currently the application for the new programme for 1994-99 is under consideration. This time it is a six-year programme. Here, time is of the essence.

**Mr. Elfyn Llwyd** (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I dare say that my hon. Friend will be interested to know that, five years ago, Aberconwy satisfied all the necessary criteria for objective 5b status. With the passage of time, Aberconwy has declined in economic terms. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is vital that its application this year should succeed?

**Mr. Dafis:** That proposal, and any emphasis on it, will have my whole-hearted support. It is good that Gwynedd, Dyfed and Powys are united in their support .

As I have indicated, time is of the essence in considering the application for the new programme. It is crucial that the system be in place by the end of the year so that the local authorities may make timely arrangements for co-financing—which is difficult these days, local government finance being what it is—and so that programmes may get under way promptly at the beginning of next year. The Secretary of State must ensure that progress is not held up in any way.

It seems that one area of dispute concerns the proposal in the Commission's green paper published on 16 June that 10 per cent. of total funding be given to European Community initiatives—programmes initiated by the Community itself in response to specific socio-economic situations. It is reported that the British Government want the proportion to be 7 per cent. instead of 10 per cent. In this regard, my party supports the Commission. We want to see the development of a partnership between the European Community and local authorities. Community

*[Mr. Dafis]*

initiatives must be given their proper place. I should say, by the way, that I am told that such initiatives are a means of ensuring that additionality actually applies. That is, of course, of great importance to the people of Wales.

In any case, at least three of the initiatives that I want to mention are particularly relevant to Wales. First, as many hon. Members will no doubt want to emphasise, we want a commitment of support for RECHAR 2—something that is very important to former coal-mining areas. Secondly, there is Konver for areas dependent on military installations and suffering the effects of cuts in that field. That is, of course, highly relevant to Dyfed and, in particular, to Pembrokeshire, which are reeling from the effects of the closure of Trecwn and Brawdy.

Applications under the current Konver programme were to have been received by June, according to information that I received earlier this year. However, until recently local authorities were unaware of the criteria for projects, as the information had not been provided. That is very worrying. I hear that the deadline has been extended by a month, and I hope that the Secretary of State will ensure that we shall not lose out. It is important that such funds be targeted at places, such as those in Wales, where defence establishments have been closed and that there be no failure by the Welsh Office to formulate and process applications.

Thirdly, there in Interreg. It is essential that the maritime border between Wales and Ireland be recognised for the purposes of this initiative. Co-operation between local authorities in Wales and local authorities in the Republic of Ireland is growing. I have attended several meetings of representatives of Welsh and Irish authorities. This is a highly encouraging development. Access to Interreg—a very substantial fund—would enable Gwynedd and Dyfed to benefit from development in the Republic of Ireland.

Indeed, there has been substantial development in the Republic owing to its objective 1 status and its eligibility for cohesion fund money. In particular, the development of the central corridor through Holyhead and of the southern corridor through Fishguard as Euroroutes—road and rail—is of vital importance. The existence of an autonomous European state out there in the sea west of Wales is a factor of major importance and of enormous advantage to Wales, particularly west Wales.

Mention of objective 1 status, which will take 70 per cent. of all structural fund moneys, brings up the question of eligibility for rural Wales. I hope that the Secretary of State will continue to pursue this matter with the utmost energy. Eligibility would be of enormous advantage to Wales because of the size of the fund and because 75 per cent. funding of capital projects with objective 1 status would be made possible. It would be quite unacceptable if rural Wales were not included in objective 1 status.

I have said little about the nature and direction of the development in Wales that we wish to see by means of regional policy. That has not been my prime purpose today. I have already touched on the need for the so-called peripheral regions to develop co-operation and to become cohesive areas that trade with each other and share the benefits of contacts. I am not very keen on the term "peripheral regions", as so much depends on what one defines as the core. Developments of this kind are to be seen in a very interesting way in the statement of intent prepared by the Irish sea partnership of local authorities.

Policymakers need to be aware of the fact that the principle of environmental sustainability must very soon become the prime consideration in economic development—something of which not many people are yet aware. We need to plan accordingly. The shift towards this kind of sustainability—ultimately the only kind of sustainability—will have massive implications for transport, trade and all other aspects of the pattern of production, distribution and consumption. That is something to which we are just beginning to wake up.

Ultimately, if economic activity is not environmentally sustainable, it is not sustainable at all. We hear these days, in very responsible and well-informed quarters, talk of the future of the planet and of mankind being at stake. This is not empty rhetoric. Coming to terms with that fact will have monumental implications for regional policy in Wales, among other things. That is something of which we must be aware now.

In Wales, there are particularly relevant issues, such as our enormous potential for renewable energy. It is possible that we need new instruments of policy to ensure that those resources are developed in such a way as to strengthen the local economy and to empower the local community and enhance local self-reliance, which is a fundamental tenet of environmental sustainability.

I should like to emphasise a particular principle—that, in the context of open European borders and a completed European market, a strong and effective regional policy is absolutely essential. Naturally, we—I refer not just to members of my own party—believe that by far the best way for Wales to advocate this principle within Europe would be as an autonomous nation directly represented in the Community. Until we achieve that status—and afterwards, of course—partnerships between the Community and Welsh local authorities will have a role. So long as there is a need for such a person, we shall need a Secretary of State for Wales who is a vigorous and a committed proponent of regional development. I hope that the current Secretary of State will confirm tonight that he is such a person and that he will prove it in action over the coming months.

8.9 pm

**The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood):** I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the progress that the Welsh economy has made in recent years as a result of the Government's policies; and notes with approval that the Government intends to continue to pursue vigorously these same policies that have brought about this success.'.

The most pressing priority for Wales and the whole United Kingdom is recovery which will bring new companies and new products, strengthen our industries, raise living standard and, above all, bring more jobs. I agree with the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) about that, but I do not for a moment agree with many of his other points.

He said that we had to cut the Welsh Development Agency budget, but the budget over which I am presiding this year is a record in both cash and real terms. As we have seen in the past few days, it and many other factors about Wales are delivering the goods in terms of many new

jobs coming to Wales. I assure the hon. Gentleman and the House that the WDA has a fine future just as surely as it has had a proud track record in recent years.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** Will the right hon. Gentleman also assure the House that the Development Board for Rural Wales has a fine long-term future in continuing the work that it has done so well so far?

**Mr. Redwood:** Our current plans are for a vigorous programme through that body as well as through the WDA.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North welcomed the idea of partnership, although it is a pity that he almost choked when he used the word "succe[illegible]." He should be proud of the successes of Wales and those of the WDA. It ill behoves him to be jealous of success in the valleys, although I understand his wish to succeed everywhere. But if he is serious about winning votes from Labour in the valleys, he will have to be more enthusiastic about promoting the valleys as well as the other parts of Wales.

Labour's Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) laughs because he does not think that the Welsh nationalists could claim votes in the Welsh valleys. There will be more tension between those two parties as they rival each other to paint a portrait of gloom and conduct a Dutch auction of promises that they wil not have to fulfil.

**Dr. Kim Howells** (Pontypridd): Is the Secretary of State saying that the Conservatives will not contest the valleys? In the local elections, many votes which would normally have gone to the Conservatives went to Plaid Cymru, but that was because the Conservatives did not put up any candidates.

**Mr. Redwood:** Of course the Conservatives will contest and win many more seats in Wales at the general election because of our economic success. In the long run-up to that election, there will be many disputes between the Opposition parties.

The west Wales task force was called into question in the introductory dirge by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North. The WDA director for rural affairs is already acting as the executive on behalf of that task force beause we have not yet made a final appointment. He is doing that because local authorities are involved and wanted the job formally advertised. We are now doing that, but we do not want delay; that is why the rural affairs director is carrying out the task in the meantime.

Today I had the privilege of opening a new business centre at Milford Haven which is making a home for new enterprises in that part of Wales. I hope that the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North welcomes that. I went on to open a remodelled youth hostel at Trevine, which will also bring business and activity to that part of the national park. I want many more such schemes thriving there, based on the partnership that our activities are bringing to Wales. I wish to see maximum local involvetment in schemes funded by the EC, by the Government or by a variety of means. That is because locally driven and locally determined schemes and locally derived ideas are usually the best, and in a true partnership local people are needed to push ideas.

Of course the Government supported the idea of objective 1 status, but unfortunately the EC was not enthusiastic. We proposed it and there was no lack of enthusiasm by the Government; nor will there be any lack of enthusiasm in pressing other joint claims by the House to the EC in its review of regional funds and eligibility.

**Mr. Dafydd Wigley** (Caernarfon): Does the Secretary of State agree that the sustaining of objective 2 status in Clwyd, Glamorgan and Gwent is predicated on the maintenance of assisted area status in those areas? Does he also agree that the Government have designated some of those assisted areas to be downgraded? Those areas will inevitably lose the possibility of objective 2 support as a direct result of London Government policy.

**Mr. Redwood:** I do not agree at all. We shall urge Wales's case upon the Commission for our revised regional map for our own assisted area status and in the wider connection about which the hon. Gentleman asks. Later in my speech, I shall deal with the state of play on the assisted area map.

A dynamic enterprise economy delivers recovery. The luxuries of yesterday become commonplace today. The jobs of tomorrow will be making things which are still on the drawing board or have yet to be invented. In the depth of the 1981 recession, people asked where the jobs would come from. Few predicted the speed or intensity of growth in pharmaceuticals and electronics, in biochemistry and in services, but that growth was the hallmark of the British recovery and growth of the late 1980s.

In the 1950s most homes lacked television, but by the 1980s practically every household owned one. In the 1970s few had video recorders, but they are now regular features of the living room. In the early 1980s, the rich few owned a microwave; today a majority of Welsh kitchens sport one. So it may be, too, with home computers, video cameras, satellite and cable television and a host of new products.

**Mr. Rhodri Morgan** (Cardiff, West): They were all invented in Japan.

**Mr. Redwood:** The hon. Gentleman jibes that all those things were invented abroad. They were not, but I wish to see more such products invented and made in Wales and I hope that he shares that aim.

I trust that in moving this motion Opposition Members want Wales to prosper, but they look at only a small part of the story of how that can be brought about. Grants can help to clinch a deal or tip the balance with the marginal investment, but investors come to Wales or expand in Wales for many other reasons, which we must also encourage and support. Prudential Insurance, Toyota and Dow Corning all came without any regional selective assistance grant and they are all very welcome.

The Government have completed their review of assisted areas and have sent their proposals to the European Commission. If we judged by unemployment alone Wales would see its assisted area coverage fall from 85 per cent. to less than half its population, such has been the success in reducing relative unemployment in Wales compared with elsewhere in the country and in the Community.

**Mr. David Hanson** (Delyn)*rose*——

**Mr. Redwood:** Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would allow me to complete my point. He might need to hear it all before he puts a question.

*[Mr. Redwood]*

I assure Opposition Members that the proposals put to the Commission are a much better deal for Wales than that, but they will have to be patient about knowing the final outline of the map. We shall announce the results when we know the outcome of the EC review. My aim has been to ensure that Wales gets all the help that it needs to continue recovery. I have taken structural change, remoteness from markets and proximity to other assisted areas into account. I have not sold Wales short. I trust that the EC will now back our judgment.

**Mr. Hanson:** Would the Minister care to comment on activity rates in Wales? An examination of that aspect rather than a statement about the number of people employed shows a far worse picture than the one that he has just painted.

**Mr. Redwood:** I have explained the factors that I am taking into account. I share the hon. Gentleman's wish to see higher activity rates. I am not satisfied with one person in 10 being out of work. There is much to do, and that is the purpose of all my actions at the Welsh Office.

**Mr. Llwyd:** The Minister says that he has taken proximity to assisted areas into account. Is that good or bad for Aberconwy, which is sandwiched between two such areas?

**Mr. Redwood:** I hope that the hon. Gentleman can work that out for himself. I made a simple point and, on reflection, he should be able to answer his question to his own satisfaction.

Why do businesses come to Wales? I have asked business men this while encouraging them to do so. They tell me of many things that persuade them, such as the warmth of the welcome and the fact that Japanese, Americans, German and other people from far afield are made to feel at home.

Those business men are attracted to Wales, above all, by the quality of the work force, who are well trained with an excellent record of Labour relations. Good cost levels and a competitive exchange rate are also attractive, because companies are shifting production from the dearer areas of Europe. Also of significance is the fact that we have the lowest interest rates in western Europe. Other factors cited by business men include the availability of good premises, the beauty of the landscape and the quality of life.

It is worth noting the achievements that the country has put together. According to Cambridge Econometrics, the growth forecasts for 1993 reveal that that of Germany is set to be minus 2 per cent., that of France to be minus 0·6 per cent. and that of Spain to be minus 0·5 per cent. The economy of Wales, however, is forecast to grow by plus 1·8 per cent. Let us hope that that forecast is wrong and that the economy will grow by an even greater amount, as it well could.

The inflation rate in Germany, Spain and Italy stands at 4·2 per cent., and 4·6 per cent. respectively. That of the United Kingdom is 1·3 per cent. The interest rates of Germany and France are around 7·5 per cent. and those of Italy 10 per cent., while in the United Kingdom they stand at 6 per cent. That is the kind of undercutting that I like to do, and that is the way to promote business.

Unit labour costs are also extremely important to manufacturers. In the past year, those of Germany, Spain and Italy have grown by 8·3 per cent., 5 per cent. and 4·8 per cent. respectively. In the United Kingdom, however, they have been falling.

**Mr. Paul Flynn** (Newport, West): It is because we are a low-wage economy.

**Mr. Redwood:** No, it is not because of low wages; it is because we offer high productivity and good rates of growth in productivity. Opposition Members do not like that, but it is true.

Economic recovery is what we want. The long dole queues across Europe are a malignant growth that we must cut out—the patient needs surgery. We want low levels of unemployment and high levels of investment, low levels of business failures and high levels of success, low costs and high productivity.

Cutting interest rates from 15 per cent. to 6 per cent. was the biggest job creation programme of all—£11,000 million of extra spending power was left with United Kingdom companies. That is money for research and development and for new factories. At last the investor, choosing between Britain, France and Germany, comes to us for the cheapest money.

Keeping taxes low gives rewards for success. Opposition Members, peddling the politics of jealousy, want to tax the entrepreneur more. If they had their way, those who create jobs or make profits would be taxed more highly than our competitors. Why, then, would those entrepreneurs stay? Why should new business men come, if more than half of their earnings would be taken by the state? Keeping taxes on profits the lowest in western Europe—33 per cent. corporation tax, with 25 per cent. for small companies—counts with investors and creates the right atmosphere for business success.

The reform of our labour laws has also been telling. Employers and employees alike need to know where they stand. Everybody's rights and interests should be protected in a clear and fair way. Sensible labour laws breed good industrial relations *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members laugh about everything apart from assisted area status. They obviously do not have a clue about how business works. They do not know what it is that attracts investors and creates jobs. I will tell them more, because I think that they should know.

In recent years, industrial relations have been transformed. Last year, across the country, there were only 253 stoppages—the lowest ever recorded. In Wales, the record is even better. Only 10 days per 1,000 employees were lost through strikes in Wales, compared with 24 per 1,000 in the United Kingdom as a whole and many more in most of our competitor countries.

Business needs freedom—freedom from red tape, from bureaucracy and from the encumbrances of vexatious rules imposed by vexatious minds. We cannot afford to put investors off with all the paraphernalia of the social chapter, as some Opposition Members seek to do. The best social welfare policy is one that delivers jobs. There is little point in extending workers' rights too far if all that results is that they get the sack because their employers cannot afford to keep them.

As the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North almost identified in his speech, underlying all is the need to promote free trade. Backing business in world

markets can win orders. We must avoid or remove artificial barriers put in the way of global trading. Countries like ours, with strong manufacturing bases, cannot afford to let themselves be hemmed in by protectionism. Protected trade brings longer dole queues.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** It is extremely encouraging to hear the right hon. Gentleman speak with such enthusiasm about free trade, and I agree with everything that he has said about it. Does he agree that one of the greatest encumbrances to free trade in the European Community is the fact that each member state has its own currency? Will he now become a convert to a single currency, which would facilitate free trade in Europe?

**Mr. Redwood:** No, I do not accept that point at all. People can and do trade in a single currency of their choice —the common currency—and many already do so. The hon. and learned Gentleman has not done enough deals in international markets to know the modest cost of exchange transactions against the overall costs of the deal transacted. If Opposition Members spent more time talking to business men and understood the real issues faced by the wealth creators today, they might make a more constructive contribution to the debate. We should praise the entrepreneur, not undermine him. We should encourage him, not overtax him. We should see him as the job creator, not as the pariah of socialist mythology.

Government can, of course, do a lot to help. Government must provide the roads and railway lines. They must stand up for fair and open markets. They should provide help where high unemployment, massive structural change or remote locations need it. None of that will work, however, if the general policy for growth is wrong.

Wales has been the prime beneficiary of that approach. Let no one have any doubt about the fact that Wales is making it: Wales is leading the United Kingdom out of the recession. The recovery is gathering speed all the time. Unemployment in Wales is now 0·2 percentage points below the United Kingdom average. At the beginning of the recession it was 0·8 percentage points above that average. In May 1986, it was 2·6 percentage points higher. Long-term unemployment in Wales has fallen by 40 per cent. in the past seven and a half years. How I welcome that.

Thousands of new jobs have been created by investors from overseas, who have been attracted by the skills of the Welsh work force, the relatively low taxes and the good communications. My predecessors as Conservative Secretaries of State for Wales made enormous strides in investing in communications, developing strategies to meet particular problems—as the valleys programme demonstrates—and enabling the Welsh Development Agency to play its role in attracting development and promoting the visionary Cardiff bay scheme. I pay particular tribute to their special achievement in generating a spirit of co-operation in developing the economy of Wales which transcends many of the boundaries of politics and ideology. There is a team in Wales which is out to win for Wales, and I am proud to lead it.

International competition is getting keener by the day. I want more skill added to the products that we make. We do not want to be a branch plant economy making low-value products which are vulnerable to any downturn in world markets. We must strive for ever higher quality. Wales should lead in new products and quality goods. We must be at the cutting edge of innovation. We must not concentrate on inward investment success alone and neglect the need to develop industry at home. A great deal has happened and an enterprise culture is emerging in Wales. Between 1979 and 1991, more than 16,000 firms set up business in Wales and manufacturing output has increased by almost two thirds—more than double the increase for the United Kingdom as a whole.

**Mr. Flynn:** That is fantasy.

**Mr. Redwood:** How sad it is to hear the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) say that it is fantasy. He should see what I have seen in recent weeks—great companies in Wales with great ideas.

**Mr. Flynn:** It has been instructive and enjoyable to hear the wish fulfilment fantasy of the right hon. Gentleman at such length, but can he tell us why the most progressive firm in Wales, at the hard edge of technology, which developed one of Britain's greatest inventions in the past 22 years, has left Wales? That invention—the transputer —is now being manufactured in France and Italy. The transputer, manufactured at INMOS at Newport, has been lost to Wales as a result of Government indolence and failure to invest in it. The French and Italian Governments have been more than happy to invest in it.

**Mr. Redwood:** I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's analysis. I wish that he had seen some of the firms that I have visited recently, which show how Wales is innovating, has many talented minds and is putting together a great record of success. I intend to give a special push to the work to encourage more entrepreneurship, more innovation and high quality business.

**Mr. Alan W. Williams** (Carmarthen): We have listened to 10 minutes of extremely optimistic clichés about the economy. The right hon. Gentleman anticipate that, in the next 12 months, the Welsh economy will grow by 1·8 per cent. Would he care to speculate about what has happened to the growth rate since January 1990? I suggest it has stood at minus 5 per cent. That is what the record says.

**Mr. Redwood:** We know that there has been a recession. It has been universal across the western world, and it is regrettable. I am discussing how we get out of recession and how Wales will lead the way. The forecast of 1·8 per cent. was independent. I have said that I hope that it will be right. Indeed, I hope that we shall improve on that.

The training and enterprise councils exist to lift the skills and encourage the new businesses of Wales. The Welsh work force has been the single most important reason for success and will be so in the future. I want the TECs to do all that they can to raise skill levels, help the unemployed to get back to work, enable young people to start off on life-time employment, and help deliver a work force that is even better qualified and skilled, and better able to adapt to new demands.

Like many advanced countries, Britain is in the throes of her fourth industrial revolution. The first three saw us change from water power to steam power to electric power; from a dominant textile industry, to a dominant engineering industry, to a strong consumer products industry; from canals and carts, through the age of the railway, to motorways. The fourth revolution takes us on

*[Mr. Redwood]*

to brain power, from older industries to high-tech industries, from motorways to Telecom's digital highways. Skilling and reskilling Britain is the new imperative.

Excellence in education is central to that task. A good start at school and college is vital. I want the universities and colleges of Wales to develop their links with business so that industry knows what they can deliver and the education world in Wales knows what industry wants. We must encourage joint ventures, initiatives and exchanges of ideas and personnel to maximise the enormous opportunities before us.

I also want working for oneself to be an option. The brightest and best leaving college and university should not automatically want to become journalists, civil servants or commentators writing elegantly about Europe's decline—[HON. MEMBERS: "Or politicians."] No, nor politicians—but some of us were in business and industry before we entered politics. Graduates should want to plunge into business, shaping the future with new ideas for commercial success.

We are now embarked on changing the subject and style of debate in the European Community. After months and years of sterile abstractions and constitutional wrangling, we are turning the focus to the pay packet and life style issues which affect every citizen. The Copenhagen summit began to ask the right questions about jobs and recovery. Our Prime Minister placed Britain and British ideas at the centre of the debate. He persuaded others to confront the reality that during the years in which America created 30 million new private sector jobs the EC managed only 3 million. While Japan has 2·5 per cent. out of work, the EC has almost 10 per cent. EC labour costs are now a fifth higher than in the United States and EC non-wage labour costs are almost twice as high as in the United States.

In Wales since 1988-89, United States firms have created 7,261 jobs; Japanese firms 4,964 jobs, and German firms 3,126 jobs. That is because Wales is better than the EC average in many respects and as such has benefited from more new investment and new jobs. I do not want a low-wage society, but I do want a low-cost economy because that is how to guarantee prosperity. That means high productivity and good ideas.

Britain can now lead the EC debate about restoring competitiveness. I say to many, "Come and see what is happening in Wales." As the dole queues lengthen on the continent, Wales is winning new business and new businesses. In the past week, 1,000 new jobs have been created in Crumlin from ASAT, 480 new jobs in Gwent from Aiwa, a possible 1,000 new jobs from the British Coal Enterprise initiatives, and 240 new jobs from six companies announcing expansion plans. Over the weekend, I announced 58 jobs for Swansea at Addis and another 160 new jobs are on the threshold of announcement as we meet tonight. That is winning for Wales, based on an agenda for a competitive Wales.

Fortress Europe or castle Wales could not succeed. Turning away foreign investors or putting them off with high taxes, strikes or too many regulations is the road to ruin, not the path to prosperity—*[Interruption.]* I am glad that the hon. Member for Caerphilly think that it is so funny; I am sure that his constituents will be delighted to know that he giggles throughout a debate on how jobs can be brought to the valleys and his area of Wales.

Over a year ago, the United Kingdom persuaded the EC not to outlaw digital technology for satellite television, and not to make the Sky transmissions illegal. Two weeks ago, the United Kingdom quietly scored another important success in Brussels: we stood up for Welsh industrial interests. In so doing, we stood up for wider United Kingdom interests—indeed, for the future success of the consumer electronics industry in Europe as a whole.

Ministers agreed an action plan to help promote wide-screen and high definition television. We were able to secure a valuable commitment that UK-based manufacturers such as Sony will be able to participate fully and without discrimination in future research programmes into digital television technology. There are those in Europe for whom this will not be welcome news, but it is good news for Wales and for the House.

We helped to shape a sensible policy for a vital new technology. Companies appreciate that, and many consumers and future employees in that industry will come to thank us. Those who tried to stop Europe developing digital systems were carrying out the industrial equivalent of burning books because the ideas were said to be heresies. It would have been damaging, but it could not have worked.

**Mr. Wigley:** The Secretary of State has mentioned a significant number of job gains in Wales. How many of those are in the counties of Gwynedd, Dyfed and Powys? Am I right in saying that the answer is virtually none? In view of the difficulties that have been faced in those westerly parts of Wales, can the Secretary of State propose any new strategies to overcome that problem in the near future?

**Mr. Redwood:** The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the bulk of the jobs were in areas other than those that he mentions, but I have already described what I have been doing in west Wales. I said that I intend to back fully the work of the west Wales task force, and the hon. Gentleman should wait to see developments. I intend to do for west Wales what I am doing for south Wales and for all parts of Wales.

The British Government's case to the EC is the case of Wales, the cause of the whole United Kingdom, and the crusade for jobs throughout Europe: do not damage competitiveness by passing unnecessary laws; do not put investors off with all the paraphernalia of the social chapter; and do not keep out new ideas or technologies just because they were dreamed up elsewhere, but realise that it is a world market and understand that the best social policy for the unemployed is a job.

All those opportunities must be grasped if we are not to fall behind. Europe must wake up, for Asia's tigers are roaring. We must reply. We must do more to curb and then to cure the European dole queues. We must shake off the shackles which still hold the economy back from developing its full potential. Away with restraint, away with petty restrictions, away with the head-in-the-sand thinking which refuses to adopt new ideas or technologies just because they were not invented here—we in Wales must scour the world for the best production processes, the

best management ideas and the best products, and we must make sure that they are produced here in Wales and sent out again across the globe.

Wales at its best is world class, able to hold its own in any company across the globe. Products are better made in Wales and should be better designed in Wales. Wales must be free, dynamic and vibrant, taking on the world—and beating it.

8.37 pm

**Mr. Rhodri Morgan** (Cardiff, West): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate and thank Plaid Cymru for choosing this opportune subject. The Secretary of State's speech was stronger on ideology than on facts and exhibited no detailed knowledge of Wales or the Welsh economy. I was not sure whether it was his Llangollen Tory party conference speech all over again, or some old material rehash of a Rothschild induction course for junior clerical staff. However, it was a preparation for the great betrayal that is to come over assisted area boundaries.

Until we heard the Secretary of State's speech, we were looking for a commitment to keep the assisted area map of Wales roughly along its present lines, perhaps with some tinkering on the borders. We were not expecting to have the Secretary of State speak for well over 20 minutes without saying whether Wales would lose out from the boundary revision, in which he has been playing a major preparatory part—even if it was mostly before he became Secretary of State—through the alterations that we now expect before the summer recess.

We also expected to hear about the timing and to have a clearer restatement that we shall have an opportunity to debate in the House the specific implications for Wales of the changes. We do not want the announcement to be sneaked in on the last day before the summer recess, only to find that the only opportunity that we get to debate the changes will be in October, during the spillover part of the Session.

That would be wholly unsatisfactory. It is why tonight is a suitable opportunity—there may be another later—for the Government to give a cast-iron promise that the House, and in particular Welsh Members of Parliament, will have the opportunity to discuss the sort of damage that I now expect because of the little hints in the speech by the Secretary of State.

I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman did not mention for nothing, and with great pride, the three firms that had come to Wales in the past few years without any regional selective assistance. He was not telling us that as though Wales had won the triple crown; he was basically saying that if Wales could attract those three firms without regional selective assistance, who needs it?

The three projects include Toyota's new engine plant on Deeside. Because of surplus capacity in the motor industry, the EC would not permit any regional selective assistance for either the engine plant, which came to Wales, or the much larger assembly line, which many people thought would come to Wales, until, in the words of the previous Secretary of State, it was snatched away at the last minute. The assembly plant that Wales did not get is 10 times bigger than the engine plant that it did get. Whether that was also a great betrayal is a matter of dispute between the previous Prime Minister and the previous Secretary of State for Wales but one, Lord Walker.

The Secretary of State also mentioned Prudential Assurance, which is located in my home of Cardiff. He was careful with his words when he said that that firm came without any regional selective assistance. It would be interesting to know whether he is claiming that it came without any Government grant. It received another form of Government grant—I do not know whether it was an urban development grant or some other form of grant, but it certainly had a substitute grant equivalent to regional selective assistance. Therefore, it is wrong to assume that, if Wales loses regional selective assistance, it will still attract a flow of firms.

The third firm that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned was Dow Corning, which is also close to my home. It has a long-standing commitment to Wales and I am pleased that it continues to provide employment in the Barry, Sully and Penarth areas.

The Secretary of State responded to a point made by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) about the size of the Welsh Development Agency's budget. The right hon. Gentleman contradicted what he thought was an assertion by the hon. Gentleman that the WDA's budget had been reduced, but that was not what the hon. Gentleman had said. In fact, he said that the Exchequer grant to the WDA had been reduced, which meant that it had to fund more and more of this year's expenditure by selling more and more of its family silver. It can continue to do that for only so long.

Obviously, the pearl in the oyster—if I can mix my metaphors—in the family silver of the WDA is the Treforest trading estate in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), which is either largely on the way to being sold or has been sold. The WDA has only so many Treforest equivalents that it can sell. Now, half the WDA's expenditure must be funded not just by the sale of the odd piece of land or by producing a bespoke factory for a client and then selling it when it is built, but by selling industrial estates that have been built up over many years—60 years in the case of Treforest.

What the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North said was correct. The amount of money that the Government put into the WDA each year is being reduced, so the proportion that the WDA must find from its own resources is unsustainable. If it continues at the current level, selling Treforest this year, Deeside industrial park next year and Fforestfach the year after, in five years it will have nothing left. It is not in a position to build up the asset base that would allow it to continue disposing of core assets.

**Mr. Rod Richards** (Clwyd, North-West): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that selling industrial estates is part of the process of consolidating an economy that is becoming stronger, or does he want Wales always to have a dependency culture economy?

**Mr. Morgan:** I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman has posed mutually exclusive questions that cover all the possibilities on the waterfront. If both rents and capital values for land become unrealistically high—rents in Wales are now above those in the London area—there will be a major squeeze on the ability of firms to fund expansion. Too much of their money will disappear in

*[Mr. Morgan]*

rents, which have shot up to £4 or £4·50 per sq ft a year, which is much higher than in the London area. That is frightening because, if the grants are removed but the rents remain high, Wales will become a less competitive area for production. It will lose the low-cost advantage that the Secretary of State spent 25 minutes telling us was its most important asset.

Again, the Secretary of State espouses the message that we must believe in the success of the Welsh economy and that it is incumbent even on Opposition parties to trumpet that. Anyone who doubts that or who believes that there is still a long way to go is somehow a traitor to the marketing effort of the Welsh Office and the WDA—the team Wales, of which he is the self-appointed captain. He was certainly not appointed captain by anyone in Wales; he was imposed from the outside. That makes us sceptical of his desire to lead us in a particular direction, for which most people inWales did not vote and in which they do not want to go.

We are also sceptical of the tendency of the right hon. Gentleman and his predecessors to overclaim success and to make the figures fit the marketing strategy. They believe that if we keep talking about success, success will come. We should look objectively at the statistics for employment and unemployment and for new factories and the jobs that they create, relative to the number of jobs being lost both through the closure of coal mines and in the steelworks and other traditional primary providers of employment in Wales. It is only by balancing the new jobs being created with the old jobs being destroyed that we can work out how well Wales is doing. During the last eight or nine years, hyping up the success of Wales has become an occupational hazard of being Secretary of State for Wales. We have seen another example of that tonight.

My fundamental case is that the reason why the repackaging of Wales has been one of the great success stories of Europe is not what has been happening in Wales, but simply the choice of marketing strategy by Lord Walker and Dr. Gwyn Jones, the chairman of the WDA in late 1988 and early 1989. It was a deliberate decision to market Wales as the great success story of all Europe's regions. It involved all sorts of tricks of the trade in redefining what was an inward investment project, and the construction of dustbin lists of huge numbers of projects, many of which did not exist or were double counted so that they would appear simultaneously in two counties.

Royal Air Force stations are now being counted as inward investment projects. There are two in the list produced for the past year—RAF St. Athan and RAF Sealand. Those are not conventionally defined inward investment projects. The list also includes brass plate changes in the ownership of firms that do not result in any gain of jobs—but sometimes result in a loss of jobs—being claimed as inward investment projects simply to reach the magic figure of the 201 such projects that apparently came to Wales last year.

**Mr. Redwood:** Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that his marketing strategy for Wales would be to say that everything is wrong and nobody comes to Wales?

**Mr. Morgan:** Absolutely not. We need an objective, balanced figure. We do not want a rapid growth in the statistical physiotherapy service of the Government, massaging the figures and claiming that new jobs are being created when they are not. Those are not my words. Only the other day, I received a letter from one of the most successful counties in Wales about the claim to have 201 inward investment projects in the year from April 1992 to April 1993. Of the 201 projects, 40 were supposed to have come to the county.

I wrote to the county's industrial development unit to ask what it could tell me about the 40 projects and whether it was aware of them. It sent a letter last week to say that it was not aware of 26 of the 40 projects. More than half the projects appear to be unknown to the unit. That is not to say that the projects do not exist, but it is likely that they do not exist given the knowledge base of the local county council.

**Dr. Kim Howells:** Does my hon. Friend agree that we object to neither the optimism nor the sense of the view that we have to sell Wales? That is not what is happening from my point of view. I am sure that hon. Members of all parties would not want the Secretary of State for Wales to believe everything that he hears from the Welsh Office. He could do worse than read the report of the Public Accounts Committee on safeguarding and creating jobs in Wales.

The PAC exposed a case in my constituency of 1,000 jobs that were said to have been created or protected. In fact, all that had happened was that British Airways had sold the factory to General Electric in America. No new jobs were created. I am glad that the factory was sold, because the new owners look like being good employers. In that sense, the factory was safeguarded. But we should not play games with statistics. That is dangerous because it undermines the authority of the Government and of the Secretary of State among the people of Wales.

**Mr. Morgan:** My hon. Friend makes a powerful point about General Electric's takeover of the extremely successful British Airways engine overhaul plant. The factory was set up at Nangarw during the war as a shadow factory and has been an exceptional success ever since. That is typical of the kind of firms that we want to see in Wales. However, no new jobs arose from that takeover. It was brass plate investment.

Another example is when, through compulsory competitive tendering, a hospital got rid of its local catering staff and employed Gardner Merchant. That was classed as inward investment. No additional jobs were involved. Health authority or local authority staff lost their jobs, and Gardner Merchant had a contract. That was one of the inward investment projects in West Glamorgan that was claimed by the Welsh Development Agency and Welsh Development International last year.

**Mr. Richards:** One proposed project which the hon. Gentleman has campaigned against viciously is the development of Cardiff bay. The Government are to put £160 million into that project, which has been marketed throughout Europe. It will create thousands—probably tens of thousands—of jobs and make assisted area status unnecessary in south Wales and many parts of the valleys. How can the hon. Gentleman tell the House that he wants to bring jobs to Wales when he has campaigned so hard against the biggest and most important development in any city in Europe?

**Mr. Morgan:** I am terribly pleased that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman on that point. He said that I had

campaigned viciously against the Cardiff bay barrage project. I must defer to his expertise in matters of viciousness. We are talking about whether the assisted area map of Wales is to be changed. The hon. Gentleman has ideas that that project could take the Cardiff area out of the assisted area map and mean that it would not need that status. I am sorry, but I think that assisted area status is needed in Cardiff and the other areas of Wales where the status presently applies.

**Mr. Richards:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Morgan:** No. I must get on.

We are trying to work out objectively whether the jobs coming in equal the number of jobs going out. We are extremely pleased when substantial new employers move in. I cite the Bosch development at Pontyclun, the British Airways developments at Rhoose airport and Llantrisant on the way to Tonyrefail, the Trico development in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), the Sony expansion at Pencoed, the Toyota engine plant at Deeside and obviously the two new plants at Crumlin which were announced by the Secretary of State last week at or near Welsh Question Time. Those are eight extremely important new pillars of the Welsh economy. I am sure that they will provide hundreds of new jobs in the next few years.

Those eight projects are the only ones of which I am aware that have been set up in the past three years that have the prospect of employing more people than a typical coal mine. I accept that Welsh coal mines are smaller on average than pits in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. Welsh pits employ about 400 or 500 people. The problem is that we see coal mines closing and balance the job losses against the new projects of coal mine size that have come in.

Is the hype justified? Is the success story that has put at risk so much of our development area status justified? Two points arise. If one packs out the inward investment to produce, say, the 201 projects last year, it has a depressing effect on encouragement of local business in Wales, to which the Secretary of State referred many times. If the Government keep emphasising the importance of one statistical indicator—inward investment—they make self-generated investment seem second-class.

The Government's emphasis on inward investment has had a depressing effect and the Secretary of State should examine it. We now have a new chairman of the Welsh Development Agency and he should examine the psychology of encouraging the local business culture.

We must also consider how unemployment is calculated. When the United Kingdom Government decide whether to reduce the number of areas covered by assisted area designation, 75 if not 80 per cent. of the weighted factors that they take into account relate to the headline count of unemployment. When the European Community draws the map of regional development and assisted areas, it looks much more at gross domestic product per head.

Headline unemployment was a reasonably reliable indicator until about 10 years ago. It is decreasingly so. People might argue that the attacks on the validity and objectivity of the unemployment count should apply evenly across the regions and that, therefore, the relative status of Wales should not be affected.

However, we can see by comparing the level of employment with the level of unemployment in Wales that taking so many people off the unemployment register and putting them on to the sickness benefit register has had a particularly strong impact in Wales. It has not had such a strong impact on the south-east of England, largely because unemployment is so new that the area does not have a comprehensive employment service to get hold of the unemployed and say, "Wouldn't you rather sign on sick instead? It will get you off the register and give you more benefit."

The ultimate hypocrisy of the Government is that, having successfully persuaded so many people in Wales to sign off the unemployment register and go on to the sickness register, the Prime Minister says that he cannot believe that so many more people are sick in the light of all the money that they are spending on the NHS; so he then attacks sickess benefit. People will then be pushed back on to the unemployment register in the autumn after the changes which we fear will come. That would be seen badly in Wales.

The Government may have wanted to reduce the headline count of unemployment in the first three months of this year because they thought that it would make confidence lift off. It will be pretty tough if the Government push those same people off the sickness register back on to the dole once they think that the reduction in unemployment has taken off. We want objective data on sickness and unemployment benefit, so that there is an accurate measure across the country of which regions are doing well and which are doing badly and need assistance.

**Mr. Flynn:** Another feature of the Welsh Office statistical massage parlour is that we are told that we are the beneficiaries of economic miracles in our constituencies, whereas unemployment has increased 20 per cent. in my constituency and 22 per cent. in Monmouth. I asked the Government for figures on the number of jobs lost by outward divestment, through jobs moving overseas. The Welsh Office says that it cannot provide such figures because it does not collect them. It measures the jobs coming in, but not those moving out.

**Mr. Morgan:** This is the good news only Government. They believe in purveying anecdotes as if they were objective statistics. My hon. Friend cites a classic example of the Government choosing not to consider outward divestment because it does not fit in with the marketing strategy. We want a statistically objective count of unemployment and employment, so that we may identify which areas need assistance.

**Mr. Walter Sweeney** (Vale of Glamorgan): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that manufacturing output in Wales has increased 25 per cent. since 1986? Is that not a general statistic rather than a detail plucked out of the air?

**Mr. Morgan:** The hon. Gentleman is right, in that it is a general manufacturing statistic—but one can always pick out a favourable statistic as though it were a general principle. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the travel-to-work area that he represents can dispense with assisted area status? I will not press him to respond immediately because that could be embarrassing for him.

*[Mr. Morgan]*

We understand that Newport is in peril of losing its assisted area status, despite the statistic that the hon. Gentleman gave.

We further understand that it is possible that the Cardiff travel-to-work area will be split in two, along European regional development fund objective 2 lines, so that southern Cardiff and the southern part of the vale of Glamorgan will remain an assisted area, whereas the northern part will not. Presumably, the splitting of travel-to-work areas will occur in London, and that would set a precedent.

We want to know how much assistance will be transferred out of Wales to the southern coastal towns. I see the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Ms. Lait) lurking on the Conservative Back Benches, and I do not imagine that she is doing so for no purpose. I do not think that it is out of her interest for Wales; rather, it is for what she can grab from Wales. Naturally, that worries us.

Wales has a long way to go before it reaches the economic self-sufficiency that will enable it to do without subsidies. We noted all the exciting announcements made by the Secretary of State and his predecessors, and all the claims that Wales can be safely attached to the four great motor regions of Europe—Catalonia, Baden-Würtemberg, Lombardy and Rhone-Alpes. If they are the wheels of the Europe's motor regions, Wales is the exhaust pipe. We are getting there, but we have a long way to go. We cannot afford to leave it to a Secretary of State who is a bird of passage and who will be looking for promotion away from Wales. We need a Secretary of State who represents Wales and who is completely committed to the interests of Wales.

9.2 pm

**Mrs. Jacqui Lait** (Hastings and Rye): It is with some temerity that I intervene in a debate chiefly relating to Wales, but the motion makes reference to regional development in the United Kingdom and in peripheral regions, and the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) said that the southern coastal towns are quickly turning into peripheral regions.

I am a great supporter of regional development. Coming as I do from Scotland, I remember when, 30 years ago, Rootes came to Linwood—two miles from my home at the time—and the destabilising effect that that had on the local economy. I remember also IBM moving to Greenock and providing jobs for many women whose husbands were working in the shipyards that so signally failed to compete.

Later, there were road, motorway and other infrastructure developments, new factories, high-quality communications, land reclamation, tax breaks, rate relief and seedcorn capital—just the same as in Wales. The policy was very successful, despite the whingeing from the Opposition Benches.

A graphic measure of regional development policy success is that historically, Scotland and Wales were the first to enter a recession and the last to emerge from it. This time, it is reckoned that, in general, Scotland and Wales were the last in, suffered less drastic recession than elsewhere, and are emerging from it earlier. Because of the success of the regional development policy, half the personal computers sold in Europe are made in Scotland.

It takes about an hour to drive the 60 miles from Glasgow to Perth. On a good day—perhaps I should not admit it—I can drive from London to Cardiff in under three hours. The train takes two hours.

Unemployment throughout Wales is 10·2 per cent. There are only three constituencies where unemployment is above 13 per cent. In Hastings and Rye it is 13 per cent.; in Sittingbourne and Sheerness 14·6 per cent.; in Thanet 16·5 per cent.

A comparison of the coastal towns of the south-east with Wales and Scotland is dramatic. For instance, Hastings is 67 miles from London, a little further than it is from Glasgow to Perth. During the day, it takes a minimum of two hours to drive those 67 miles. It often takes two and a half hours. The train takes an hour and a half—about the same time as it takes to get to Doncaster. The southern half of the A21 is still single carriageway. The A259, the route to the channel tunnel, the continent and prosperity, would be recognised, bar the tarmacadam, by the smugglers of the 18th century.

Hastings has some home-grown companies, but it was a branch plant economy, which is how the Secretary of State described Wales historically. When the recession hit, there were the inevitable closures. Our biggest employers are the local council and the health service. While both are vital, neither can be called a wealth creator.

We have high levels of drug and alcohol abuse, many single-parent families and alarmingly high levels of child abuse. Wages are well below the national average—reminiscent and indicative of inner city problems, one of the indicators for assisted area status. The bleak statistics are similar to those in Scotland and Wales 30 years ago, when they embarked upon their regional development policy. We have seen that policy work. We must help other areas which need it now.

While I understand and appreciate that the Welsh, the Scots and other regions like the north-east and the north-west would like to hold on to what they already have, places such as Hastings, Sittingbourne and Thanet need to benefit as well. We are not asking for much when we ask for assisted area status. We can only get selective and enterprise grants, help with industrial premises and the consultancy services of the Department of Trade and Industry.

There are new poor areas in the United Kingdom. The south coast towns are part of them. We must adjust our development policies to take these changes on board. We must ensure that it is not only the United Kingdom Government who are aware of the empty factories, the length of the dole ques and the harm that is being done to the good and honest people we see around us.

The EC Commissioner, who provides so much of the money now, needs also to be aware of those changed circumstances. Karel van Miert, the commissioner responsible, should visit the rich south-east, the area that he says is structurally and economically strong, and see the problems for himself. He must take on board the successes of the traditional development areas and learn about the difficulties of the new ones.

We must change our regional devlopment policy, so that it recognises the new realities and enables areas such as the south coast towns, which are weak, to become as economically strong as, dare I say it, Wales and Scotland. We must refocus our regional development policy so as to enable all the British Isles, as they need it, to benefit from it.

9.8 pm

**Mr. Denzil Davies** (Llanelli): I shall be brief, because others want to speak in this short debate.

The speech of the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Ms Lait) was one of the best critiques and condemnations I have heard of 13 or 14 years of Conservative rule and of the kind of ideology that the Secretary of State—I do not want to be rude to him—has espoused since the early 1980s.

**Ms Lait:** When the Labour party was in power many years ago, what did it do to help peripheral towns on the south coast?

**Mr. Davies:** I find that interesting, but I do not think that unemployment was as the hon. Lady described. I mean no disrespect, but apparently Hastings and Rye are now on the periphery. That shows the general decline in the British economy, vis-a-vis the European economy, in the past 13 or 14 years. I cannot see how that decline will be arrested, but I shall return to that point later.

I shall concentrate on assisted area status for my constituency and the effect that removal of intermediate status would have on it and on much of west Wales. I shall try to argue briefly that we deserve an uplift to the full assisted area status that we enjoyed until the early 1980s when, in his review, Sir Keith Joseph, as he then was, removed Llanelli's full development area status.

A few months later—I am not arguing cause and effect—a large private steel works, which had operated for a long time, closed for various reasons, with the loss of 1,200 jobs and ancillary jobs. Llanelli never regained its full development area status. The map that was drawn by Lord Joseph seemed to be cast in stone, and no changes were allowed to it.

**Mr. Richards:** Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that, when he was a Treasury Minister in the late 1970s, overmanning in the British steel industry was at crisis point—not unlike, perhaps, the present overmanning of the German steel industry?

**Mr. Davies:** I do not dispute that many sections of British industry were overmanned for a considerable time, and much had to be done to reduce that overmanning, but the point that I am making is that, in 1980-81 my constituency lost assisted area status. We have not recovered from the closure of the steel works, which was privately owned rather than nationalised—I do not want to waste time on an argument over its ownership, because it is not important.

In 1979, fewer people were unemployed in my constituency than they are today, and income per head was higher. Economic activity rates were higher and—perhaps overmanning was a small part of this—40 per cent. of the work force in the Llanelli area were employed in production. The Secretary of State says that Wales is making it. That may be so, but in Llanelli they are making less of it today than they were 14 years ago. I accept that the statistics are somewhat simplistic, but the figure is now down to about 30 per cent.

Since 1979, the standard of living in my constituency has declined. That industrial decline is mirrored in Wales, which is the poorest region of Britain, with the lowest income per head. Unemployment is higher than in 1979. Activity rates in Wales are lower than in 1979.

That also mirrors the decline in the British economy relative to western Europe, which was shown by the speech of the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye. There has been a consequent effect not only for our economy and our industry but for our public services, with a breakdown in community discipline and family values and disciplines.

The M4 motorway has brought great benefits, but the theory was that it would have a trickle-down effect. I see the Secretary of State nodding. In the 1980s, the teenage radical right advocated the trickle-down theory in the economy.

I do not wish to be rude—not as rude as my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan)—but I do not know whether those on the teenage radical right have grown up or whether they still believe in the trickle-down theory, which has largely been discredited. In any case, it has not worked with the M4.

There has been little investment west of Swansea in places such as Llanelli, which has a great manufacturing, engineering and mining tradition. As we have heard, most of the investment has gone further east, so the M4 trickle-down theory has not worked. It was always argued that more factories would come to Bridgend, until all the land was taken, and that they would then go to Neath and Port Talbot—or vice versa—and then Swansea. My constituency has not received minor, let alone substantial, new investment in manufacturing since 1979.

I do not believe that assisted area status, or inward investment, as it is called, is a panacea. We should begin by examining local industry in terms of sub-contracting, because many major firms, especially motor firms, sub-contract. Llanelli contains quite a few motor manufacturing and component firms. We should consider ways of improving the quality of what is produced by Welsh sub-contractors.

Assisted area status is not a panacea, but it is of enormous help to a constituency like mine in obtaining manufacturing and engineering investment, which would not only provide jobs and hope for our young people but would preserve the many skills that we still have. Those skills will not last much longer unless we have the investment to enable us to take advantage of them.

The Secretary of State will no doubt say that I am whingeing and offering nothing but doom and gloom. He made great play of his years in the City and his time at Rothschild, which I am sure was valuable experience. However, I do not think that anyone from Rothschild or any other merchant bank who was considering the world economy would be too optimistic about inward investment to my part of the United Kingdom. The world economy does not look very good, and the unification of Germany does not encourage inward investment from Europe to the west of Britain.

Perhaps the Secretary of State secretly agrees that the combination of a single market, the Maastricht treaty and the channel tunnel—the latter involves Hastings and Rye—will make it even more difficult to attract the investment that I believe we need, certainly west of Swansea and perhaps west of Bridgend.

To me, the treaty means the centralisation even further away of economic and monetary power. It takes power from politicians and puts it in the hands of technicians. It means that politicians are unable to react to the problems caused by the marketplace. I shall not continue with that argument, because we have said it all before.

*[Mr. Davies]*

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) did not seem to know where the periphery was. The hon. Member for Hastings and Rye believes that it is in Hastings. I can tell the hon. Gentleman where it is—he is in it. Aberystwyth is the periphery; beyond Aberystwyth is Ireland and then the United States. We usually consider Britain in terms of north and south, but let us consider it in terms of east and west. East Britain does quite well but, if one draws a line down the middle, west Britain—especially parts of Wales—will find it extremely difficult to compete.

The nationalists' motion states that the European Community is interested in the periphery. The Maastricht treaty is concerned only with the periphery in Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Greece but not in Wales. Wales does not feature in the infrastructure money, which, in any event, amounts to very little. It is no good the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) waving a document at me. I am perfectly capable of reading the Maastricht treaty, and I know that the motion would do nothing to alleviate the treaty's centralising tendencies. I would have thought that the fact that we are on the periphery is a strong argument for not changing our assisted area status.

With great respect to the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye, if I was a young person at Rothschild carrying out an analysis of economic development, I would have examined the south and south-east of England. The President of the Board of Trade has advocated the east Thames development—which no doubt the Secretary of State considered in his previous position—quite rightly and logically in the context of the south-east of England. It is clear that that area will develop and benefit because it looks towards Europe, whether it looks east or south.

In terms of the European Community, I would not be too worried about the south and south-east of England. It also has the channel tunnel. Boulogne is much closer to London than Llanelli. The problem is that the south-east will develop, as an economic area, as part of the Pas de Calais. Eventually, people will live in France and come to work in England or vice versa. That area will become partly English and partly French.

We must consider the development of Europe and the centralisation that will inevitably take place as a result of the internal market and the Maastricht treaty. I accept that there is high unemployment in the south of England, but that is mainly due to a debt-ridden service economy which is no longer producing. Only about 5 per cent. of the people who work in the south of England actually make things, and that 5 per cent. are mainly engaged in armaments factories. The rest do not make anything.

Although I have sympathy with the constituents of the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye who may be out of work, we should not argue from the particular or on a short-term basis. The south and the south-east will develop as Europe develops. However, the areas that my colleagues and I represent will find it more difficult to develop.

I make no special pleas for my constituency. However, I believe that we have a very good case for bringing back the full development area status to my constituency which we lost in 1980 before the major steelworks closed. The situation changed completely, and it has not returned to what it was in 1979. We should at least retain our intermediate status. I believe that there is a very strong case to upgrade that to full development area status, so that we can obtain the investment to allow us to continue to make things and to make more things to contribute to the economy of Britain.

9.22 pm

**Mr. Walter Sweeney** (Vale of Glamorgan): I was surprised that Plaid Cymru chose this topic for debate, in view of the central plank of its policy—that Wales should leave the United Kingdom. It seems to me that if that were to take place, investment in Wales would be decimated. It is very easy for a party with no prospects of forming a Government to argue for increased resources without saying where those resources will come from.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) described Wales, in his usual belittling fashion, as the exhaust pipe of the motor of growth. It would have been better if the hon. Gentleman, who has not stayed in the Chamber—*[Interruption.]* I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. He seems to have woken up. Would it not have been better for the hon. Gentleman to describe Wales as a fiery dragon on the bonnet? That is far closer to the reality of the current performance of Wales relative to other European countries.

Unemployment in Wales is lower than the United Kingdom average for the first time since 1924. Is not that good news? Is not that something that the hon. Gentleman should mention so that the people of Wales will be encouraged to build on success?

Since 1979, self-employment in Wales has increased by more than 36,000 to 158,000 people. During the 1980s, Wales gained an average of 1,400 new businesses a year, making a current total of 87,000 businesses. All that we hear from Opposition Members is about jobs lost. We do not hear about the jobs that have been created or that the number of employees in manufacturing has increased by 5 per cent. since 1986. We do not hear from them that manufacturing output is up by more than 25 per cent. since 1985. We do not hear from them that there are 800 new manufacturing plants in Wales since 1980, providing more than 50,000 new jobs, and we certainly do not hear from them about the 1,100 inward investment projects that have been created since 1983. Let us have an end to their doom and gloom and let us start fighting for Wales.

9.25 pm

**Mr. Alex Carlile** (Montgomery): I, too, congratulate Plaid Cymru on choosing this subject for debate. It gives us a valuable opportunity to discuss some serious points affecting the future of Wales. I intend to make more of a plea than an attack because, first, I believe the new Secretary of State to be a serious man who will understand serious points. Secondly, there might be some advantage in the fact that the new Secretary of State was not familiar with Wales. He might be able to take a fresher view of the development of Wales than has hitherto been the case—we shall see, but I shall be optimistic for the purposes of my short speech.

We have heard much about infrastructure. I suggest to the Secretary of State that there are still serious problems with the infrastructure in Wales. There is much development to be done. I share the right hon. Gentleman's aspirations for Wales and his view that Wales should be inventive and that the best designs should come from Wales. Like the Secretary of State, I believe that

Wales has the best possible work force. However, we need to be able to build on the potential of that work force by ensuring that work can get to them and that they can do the work that is available.

If I asked the Secretary of State how much freight is carried across central Wales by rail on the line from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth, would he know the answer? It is a very easy answer—absolutely zero. Petroleum used to be carried on a weekly train from Stanlow in Cheshire to Aberystwyth. British Rail put up its price by 50 per cent. I do not blame Shell for leaving that line when it faced a 50 per cent. price increase; it was a normal business conclusion that it should transfer its fuel on to the road. However, the fact that it happened does not show a commitment by the Government to a rail infrastructure for Wales which central Wales deserves.

Indeed, I suggest to the Secretary of State that there is a clear illogicality between the work that has been done by the Development Board for Rural Wales and the fact that the rural railway line that crosses central Wales appears to have been put in deliberate decline by British Rail and is no longer able to offer competitive freight rates.

**Mr. Redwood** *indicated assent.*

**Mr. Carlile:** I am delighted to see the Secretary of State nodding in agreement.

The Development Board for Rural Wales has done an excellent job over the years within its terms of reference. I was glad to hear the Secretary of State endorse the future of the DBRW when I intervened on him. The DBRW has not had as full terms of reference as it should. Over the years, I have regretted—I have repeatedly made this point in the House—that the DBRW has not been directly involved in agriculture or in tourism. If the DBRW had been able to build advance hotels, for example, just as it built advance factories, we should have seen a more suitable range of hotels in rural Wales. The development board appreciates the lack of hotels, especially those for people who want to do business in rural Wales, but the board has not been given the opportunity to take the initiatives that it might otherwise have taken in this context.

It is wrong to look at tourism and industrial development as different species. I hope that the Secretary of State shares the view that they are both part of the same effort. I hope that he will regard it as logical to develop the rail infrastructure so that people wishing to go to those hotels when they are built, or those wishing to open research facilities in the great university town of Aberystwyth will be able to use a decent rail route to get there. At present, there is no such route.

I endorse the remarks of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) about the need to ensure that economic development is sustainable and consistent with an environment which is acceptable to both the people of Wales and the Government's international treaty obligations.

I ask the Secretary of State, especially in his appellate role with regard to planning matters, to ensure that, while the development of non-fossil fuel energy generation is a good thing, we do not face a future in which every hill top throughout Wales will have dozens of windmills on it. That matter is causing great controversy in my constituency and, indeed, in neighbouring constituencies. There is still room for more wind power development—we have not yet reached saturation point—but I ask the Secretary of State to be conscious of the fact that we may reach saturation point soon and that that must be borne in mind as an aspect of the future of rural Wales.

**Mr. Dafis:** I suggest to the hon. and learned Gentleman that, with only a few wind farms in existence, we are far from reaching saturation point. Does he accept the principle that we should be encouraging the establishment of small-scale wind farms of up to five turbines, which would blend in well with the landscape and make it possible for local companies to be involved in their development?

**Mr. Carlile:** I suspect that it may be more realistic for developments of wind turbines to be economically based on somewhat larger wind farms than those to which the hon. Gentleman referred. But for the purposes of this point, I emphasise that I care not so much about the size of wind farms as the potential proliferation of them.

**Mr. Richards:** Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Carlile:** I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman because he has already taken up a lot of time with interventions.

A further point that I wish to make in my short speech relates to the agriculture industry. Agriculture is still the biggest industry in my constituency and, indeed, throughout rural mid and north Wales. But it struggles from crisis to crisis. Prices in the markets are a little higher at present, so the farmers are less pessimistic. However, they take it for granted that there will be another crisis around the corner and they are approaching that corner quickly.

I have already made the point that I should like to see the Development Board for Rural Wales more directly involved in agriculture. The principal reason is that, for farmers living in rural mid and north Wales, diversification is difficult to achieve. There are only so many places where one can make love spoons and sell them to passing trade. There are only some parts of north and mid-Wales where one can grow pick-your-own strawberries, and even that season is short. There are dozens of country hotels and pubs on the market, so the potential for turning a farm into a holiday enterprise is strictly limited.

We need to improve our road communications as well as rail communications to enhance the tourist potential. I ask the Secretary of State to see whether he can bring forward the development of a bypass for Newtown as quickly as possible to ensure that people have quicker access to those parts of Wales where tourism is especially attractive. I am not asking for a motorway. The last thing that we want is a dual carriageway to scar central Wales. We want adequate road communications proportionate to the problem.

Some farmers are in a state of desperation as they look for ways to diversify into tourism or otherwise. In my constituency, there has been an extremely sad and regrettable increase in suicides among farmers who face potential bankruptcy as the banks see the equity available against their loans diminishing.

I hope that it is music to the ears of the Secretary of State to hear that the answer lies with him and the Welsh Office. They should be leading the fight to begin considering the common agricultural policy all over again.

*[Mr. Carlile]*

As I go around farms in my constituency, I wonder whether the present system of delivering grants and subsidies, many of which are substantially defrauded—not in Wales, but in other countries—is the best way in which to sustain farming. I hope that, as Lady Thatcher has said on many occasions, the Government will encourage the expansion of the European Community to include countries in central and eastern Europe, those formerly in the Soviet bloc, and countries such as Romania, which I visited in the past week, and to give them a share of Europe's development. That may give us the opportunity to start with a clean sheet of paper for a new agricultural policy that could benefit Wales.

I am fast coming to the conclusion that we could bring the price of food down and make contracts with farmers that would mean that, at the worst, farmers would not be worse off, and would mean that the housewife or the man who buys the weekly groceries would pay less for them. I see the future of a prosperous agriculture in Wales as one based on contracts with the farmer to produce the food needed and to sustain the environment that we love, not the situation in which we flounder between subsidies, arguing year after year about small changes up or down.

I have raised three principal points about which I feel strongly. They are all worth considering as one tries to take a bird's eye view of the economic future of Wales. There are many other issues I would like to raise but there is not time. If we hear the Secretary of State or the Minister saying something positive in response about those three issues, I shall feel encouraged.

9.38 pm

**Mr. Jonathan Evans** (Brecon and Radnor): I shall follow my neighbour from Powys, the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) by reacting to a couple of the points that he mentioned. He urged the Secretary of State to seek to take some role in the planning process of wind farming development. On the contrary, local democracy should decide where wind farms are placed and I applaud my right hon. Friend's predecessor for deciding that the decision in Radnorshire should be made locally.

I endorse much of what the hon. and learned Gentleman said about the work of the Development Board for Rural Wales, and about the strong role of the development board throughout my area and in the constituency of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis). If I have a criticism of the development board, it is that it is rather more active in the hon. Gentleman's constituency than it is in mine, but I hope to work on that in the years ahead.

One change I urge my right hon. Friend to make is in the role of inward investment, which is rightly highlighted by Conservative Members. At present, inward investment goes primarily to north and to south Wales, not only because of the population, but because the WDA is the agency bringing in international investment. Although the WDA brings in investment on behalf of the DBRW, the board ought to have had more of a role in international consultation and in developing inward investment.

My next observation is important in the context of this debate. Conservative Members are sometimes criticised for being too positive by Opposition Members who adopt too gloomy a view. The motion has been tabled by Plaid Cymru. Recently, we had a debate in the Welsh Grand Committee. Since the debate took place, unemployment in the constituencies of Plaid Cymru Members has dropped by 2,331. I am sorry that they have not found time to mention that in this debate.

Today is the day that David Kerns, the chief economist of NatWest, says that we may see very much stronger employment growth in Wales than in any other region of the United Kingdom. We might have waited too long to hear that news from the Opposition. Yet again, it has had to be said by Conservative Members.

9.40 pm

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones** (Ynys Môn): As my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) said, this debate is opportune. It has been an excellent debate because it has given hon. Members from Wales and from outside an opportunity to discuss the important issue of regional development. In the time allotted to me, I shall not be able to refer to all the contributions. However, there are two points to which I wish to respond.

First, the Secretary of State said that we in Wales must be ready to recognise that good ideas sometimes come from outside Wales. Let me put the Secretary of State right. We accept that point. Over all the generations, the Welsh people have accepted influences from outside. In the great tradition of Welsh culture and language, we have always accepted outside influences and have assimilated them.

**Mr. Redwood:** The hon. Gentleman misunderstood what I said. I said that the European Community, when framing technology principles and policies, should understand that point. It was not a criticism of Wales; it was a specific remark about high-definition television.

**Mr. Jones:** I am grateful to the Secretary of State for correcting my impression.

Secondly, I shall respond to the point made by the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney). He said that he was surprised that my party wanted to discuss issues of regional development and he posed the question of where the money would come from. Increasingly, the money is coming from the European Community. The problem is that if the hon. Gentleman had had his way and the House had voted against the Maastricht treaty, Wales would have been cut off from a valuable source of investment and resources.

**Mr. Richards:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Jones:** I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. He has made a number of interventions. Indeed, he has almost made a speech through interventions.

We believed when we set the topic for tonight's debate that it would be an important and timely debate. It is an important debate because of the European Community's recognition of the fact that countries such as Wales need assistance if they are to compete against the Community's core areas. The problem with the contribution by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), who unfortunately is not in his place, is that the Community recognises the fact that Wales is a peripheral nation. That is why the structural funds, which are currently being reconsidered, recognise the need to reduce that peripherality. It is

because the European Community recognises that that we want to put the Secretary of State on the spot by asking him whether he agrees with that analysis.

The debate is also timely because the Commission is currently considering the plans of the Department of Trade and Industry—not the plans of the Welsh Office—to ditch parts of Wales from assisted area status and to replace them with areas in the south-east of England. During Welsh Question Time, I referred briefly to an article in *The Sunday Times* on 20 June. The article says:

"Brussels officials studying the proposals"—

the proposals submitted by the DTI—

"said yesterday they did not believe any area south of Birmingham should qualify for aid. 'I can see little reason that the British government should include any southern region, even if they have been particularly touched by the recession,' said one Brussels source. A spokesman for Karel van Miert, the Belgian EC commissioner responsible for competition policy, said: 'We feel the money should be concentrated in areas of maximum need. We want the weaker regions to get the money to enable them to move up to the national average. If they finish up getting less, the aid scheme is no longer viable.'"

Can the Secretary of State for Wales tell us who speaks for Wales? Is it the European Commissioner, the Welsh Office or the Department of Trade and Industry?

**Mr. Richards:** It is not the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Jones:** I can only say, in reply to that interruption, that we are making the strongest possible argument that it is not the Welsh Office.

What does the Commissioner mean when he says that he wants the weaker regions to get the money so that they may be enabled to move up to the national average? He means that the money that is earmarked for regional development should go to those areas whose economies have traditionally been weak and have needed support. I do not subscribe to the view that an economy can be improved only by pumping public money into it. I accept the analysis that there must be a partnership between the private sector and the public sector. However, I do not accept that parts of Wales should be ditched as the Department of Trade and Industry tries to save some Tory skins in the south-east of England.

This is also a very important debate because it puts into sharp focus the need for the Welsh Office to speak in the Cabinet for Wales. Will the DTI succeed on this occasion? The Secretary of State has told us that it will. He has said that, on the basis of unemployment rates in Wales, half of the assisted area status would be lost. Even if it were less than half, Wales would still lose. Can the Secretary of State give us an assurance that no part of Wales will lose assisted area status? I am afraid that he is not prepared to give such an assurance. Brussels is sending the map back to be redrawn. We believe that this is an opportunity for the new Secretary of State to tell us where he stands on the issue. May we expect a response from his hon. Friend who will wind up?

This is also an important debate because the Secretary of State could have told us whether he is personally committed to regional development. Does he support the notion that, owing to the disadvantages of location and infrastructure, areas must be given assistance to compete? If he believes that that is so, and if he rejects the notion that the market can deliver everything—the notion with which he came to the House in 1987—he has moved substantially along the road to the position taken up by his predecessors. My hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North highlighted the problem: if the marketplace, and the marketplace only, were to determine where industry should go, the social and cultural upheaval in Wales would be enormous, and the result would be catastrophic. To succeed, Wales has always relied on a partnership between the private sector and the public sector. We want to see that continue.

The Secretary of State said something like, "If only Opposition Members would spend time talking to business people . . ." But we do spend time talking to business people.

Before he came to this place my hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) spent his life in industry. We speak to industrialists in our constituencies and we understand the problems of industry in Wales. The Secretary of State should recognise that.

We gave the Government a test and they have failed it. *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State chided the Labour party's spokesman for laughing, but now the right hon. Gentleman is laughing. He must listen to what hon. Members have to say. First, the Secretary of State failed to reassure us about his commitment to regional development. He failed to give guarantees about assisted area status and he failed to persuade us that the Welsh Office speaks for Wales in the Cabinet when it is faced with a challenge from the DTI. That is why we have no alternative but to challenge the Secretary of State in the Lobby.

9.51 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones):** Inevitably, debates on Welsh affairs follow the traditional pattern. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said last week, the Government side has been winning and the Opposition side has been whingeing, not least by way of the speech by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones). Where failure is, failure sits—on the Opposition Benches.

The debate was opened by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis), who started with the usual cheap shots about my right hon. Friend. I suppose that I could congratulate him, because for once he outdid the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), who concentrated instead on doom and gloom. The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North wanted to play down the successess that even he had to admit have taken place under the Government. The hon. Gentleman said, "That is not to whinge," and that shows that the point has struck home. But that was exactly what he did throughout his speech.

The hon. Gentleman spoke twice about the significance of any closure or rundown of military establishments in Wales. That is in contrast to his apiration for an autonomous nation of Wales. If that came about, he would make sure that all military bases were closed without any regard for the consequences for the people of Wales.

His protestations are totally hollow. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State dealt with a wide range of positive and practical measures for the economic development of Wales. That is in stark contrast to the position in Wales in 1979, when it was not just dependent but dangerously over-dependent on a handful of basic industries that were rapidly declining. It had a legacy of

*[Mr. Gwilym Jones]*

problems that were not addressed but deferred; that was confirmed by the past-tense remarks by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies).

In Wales, we have a range of different programmes underlying the economic measures that we have consistently and successfully pursued for 14 years. We do not propose to abandon them. My right hon. Friend's speech should have left hon. Members in no doubt that we are continually seeking to improve and adapt our programmes to meet the needs of the 1990s and beyond. Our objectives are clear: we want to broaden our recovery, widen our industrial base and build on our strengths in Wales.

I welcomed the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), who endorsed exactly what we have been doing by asking that more of the same should be done in his area. It is remarkable that the hon. Member for Cardiff, West belatedly welcomed the announcement of new jobs for Crumlin. He is a week late, and he kept his remarks to the singular.

I remind the House that, in the past week, there have been 1,000 new jobs for ASAT, 480 for Aiwa, a possible 1,000 for British Coal Enterprise, 240 from six companies announcing expansion plans, 58 for Addis in Swansea, and another 160 are on the threshold of being announced. With the exception of the hon. Member for Cardiff, West, who made a remarkable admission, no Opposition Member welcomed any of those announcements.

I should record another positive contribution—from the right hon. Member for Llanelli, who suggested that more should be done to encourage sub-contracting in the motoring industry. I reflected on this when my right hon. Friend was talking about his vision and goal that Wales should lead in new products, quality goods and be at the cutting edge of innovation. But what did we hear from the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn)? He dismissed that goal as fantasy. He does not care.

**Mr. Flynn:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Jones:** Many hon. Members referred to the reveiw of assisted area status. My hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye——

**Mr. Flynn:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The subject of this debate is assisted area status for Wales. I have listened very carefully to the Minister, but he has not mentioned it from the word go.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman is well aware that that is not a valid point of order.

**Mr. Jones:** The hon. Gentleman is obviously not listening, because I had begun to talk about the assisted area review.

I was reminding the House that my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) has stated a plain and good case for assisted area status for her constituency in the south-east of England. I am sure that she will understand why I cannot respond specifically to her case, but I know full well that the representations she has made will be given the fullest consideration. I acknowledge her point about inviting Commissioner van Miert to visit the south-east of England.

At least my hon. Friend spoke positively about the need for extending assisted area status, unlike the hon. Member for Cardiff, West, who radiated gloom and doom in predicting that damage would be forthcoming for Wales.

The Government's proposals were submitted to the European Commission 15 June. The Commission's initial criteria are based on local unemployment rates over recent years, compared to national and EC averages. The Commission will also be concerned with the overall coverage of any new map, compared with similar coverages in other member states.

Our proposals for the new assisted areas map are based on a balance of all the factors—for example, unemployment, urban problems and, as Opposition Members have requested, activity levels. We hope that the Commission will feel able to approve it. The hon. Member for Ynys Môn asked me to respond to that point, but it has been covered by what my right hon. Friend said earlier. We have sought the right deal for Wales.

The only issue now is the Commission's proposals. We cannot anticipate how long it will take it to complete its consideration. In order not to prejudice negotiations with the Commission, and to avoid uncertainty, no information on the proposed map will be made available until EC approval has been received. We must await EC clearance, but we are aware of the difficulties caused by continuing uncertainty, and we hope to make the announcement before the summer recess.

As with earlier assisted area maps, measures of employment were the main criterion, although other factors were taken into account. While the exercise cannot be wholly statistical, we shall ensure that decisions are fair and consistent. There will continue to be two tiers of support—development areas and intermediate areas—and the travel-to-work areas will continue to be the main area unit. Once the announcement is made, the Government will set out clearly the basis for our decisions.

The contribution of the hon. Member for Cardiff, West dwelt on his disappointment that unemployment has fallen and continues to fall. He dragged in the red herring that people were being made to go on sickness benefit instead of the uemployment register. He then accused us of trying to push people off the sickness register. Opposition Members cannot have it both ways.

I contrast his remarks with those of my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney), who spoke of the success in the reduction of unemployment figures. Unemployment in Wales is less than the national average. He rightly said that that good news should be acknowledged.

In a telling intervention, my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) pointed out that, through our proposals for Cardiff bay, we seek to achieve more than 20,000 new jobs. He referred to the "vicious campaign" of the hon. Member for Cardiff, West against that. Significantly, the hon. Gentleman had no answer to that.

We have had a varied debate. In the short time left for me this evening, I am afraid that it is not possible for me to respond to every point that has been made. Opposition Members have had their say, but actions speak louder than words. The Government will not be—nor would we wish to be—judged on our rhetoric. We want to be judged on our performance.

We now have the lowest inflation for nearly 30 years, the lowest interest rates for 15 years, the fastest growth of

manufacturing productivity for more than six years, the best performance on unit wage costs in manufacturing and high business confidence, particularly in Wales. There can be no doubt that Wales is in a position to make the most of recovery and to continue the very real progress that has been made.

*Question put*, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 43, Noes 150.

**Division No. 309]** **[10.00 pm**

**AYES**

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Bayley, Hugh
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cryer, Bob
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Flynn, Paul
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lynne, Ms Liz
Mahon, Alice
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Morgan, Rhodri
Pike, Peter L.
Rendel, David
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Worthington, Tony

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mrs. Margaret Ewing and**
**Mr. Elfyn Llwyd.**

**NOES**

Aitken, Jonathan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Horam, John
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. David Lightbown and**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*Question*, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the Main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

*Resolved*,

That this House welcomes the progress that the Welsh economy has made in recent years as a result of the Government's policies; and notes with approval that the Government intends to continue to pursue vigorously these same policies that have brought about this success.

# Members' Interests

10.11 pm

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** I beg to move,

That this House approves the First Report from the Select Committee on Members' Interests of Session 1991-92 (House of Commons Paper No. 326) relating to the registration and declaration of Members' financial interests, provided that the recommendation in paragraph 84 of the Report relating to the declaration of any relevant registered interest at the time of tabling an early day motion shall apply only to the Member in charge of such a motion.

As the House knows, this is the first of two debates this evening arising from reports by the Select Committee on Members' Interests. It is appropriate that I should begin by paying tribute to the Chairman of that Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) and his colleagues on the Committee for their careful consideration of the sensitive issues with which they deal on our behalf.

I probably do not need to remind the House that the impetus for the report arose from an unhappy incident in the previous Parliament, following which there was a widespread view that the rules governing the declaration of interests needed some clarification. That view was echoed by my predecessor in his evidence to the Select Committee in 1991 when he said:

"there is still uncertainty among a lot of Members about what should and should not be declared under certain headings . . . I think it would be a worthwhile thing . . . to go through the list and actually give Members rather more detailed advice as to what should be declared and what should not."

The Select Committee's subsequent report on registration and declaration was debated by the House last year. The response on that occasion has led the Government to table a motion to give effect to its recommendations, with one modification, so that they can be effective in the establishment of the register for the next Session. The main purposes of the motion, therefore, are to authorise the use of the new registration form that the Committee proposed in its report and to give Members clearer and more explicit guidance as to the matter in which they should register their financial interests.

I will briefly set out the main changes in practice that the report recommends. In many cases—this has perhaps not always been as clear as members of the Committee would have liked—the matters are of clarification rather than completely new provisions. Taking business interests first, a Member who has an association with a company is already required to name it, but he would now be expected to state briefly the nature of the company's business. Most people would think that that is reasonable.

As for shareholdings, the existing rule is that a holding of 1 per cent. issued share value of any company must be declared. That rule would be modified to require the registration of shareholdings with a nominal value of more than £25,000, as well as those that constitute more than 1 per cent. of the issued shared capital of the company.

The new form would also require clearer details about clients of consultancies linked to the work of right hon. and hon. Members in the House. Right hon. and hon. Members must already register any consultancy firms to which they provide advice. The Committee's recommendation is that, in future, right hon. and hon. Members should not only register any consultancy firm to which they provide advice but list any of the firm's clients to which the right hon. or hon. Member personally provides any services. That, too, is more a matter of explicit clarification than of innovation, because I understand that at present the registrar advises right hon. and hon. Members who ask that they should register the names of clients on whose account they have worked.

The report recommends that membership of Lloyd's should be more clearly described. Ever since the register was established, right hon. and hon. Members have always been advised to register their membership of Lloyd's. The Committee now proposes that they should detail the individual syndicates to which they belong. I understand that the Committee's view was that, just as right hon. and hon. Members should register the nature of the business of firms with which they are connected, so too should they register the number of their Lloyd's syndicate—a measure that clarifies the nature of the insurance business with which right hon. and hon. Members are involved.

The report recommends also that the provisions relating to land and property should be clarified. Right hon. and hon. Members would not be required to list their individual holdings, but they would be expected to specify the nature and general location of any property other than —I emphasise this point—any home or second home that has a substantial value or produces a substantial income.

A new provision recommended by the Committee is that gifts in excess of £125, including cash gifts, would need to be registered, as would hospitality, services of benefits in kind greater than 0·5 per cent. of the parliamentary salary, which is currently about £155. Those limits are broadly in line with those for Ministers and would avoid the obvious absurdity of requiring an entry every time that, for example, someone attended a lunch or dinner.

As to the right hon. or hon. Member's relationship with his constituency party—there will be particular interest in this point in many quarters—the report proposes a clearer definition of sponsorship. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden may have something more to say on that. It may help the House if I explain the Government's understanding of that section of the report.

The Committee's proposal on the registration of donations to associations applies only to donations from a company or organisation. It does not apply where the donor is an individual, and I am sure that it is right to maintain the privacy of such donations. Where a donation is made by a company or an organisation, the Committee proposes that it would need to be declared if it exceeded £500 and was made on a regular basis and was not just a one-off or occasional donation, and—perhaps this is particularly important—the donation was linked to an individual right hon. or hon. Member's candidacy or membership of the House, or if the right hon. or hon. Member himself acted as intermediary between the donor organisation and the constituency party.

It is important to note that where a donation is made as an expression of general support for the party, as opposed to support or sponsorship of a particular candidate, it would not need to be declared. As the report states on page 17:

"Donations made directly to a constituency party as an expression of general political support, not linked to the Member's candidacy or membership of the House, should not be registered; and similarly it will not be necessary to register a trade union donation to a constituency party which is not linked to the promotion of a particular parliamentary candidate."

**Ms Angela Eagle** (Wallasey): I speak as a Member of Parliament who was sponsored by the Confederation of Health Service Employees—as it will be for only a couple of days more, because it will be named Unison thereafter —only after selection and election. What is the right hon. Gentleman's interpretation of the new rules in my particular case, as I was not sponsored through the selection process?

**Mr. Newton:** Should the motion be agreed tonight, the hon. Lady may wish to obtain the registrar's advice. However, I understand that the hon. Lady would need to declare an interest only if the amount involved exceeded £500 a year and was linked directly to her candidacy or membership of the House. In other words, she would have to do that only if it were an annual sum that amounted to more than £500, which had been given on the basis that it related to her rather than to her constituency Labour party or association.

I am sure that the House will think it right that where an individual Member is receiving what amounts to—this is the case that the hon. Lady put to me—substantial sponsorship from a company or an organisation on a regular basis, sponsorship that is related to his or her candidacy or membership of the House, that should be declared. Equally, where donations are in support of the party itself, whatever their source or size, they would not need to be declared.

None of this affects the existing rules relating to contributions to a Member's election expenses, which are unchanged. Members should continue to register any sponsorship that exceeds 25 per cent. of their election expenses.

There are also some provisions relating to Members' staff.

**Mr. Tony Marlow** (Northampton, North): I own small amounts of property and I have always declared the fact that I own small amounts of property. Why is it relevant whether the property is in Lewisham or not?

**Mr. Newton:** My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir. G. Johnson Smith) may wish to comment on that question. That is the proposal in the Committee's report. I did not feel that it was a sufficiently important point to justify a special departure from an all-party agreed report that has put these recommendations before the House.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): Will the Minister answer a simple question that we argued long about in our Committee proceedings? Why should a Labour Member of Parliament sponsored by a trade union, who is under no particular pressure from that union —*[Interruption.]* That is the case. We are talking about £600 per annum. Let us move into the real world. The fact is that £600 a year is a very small amount of money. *[Interruption.]* I agree that over five years, it amounts to £3,000.

Why should a Labour Member of Parliament be required to register and declare that sum of money, while a Scottish Member of Parliament who received £10,000 from a property developer in Scotland—hon. Members know about it because it is in the report, and the House may wish to comment on it tonight—is not required to declare that sum? That hon. Gentleman did nothing wrong. He is a perfectly honourable Member of this House, but his constituency party received £10,000 in a 12-month period. I want to know why he does not have to declare it, while a trade union-sponsored Member who gets £600 has to declare it.

**Mr. Newton:** It seems to me that the issue is whether that constitutes the regular annual sponsorship of a particular individual. The hon. Gentleman was a member of the Committee that produced this agreed report. It is open to him to advance the reasons for a different set of recommendations during the speech that he will no doubt seek to make, if he is successful in catching your eye, Madam Speaker. However, I am setting before the House as clearly as I can the recommendations that are contained in the report.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** May I ask another question?

**Mr. Newton:** Perhaps I may make one point before I give way again to the hon. Gentleman. As I have just said, the hon. Gentleman, whose interest in the matter is well known, was a member of the Committee, and he has pressed me to put its recommendations before the House. It would be more appropriate, I believe, for him to develop the arguments in favour of his alternative report to the one that he signed in a speech, rather than by putting points to me in this way. However, I do not want to prevent him from doing so, if he wishes. Therefore I shall give way to him again.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** What is the difference between a trade union-sponsored Member of Parliament who receives £600 a year for his constituency party and a Conservative Member of Parliament who receives £600 a year from the local industrial council? Is there more pressure on a Labour Member than on a Conservative Member? We know that it goes on.

**Mr. Newton:** My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden may wish to elaborate on the point, but I understand that the Committee was quite reasonably seeking a definition of regular annual sponsorship related specifically to a candidate or Member rather than to the constituency Labour party, a Conservative association or, for that matter, a Liberal association. That was a reasonable distinction to seek to draw; but if the hon. Gentleman thinks differently, he will no doubt elaborate on his reasons in the debate.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): I have been sponsored by the National Union of Mineworkers for 23 years and have been a member of it for 44 years. It is proper for Members of Parliament to declare in the register that they are sponsored by a specific union. It is important to do that. Those of us who are sponsored in this fashion are happy to let it be known, and anyway I do not take all that much notice of the union's decisions. For instance, the year before last, it was in favour of proportional representation. I said, "I am not supporting that and, what is more, I will change the union's view." I campaigned in the union to get it back on the straight and narrow—first past the post—which the executive agreed by 13 votes to three. It was a great campaign. I am quite happy to do that, but if Tories are getting money from businesses, the amount of money should appear in the register, because then it is quid pro quo.

**Mr. Newton:** I am rather more glad than usual that the hon. Gentleman's advocacy of a proposition was

*[Mr. Newton]*

successful. It is entirely open to him to advance that point of view. I do not agree with it and it was not what the Committee recommended.

**Mr. Skinner:** What, first past the post?

**Mr. Newton:** No, I am talking now about the hon. Gentleman's subsequent remarks.

That was not what the Committee recommended. It is not what I am proposing and I do not think that the argument holds. If the union chooses to give money to Bolsover Labour party, I do not see why it should have to declare it any more than the report would require. If it is specifically related to the candidacy of the hon. Gentleman or his membership of the House, that is a different matter. That, as I understand it, is the distinction that the Select Committee was seeking to draw.

The report proposes that visits and benefits provided for Members' staff should now have to be registered. I had some reservations about this proposal and whether it was really worth the effort involved, so my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden arranged to consult the relevant staff associations, neither of which, although he may wish to elaborate on this, has raised any objection. Holders of permanent passes as Members' secretaries or research assistants will have to register visits, gifts or benefits on the same basis as Members.

The report proposes some administrative changes. The Select Committee would be authorised to make minor—I must emphasise "minor"—modifications to the rules, such as to improve ambiguities or to bring financial limits up to date, without the need for further recourse to the House. The scope of such changes would be strictly limited, which I am sure the House will think right. The last sentence of paragraph 66 of the report states:

"other changes—and particularly any which involve a major alteration of the categories or definitions of registerable interests—will of course still require approval by the House."

After a general election, Members would be given more time in which to complete the registration form. At present, they are allowed four weeks; in future, they will have three months.

I draw to the attention of the House one issue on which the Government propose a slight change to what the Committee recommended in its report. Following an earlier recommendation by the 1974-75 Committee, which was chaired by Mr. Fred Willey, the Committee recommended that the sponsor and the first five supporters of an early-day motion, or an amendment to an early-day motion, should be required to declare any relevant registered interest verbally or in writing to the Table Office at the time of tabling. When the motion appeared on the notice paper, a symbol would be printed by the hon. Member's name to signal that an interest had been declared.

I do not need to tell the House that the number of early-day motions has been growing significantly. I think that I am right in saying that, when I first entered the House just under 20 years ago, there were probably 500 a year. I know from business questions on Thursdays that there have been well over 2,000 in the present Session; and the flow shows little sign of stopping. Every day, the Table Office has to deal with several hundred added names—sometimes more than 1,000—most of which arrive in the post. The recommendation, if it covered all the names suggested in the report, would therefore place a large additional burden of work on the Table Office and would divert the Clerks from the task of dealing with questions and offering advice to hon. Members, which I think the House would regard as more important.

A further specific problem to illustrate the type of difficulty that could arise is that it might not be possible to tell hon. Members reliably whether their signature would be among the first six, as new signatures might already have been handed in which had not yet appeared on the computer. My advice to the House is that the main thrust of the Committee's recommendation can be achieved with an acceptable amount of extra work if the requirement is limited to the sponsor of the motion. That is the purpose of the Government's motion.

I acknowledge that it could be argued that someone could circumvent the provision by getting someone else to table the motion in his or her name, but it would not be much more difficult to get six other people to table the motion and then to add one's name as the seventh. The practical gain would therefore be limited in following the Committee's recommendation as distinct from that suggested in the Government motion.

Subject to the approval of the House, I understand that Madam Speaker has authorised the application of this procedure in relation to early-day motions—or acknowledgement of interests in respect of the first name—from the start of the new Session.

As I said in response to an intervention, some people will no doubt have reservations about one or more of the report's recommendations, and in both directions—some will have wanted it to go further and some perhaps not quite as far. However, the report has been produced by an all-party Committee and was generally agreed, although there were arguments on one or two points. The Committee was chaired by a senior and respected Conservative Member. I believe that the House would be right to accept these useful improvements in our system of registration and declaration——

**Sir Roger Moate** (Faversham): I apologise for interrupting my right hon. Friend. On that very point, if one does have reservations—one can discern possible matters about which one might have some, despite the general acceptance of the report—is it right to approve the report in full, bearing in mind that it is often the small points that give rise to problems of interpretation? When my right hon. Friend answered the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), he admitted to having a reservation himself. Is it right that we should give carte blanche approval, without further examination, to a report of considerable significance? Would it not be better to hear the views of the House and decide whether some of the points——

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that interventions should be short.

**Mr. Newton:** I shall make two points. First, we debated this issue a little less than a year ago in order to asses the House's general reaction. It would be fair to say that reasonable support was expressed. Secondly, I do not think that I expressed a particular reservation in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) but said that, if it were a matter of explaining the Committee's thinking, it seemed more

appropriate that it should be done by the Chairman of the Committee rather than by my attempting to interpret what was in the Committee's mind.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House confirm that the report was compiled not on the initiative of Selective Committee, but in response to a request from the House following a debate about a former hon. Member who had complained about difficulties? The general view expressed by the House, through a vote on a motion, was that the Committee should clarify the rules. This report is a response to that request.

**Mr. Newton:** Yes, I adverted to that at the outset of my speech.

Clearly, several hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate.I suspect that my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) and the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) sensed that I was trying to bring my—I hope reasonably brief—remarks to an end. The improvements to our system of registration and declarations are useful; they will remove some of the dilemmas that hon. Members have faced as a result of the lack of clarity in certain respects. I hope that the House will support their implementation tonight. I therefore commend the motion to the House.

10.35 pm

**Mrs. Margaret Beckett** (Derby, South): I am pleased to be relieved of the necessity of continually asking the Leader of House, on behalf of my hon. Friends, for this debate. We are pleased to have tonight's debate and to deal with the matter before us.

We are particularly pleased because the initial move to set up a register, as the Leader of the House recognised, was made under a Labour Government in 1974. There were then two parts to the resolution. According to the first part of that resolution, the declaration of Members' interests should be made a rule rather than a convention. The second part of the resolution set up the register itself so that hon. Members could assess any pecuniary interest or other material benefit which might be thought to affect the conduct of Members or the influence that they might exert.

I wish first to refer to the emphasis in the initial report, and the emphasis in this excellent report, on the responsibility on individual Members to ensure that they satisfy the conventions and rules of the register and, if they are in any doubt, to err on the side of including matters in the register rather than leaving them out. As the then Speaker said in evidence to the Select Committee:

"Members who hold consultancy and similar positions must ensure that they do not use their positions as members improperly."

I am aware that many hon. Members, quite rightly, want to speak in the debate, so I shall be brief. With regard to the declaration of interest, when the register was first set up, many of the reservations expressed by those who were unhappy about the procedure were along the lines that it would be very important for hon. Members not to think that the register should replace the need for a declaration of interest.

To a certain extent, for all of us, such declarations are subjective impressions. However, it is my impression that declarations of interest are hardly ever made these days. I understand how that has occurred, as there must be an instinctive feeling among many hon. Members that if the matter is in the Register of Members' Interests, people are free to look it up. Indeed, one often sees hon. Members speedily consulting the register, particularly when debates on contentious matters are taking place.

However, I wonder whether the Select Committee or the House should consider whether there is any way of reminding hon. Members afresh of their duty to make a declaration and that that duty is not extinguished by the existence of the register. For example, I want to declare an interest in that I am proud to be a sponsored Member of the Transport and General Workers Union. That interest is declared in the register. However, I rarely recall hon. Members making such declarations in the House or in Committee these days. We should consider whether we can improve that situation.

Also, we are seeing a number of changes in public policy and in the assumptions and the conventions of behaviour which reinforce our concern about the register and also the need for hon. Members to consider whether they themselves would wish to make a declaration. If I may take an example from outside this place, increasing concern has been expressed about the way in which civil servants are seen to move—I recognise, of course, with the permission of the Government, with the waiving of the rules—much more directly than has been the case in the past, straight from Departments into private industries with which they frequently were dealing a short time before. That is becoming an issue of growing concern.

Without wishing unduly to upset Conservative Members, I draw attention to the fact that, after a long period in government, people retire as former Ministers. Paragraph 15 of the Select Committee's report refers to the fact that the ministerial rules are so phrased that Ministers are discouraged from using information that they receive as Ministers for private gain, and quite properly.

We all recall well-publicised cases in which hon. Members have gone very speedily—more speedily than would have been expected some years ago—from the Cabinet into private companies and, in some cases, on to the boards of companies over whose privatisation they had presided. There is nervousness and unease in the House about those matters, which makes it all the more important that we should be vigilant and try to get the balance right.

It is right—this theme runs through the report, and some hon. Members may have doubts about it—that such issues should remain largely in the control of hon. Members. That is my own point of view because, when we are dealing with such issues, we are conscious of the degree to which our common experience might make hon. Members share a view which might not be so widely held outside. That is natural among any group of individuals who have some common experience and who have, therefore, to some extent shared perceptions and understanding of the nature of the work and its pressures.

I am reminded, for example, of a letter that I received the other day from someone who is not a constituent of mine, mentioning an issue for me to raise because it was a matter of great concern to that individual. I wrote back as courteously as I could explaining that, as the matter involved neither a constituent nor an issue which came within my own domain, I did not feel able to take up the campaign. I explained that all hon. Members receive requests and pressures to take up certain issues and

*[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]*

campaigns which they are simply unable to meet, physically or in any other way, and that everybody has to make choices.

I was slightly dismayed to receive a prompt reply saying, "I had no idea that Members of Parliament could choose what aspects of their work they wished to pursue. I am delighted to hear that. I will now renew my pressure on everybody to whom I have written and say that they must take up this campaign." Every hon. Member is conscious that such correspondence is received almost daily and that it is literally impossible for any hon. Member to take up all the issues and raise all the campaigns that some people outside this place wish us to take up.

For such reasons it is right that these matters should remain within the control of the House. However, while they remain within the control of the House and of hon. Members, it is all the more essential that it is seen that that control is not being misused and that we are vigilant about the standards that we apply. Otherwise it will be difficult to justify keeping the matter within the hands of hon. Members primarily.

It is sensible—to some extent it might be an answer to the issue raised by the hon. Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate)—that paragraph 66 of the Select Committee report suggests that it should be within the remit of the Select Committee to make minor modifications. That paragraph refers to the need to make minor modifications to the guidance in order to remove ambiguities as well as to deal with altering the financial limits without it being necessary to come back to the Floor of the House for full authorisation. That seems a sensible proposal, as is the idea of the pamphlet which might provide one route for highlighting the issue of an hon. Member's declaration, although I think that perhaps it might be better to look for a stronger route.

Having identified some of the issues in the report which I unquestioning and wholeheartedly welcome, there are a couple of issues on which I wish to enter a caveat. The first is the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) in the previous debate on 23 June 1992, to which the Leader of the House referred. Indeed, the point was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) a moment ago.

I am sure that the Leader of the House was accurate in his reply to my hon. Friend: that the way in which these matters are defined in the report and the considerations of the Select Committee has led to the difference that he identified between someone who got perhaps as little as £100 or £200 a year on a regular basis from a specific organisation where it is regarded as a sponsorship link to that candidate, and someone who might receive substantially larger sums, perhaps not on quite the same basis—either it is not a regular donation, in which case one might imagine that it might come up under the next section headed "gifts" in the register or, alternatively, it is not seen to be linked to the candidacy of an individual but is given as a donation to the political party rather than as a gift to the member. There seems to be a real loophole.

Without wishing to stray into other matters which are outside some of our deliberations tonight, I am reminded that the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) suggested that much of the identified moneys which go to the Conservative party go what he called "locally". How he defined "locally" is not entirely clear. I suspect that "within these shores" might be one of his definitions. However, if that is the case, as he implied—he suggested that perhaps even millions of pounds went to associations locally—that highlights the importance of that area to which my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin referred in June 1992 and to which my hon. Friend the Member for Workington referred tonight. That seems to be one issue which bears further investigation.

**Mr. Tim Smith** (Beaconsfield): I think that I can help on that last point. My right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) told the Select Committee that, out of a total income of £26 million last year, £18 million was raised by local Conservative associations and only £8 million by Conservative central office centrally. That was the point—"local" meant local Conservative associations.

**Mrs. Beckett:** That is a helpful intervention from the hon. Gentleman, both in clarifying the point made by the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield and in making precisely the point to which I have just referred. If it is the case that sums of such magnitude are being given in a way which apparently does not come within the purview of the register as it has been described, the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington is made in spades.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The figures that the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) quoted are fascinating because when I wrote a paper on this issue for the Committee at no stage could I establish the figure. We are talking about large sums of money paid at a local level to constituency associations on a regular basis—payments of £500, £600, £700, £800, £900 or £1,000 a year are often made. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Why do we not see the accounts to establish that?

**Mr. Tim Smith:** They are published.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** No, they are not. If the accounts are published, I can ask the hon. Gentleman, can I?

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg):** You can see the accounts of Grantham conservative association at any time, if you want.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I will take the right hon. and learned Gentleman up on that offer. I hope that that will be recorded in *Hansard*.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. We cannot have general conversations.

**Mrs. Beckett:** I do not wish to dwell on this any further, although I suspect that other hon. Members will do so on other occasions. If it is the case that £18 million was raised among some 650 associations, that seems to be a substantial interest which does not appear in any way to be covered by the register as it stands at present or, indeed, by the proposals before us tonight.

The second issue that I raise is the more general issue, which was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) in the Select Committee. The issue was whether the amounts that individual Members raised, rather than the fact that they received a pecuniary

or other reward, should be quantified either as a sum or as a band. I am aware that there was discussion in the Committee and a vote, and that the proposal was defeated on two grounds. One ground was the general issue of individual privacy and the second was the ground that what might be a significant sum to one Member, because of his financial circumstances, might be of less significance to another Member in different circumstances.

Although I can follow that argument, I point out that if a donation or gift of £10,000 or £25,000 is of no consequence to an hon. Member because his wealth is so great, the likelihood is that the sum would show up in the register because the hon. Member would list the other interests and concerns that had made such an amount pale into insignificance, in his terms. So the argument does not stand up in general terms

We should consider putting the matter in the public domain, perhaps through a band within a certain range. Such donations should not be excluded. I suspect that the Select Committee will have to return to the matter in the future, just as some of the issues contained in the report that we are discussing tonight are issues with which the Select Committee previously thought that it did not need to deal, but which it has over time come to realise are necessary.

The issue of strengthening the register is important. The Leader of the House referred to the information coming from the register which exists for members of staff, such as researchers. That, too, is the right step. The Opposition take the view strongly that, although we all want to respect the proper privacy of hon. Members, on the other hand we are all working within the public domain and owe to the public their right of scrutiny and their right to information which should properly be available to them.

10.52 pm

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith** (Wealden): I thank my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for moving the motion, with a minor modification, and for his general support. That was appreciated by all members of the Select Committee on Members' Interests. I also express my gratitude to the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) for giving a broad welcome to the report, although with certain more substantial differences of opinion.

For the benefit of some new Members whom I see here tonight, I should say that we all recognise that having to register and to ensure that we have got it right is a tedious operation for some. We always feel that, if we have not got it right, we may be the subject of a complaint. There is also the feeling that it is something that we have to do because if we do not, some people might think that we are corrupt.

I remind the House that when we agreed to introduce the register in 1974-75, we did not do so because we believed that there was corruption in the House. I believe that compared with any other Parliament or democratic assembly in the world, we are the least corrupt. We agreed to the introduction of the register because we believed in the need for openness and for transparency in a representative democracy. The point that has been made on other occasions—I do not apologise for making it again—is that in the absence of openness, rumour and innuendo can flourish, especially in the media. I leave it at that.

It is not a pleasant task to look into complaints. We do not relish it at all. The House asked us to see how the duties of Members, under the regulations laid down, could be made clearer. That was the sole purpose of the exercise.

Other matters had to be considered, of course. When there is some ambiguity, there is bound to be inconsistency in the way in which Members declare their interests. Making things more explicit was therefore another objective.

As I have dealt with this matter at greater length on a previous occasion, I do not want to labour the point. I do not want to weary the House by going over ground that was covered a little more than a year ago. Nor do I want to duplicate the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. However, I must emphasise that when we embarked on this exercise none of us thought that we would burst upon the House of Commons with a report setting out a whole lot of new and draconian rules. The objective is to make the existing rules clearer and more specific and to try to establish as the standard the current best practice in registering financial interests.

We realise that some hon. Members would like to go further. The right hon. Member for Derby, South referred to one very important division in the Committee and, I expect, in the House as a whole. That division concerns whether we ought to recommend recording the actual amounts of remuneration deriving from outside interests. This is a delicate issue. It may not go away, but we have tried to proceed on the basis of consent. I very much appreciate the fact that, during my years as its Chairman, the Committee has been able to proceed with reasonable unanimity, helpfulness and co-operation across the often rather large gulf between us.

I want to emphasise that the report was debated last year. It has been on the Table. I am grateful that it has now come before the House for debate, but I should be even more grateful had it come sooner. Hon. Members have had time to consider what changes, if any, should be made in it. I wish that the Committee's recommendation about early-day motions could be accepted, but I appreciate the practical considerations that the Leader of the House has mentioned, and I should not want this comparatively minor point to be an obstacle to progress on the report's central proposals. The last thing we want to do is introduce some cumbersome bureaucracy.

I do not think that my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) was totally satisfied with the reasons for registering a property in Lewisham. We found that there were often generic entries, such as ownership of a farm. Some hon. Members have registered properties that are apparently their private residencies, although that is not required. In the report, my hon. Friend will find these words:

"We accept that it would be unduly burdensome to require Members to list all their individual land and property holdings in minute detail. This would, moreover, breach the principle of reasonable privacy, to which we attach importance. But we do consider that more uniformity of practice is desirable and that entries should be reasonably specific as to the nature of the property and its general location. For example, 'Woodland in Perthshire' or 'Six lock-up rental garages in Lewisham, SE London'".

We thought that that would be a perfectly acceptable form of entry.

**Mr. Marlow:** Why does my hon. Friend think that it is useful to know that the garages are in Lewisham rather than Lambeth?

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** I do not think that I would go so far as to say that. Anyone with a hang-up about the geographical location could discuss it with the registrar. I do not see that, for these purposes, there is any difference between garages in Lambeth and garages in Lewisham.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Or London.

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** Or London.

The little extra information enables us to judge the extent to which, for example, a farm is a smallholding in a rough area, such as the one I represent, with poor land and clay, as opposed to some of the lush pastures of the exquisite farmland in Perthshire. That is what we are trying to elicit from hon. Members who register under this heading.

I should like to outline the next steps, assuming that the motion is accepted. The next printed edition of the register is to be published early next year. It is customary for the registrar to circulate all hon. Members some weeks before the register is reprinted to remind them of the need to update their entries. Without that annual reminder, it is amazing how forgetful we can be. That circulation, probably in November, will be the obvious occasion on which to send out the new registration form for the first time. Because the new form differs from the old one in some material respects, it will be necessary for hon. Members to return the completed form, just as they did after the general election, and not merely to amend their existing entries.

In accordance with paragraphs 68 and 70 of the report, the registrar will also be drawing up an explanatory leaflet to assist hon. Members in completing the new forms. That is important. The leaflet will need to be examined by the Select Committee, but it should be ready for circulation at

the same time as the new form. After the first register the new rules will be published in January, following which the process of amendment and updating by letter to the registrar will continue in the same way as now.

I recognise—there must be some humility about this—that although we believe that the rules are an improvement on the existing ones, and are more detailed and specific, they still require judgment and interpretation when applied to particular circumstances. It is the role of the registrar, a senior official of the House, to advise on matters of interpretation in the first instance. Everything said to him is treated in confidence. He can call on the assistance of the Select Committee if he encounters a problem that he is unable to settle on his own authority.

Paragraph 66 of the report gives the Committee the authority to make minor modifications. That is no thin end of the wedge but an attempt to deal with any wording of the rules that still results in some ambiguity. Such matters can come to light only when the rules are tested in practice. If it becomes apparent that the revised provisions have consequences that were not intended when the Committee agreed the report, there is machinery for putting matters right.

There never seems to be a time to consider these matters in a calm and objective fashion. Much of the exchanges about the funding of parties had nothing to do with members of the Committee who were not concerned with that wider question that has attracted so much attention over the past week or so. In dealing with the serious business of how far we can be open with the public to avoid innuendo and criticism, I have been greatly impressed by the painstaking way in which hon. Members have risen to their obligations. As I have said, I greatly appreciate the help that I have been given over the years by hon. Members from all parties who formed the Committee. I hope that the House will approach the debate in the same spirit and approve the Committee's recommendations.

11.3 pm

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): We are debating the development of registration, which is a requirement on all hon. Members. The background is not simply that a Labour Government put that into effect, because in the early 1970s, and certainly when I was first elected, the general view was that this place did not need a register and that everybody knew the wrong 'uns. When I suggested a register, I was told by a Labour Member, "We don't need a register. We know all the wrong 'uns in here, old boy, and we can pick them out."

The set of circumstances that produced the register were precipitated by a man called Poulson, a corrupt architect, who corrupted Members of Parliament, a senior civil servant and a varying number of councillors of all political persuasions. Because of the tide of criticism of people in public office, and because the wash swept over a large proportion of hon. Members who had behaved perfectly properly and with complete integrity but who were stained by the Poulson corruption, the House, following the report of Justice Salmond on "Standards of Conduct in Public Life", established the register. The truth was that, even if the House knew "wrong uns", there was little that it could do or wished to do at that time.

The register has been a source of information and rightly so. Since its establishment, the House has set standards of conduct for local authority councillors. It is now a criminal offence for councillors to fail to declare a financial interest. The standards of conduct for councillors are much tighter than those for hon. Members. If any Member thinks that the new rules represent an additional burden, he should bear in mind the fact that the House requires much higher and tighter standards from councillors. Should they breach the rules, they are also subject to criminal penalties.

Councillors with a financial interest are also required not to take part in various committee and council decisions. A councillor who is a council tenant requires special approval from the Department of the Environment to take part in any discussion of proposed rent changes.

It is also worth noting that the House sets the standard of conduct for people outside. We determine through delegated powers given to Ministers, and approved in orders passed by the House, the information provided by and standard of conduct expected from the poorest people in the land—those who are on income support. We do not allow them not to declare any bit of capital that they may have or any other income. That must be declared. It would be hypocritical if the House did not accept the need for better, clearer rules—which it has requested—on Members' interests, if, at the same time, it imposed draconian rules on people who are seeking relatively tiny amounts of money. They are certainly tiny in contrast to Members' salaries.

We are in receipt of taxpayers' money, and our salaries are better than those of most of our constituents. If people outside, who put us here, want to know about the influences that shape our voting and, in particular, any financial influences that may shape our voting, we should accept their request. That is part of the process of democratic accountability.

Although the report does not go far enough, it is a step in the right direction, and I support it in general terms. On page xxxv, I proposed that the amount of money that hon. Members receive should be disclosed. The report does not require that, however, which is unsatisfactory. There is a marked difference between an hon. Member receiving 150 quid from the Women's Institute towards the cost of secretarial work, because that Member is interested in representing its case in Parliament, and someone who receives between £10,000 and £20,000 in personal income from an outside organisation. That should be known.

The disclosure of such information is not an intrusion on Members' privacy. If we receive money as Members of Parliament, in pursuance of our duties, people outside should know about it. That might stop Members from voting on a issue in which they have a direct, pecuniary interest, as defined in "Erskine May". If they were to vote with a direct pecuniary interest, the vote might be invalidated.

The declaration of the amount of income that Members receive would be a safeguard against their foolishness. That happened recently when the Select Committee on Member's Interests examined a complaint about the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, who felt that he did not have to declare his part-payment of legal expenses to get rid of Miss Whiplash, because it was anonymous. The Committee was unanimous in the view that anonymous donations can be more dangerous than known donations.

What if, for example, Asil Nadir were one of the principal anonymous contributors who then turned up, two years later, on the steps of No. 11, knocking on the

*[Mr. Bob Cryer]*

door and saying, "And by the way, Norm. Do you know that I made a major contribution and would like some little tax concessions in return."? That is a dangerous position for anyone to get themselves into, but it can happen without Members thinking too much about it, as clearly happened on that occasion.

The declaration of the amount of money would therefore have been a safeguard and a benefit to Members, not a handicap. After all, some Members would positively like to boast of the money they receive from outside, so why should they not register it? However, the Committee has decided against that. There was a vote, and my proposition was defeated. That does not mean that I am against the report. I am disappointed, but I merely point out to those Members who think that this will be an additional onerous burden that, although the report does not satisfy me, I am prepared to compromise.

There are improvements. For example, clients must be listed if Members of Parliament are employed by an outside organisation dealing with specific clients. That used to be the case. Clients were nearly always listed in the register, but it simply fell into desuetude, to use a good Church of England phrase, and people simply did not bother. That can lead people into all sorts of traps and difficulties, as we have recently witnessed. People should have to declare the clients for whom they are providing a service. That is incorporated in the report, and represents an improvement.

Membership of Lloyd's syndicates was discussed by the Committee. A member of Lloyd's on the Committee did not like the view but did not take part in the voting, quite properly, and retained a neutral position. The Committee approved that the membership of a syndicate should be included. If Lloyd's were not a scandal-rocked institution these days, with Conservatives standing up in the House and making accusations about certain syndicates, it would probably never have been required to be incorporated. But it is a safeguard for Members against future accusations that they were voting to benefit their private financial interests. The fact that it is recorded will make their position much clearer. Thus, the Committee opted for openness.

For the first time, the report defines the sort of gifts that must be declared. The figure is given as "over £125" and, as benefit in kind, 0·5 per cent. of the current salary of a Member of Parliament. That has never been adequately defined. It has been adequately defined for Ministers in the past. They have either had to return the gift, pay the balance—it used to be £30—or distribute the gift, if possible, around the members of their private office.

Those rules arose on the basis of the experience of a silver coffee pot. Tony Crosland opened a school and was given a silver coffee pot. Several months later it was discovered that the coffee pot was donated by Mr. Poulson and there were a lot of red faces. It was then decided that Ministers should not receive gifts because it might be argued that those gifts were being used to corrupt them. Ministerial rules were therefore laid down for Ministers' protection and the better information that Ministers were conducting their public affairs with the best possible probity.

That is really what the report is about. The rules represent an improvement and contain nothing to which hon. Members should object. They mean greater accountability. They will apply to Members of Parliament who apply much tighter rules to those outside this place. It would be hypocritical and double standards if any hon. Member voted against the rules while applying tighter rules to those outside.

11.15 pm

**Mr. Peter Viggers** (Gosport): It is never a happy experience to probe and discuss whether or not we behave properly. In my view, this is an open and honest House and the exceptions are very rare and well publicised.

I shall restrict myself to only three points. First, what sort of control should there be? Should it be control by the House or statutory control? The Committee was guided by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) and by the previous Leader of the House, now my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, who took the firm view that we should not have statutory control, with the inevitable judicial procedures that that would involve, but that as a House we should police ourselves and Members of Parliament should be judged by their peers.

The Committee approached the issue on the basis that hon. Members are just that—honourable—and that the rules are there to guide them and give them protection. I join those who have urged hon. Members to rely on the registrar and, if in doubt, to register. The register should cause no fear. I voted against a register when it was first proposed, but I now recognise that the world has moved on and that the register exists to protect hon. Members as well as to police them.

Secondly, we are discussing two reports, the second of which is arguably the more important in the longer term. I refer to the report dealing with lobbying, which in recent years has become a large financial practice. The lobbyists —those who specialise in public relations—have, as their best interests, maximising of the number of clients and claiming that they have considerable influence over hon. Members and therefore, through the vote, the House. I am not sure that lobbying companies have as much influence——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. There will be a separate debate on that issue, so the hon. Gentleman must confine himself to what is immediately under consideration. Many hon. Members want to speak in the debate.

**Mr. Viggers:** I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was under the impression that the two debates elided. Obviously, I was wrong.

My third point is that in Committee reference was made to members of Lloyd's and there was a vigourous discussion about how they should declare their interests. That provided the opportunity for quite a lot of fruitful political digging because more Conservative Members than Labour Members are members of Lloyd's—I think by a majority of 47 to zero.

I declare my interest as a member of Lloyd's since 1973, which predates my entry to the House, and an elected member of the Council of Lloyd's during the last 18 months. My guidance to the Committee was that it would be onerous to require members of Lloyds to declare their interests fully within the register. My view was based on a realistic premise of the way in which members of Lloyd's declared their interests in the working group on Lloyd's. I

said that I thought that the size of the register could be doubled if members of Lloyds declared their interests fully and in a manner that would fully explain their financial interests. My guidance was that that would throw the register out of kilter and put far too much on Lloyd's as against other matters.

Other Members took a different view. They thought that at least Members of Parliament should list their syndicate numbers for the year in question. My advice then and now is that that is a pretty pointless and rather prurient exercise because it does not give any full idea of the results that the member will get from Lloyd's in any one year. The numbers alone do not give an idea of the amount of his participation in any one syndicate. Nor does it show whether he has any so-called "stop loss" on his investments or whether he has any open years from previous years.

The issue has caused some concern and even anger among members of Lloyd's here. They feel that the exercise is prurient and pretty pointless. My considered judgment is that, as the world has moved on, there is keen interest in Lloyd's of London, which is an important and large institution. It is one of the largest single export earners in Britain. Individual participants inevitably receive some publicity if they participate in such an exercise. I say to my hon. Friends who are members of Lloyd's that the compromise on naming individual syndicates is not particularly productive, but perhaps it is a reasonable way of giving some further information on the membership of Lloyd's of Members of Parliament.

I abstained in the Committee. I do not feel particularly strongly about the issue now. I would prefer that the requirement was not included. Nevertheless, other members of the Committee felt strongly on the issue and I therefore commend the point to my hon. Friends, although I do not do so with any great enthusiasm.

11.21 pm

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): I shall be brief, having spoken earlier this evening. I wish to place on record the fact that we all regret the passing of Robert Adley, who was an active member of the Committee for several years. He played a major part in the formulation of much of what is in the report.

I wish to qualify the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) about clients, in case some hon. Members are worried about the matter. The need to declare a client arises only where that client is being served by way of a Member carrying out his parliamentary duties. The form says that clearly in the box which deals with that matter. It does not require the registration of all clients of a Member of Parliament, who might well represent clients on matters unrelated to activities on the Floor of the House or the conduct of his work.

I draw attention to the matter of sponsorship. Labour Members do not object to sponsored Members having to declare or register. That is not the issue. The argument in the Committee was about whether there was a level playing field and whether it was right that only Labour Members who were sponsored, or whose constituency parties received money from trade unions, should have to declare sponsorship, when Conservative Members whose constituency associations receive money from organisations on a regular basis or, indeed, one-off payments, historically have not registered those payments over the years. We simply sought to set a level playing field.

I went into the inquiry most worried about what I thought was happening in Parliament. One of the conclusions that I drew was that the problem was not so much the rules as the way in which the rules were applied in the form that Members are required to fill in annually. I concluded that, if we could simply redraw the form and marginally tighten up the rules, and if the rules were complied with, the form presented in the report would deal with many of the Committee's anxieties.

When we took evidence from the former Member for Winchester, John Browne, he repeatedly referred to what he said were ambiguities in our rules. We did not accept that ambiguities existed, but he believed that they did. That was his defence to many of the allegations made about his activities. During the course of the inquiry, therefore, we felt that we should tighten up the rules about which John Browne complained.

In the form that comprises annex 1 of the report, which makes the critical reform, the rules remain the same but they are presented differently—in the form of direct questions—which avoids any possible ambiguity.

The Committee's purpose over a number of years was always to seek a compromise. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) sought the declaration of payments received by right hon. or hon. Members from outside interests. I was not prepared, in the spirit of compromise, even to go that far. I merely requested—an amendment in the report deals with this point—that where Members of Parliament receive more than £10,000 a year from any organisation, sponsoring body, consultancy or directorship, they should asterisk that in their report.

There was never an attempt by some members of the Committee to pry into the private affairs of individual right hon. and hon. Members. We accepted that a balance had to be struck between privacy and the public interest. I believe that the report, which I hope will be approved by the House tonight, secures that objective.

11.26 pm

**Sir Roger Moate** (Faversham): I want to place on record my deep unease at the manner in which we are asked to approve the report and some of its recommendations. That is not in any way to suggest that the Committee and its Chairman—my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith)—and others have not met their remit from the House. I do not doubt that they have done so thoroughly and conscientiously, but I feel uneasy about some of the features of the proceedings tonight—just as I felt uneasy, as I suspect did other right hon. and hon. Members, on those occasions when the House sought to pass judgment on the conduct of some colleagues, based on the Committee's rules and criteria.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) referred to the Poulson affair of some 20 years ago. I still feel that the House acted in a most unfair manner in the way that it treated certain of our colleagues. That is not to make a judgment about the merits of those individuals, but I felt that, when the House passed judgment on someone

*[Sir Roger Moate]*

such as Mr. John Cordle, it did so unfairly and rather heavily, without giving that Member of Parliament a full opportunity to defend himself.

**Mr. Skinner:** He resigned.

**Sir Roger Moate:** As the hon. Gentleman says, Mr. Cordle resigned—but, without legislation and the precision of law, peer group pressure and that of the media are brought to bear on certain Members of Parliament, without their having an opportunity to defend themselves in the way open to other citizens.

We asked the Committee to make general recommendations with a lack of precision, and we are called upon to pass judgments on specific instances on the basis of very woolly laws and rules. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) might be surprised to learn that I go along with the line that he seems to recommend—that if one is to start on that course, one must be logical and precise, so that Members of Parliament ultimately know the rules on which we are supposed to opperate. That can only be done by the force of law, because we are determining the rules by which a right hon. or hon. Member can represent his constituency.

My argument is borne out in some respects by the procedure. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House indicated that he had some reservations on certain points. None the less, it is right that we should accept this worthy report and pass it as it stands.

In law, one cannot have reservations about certain points and say that nevertheless the general principle is right. Our job is to tidy up those points. The right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) welcomed the fact that the Committee had been given some flexibility to deal with minor adjustments. That is fine, so long as it adjusts matters that concern me, or other people, but we have no assurance about that.

I want to draw three points to the attention of the House. The first relates to staff. The report says that there should be a declaration of gifts, visits and other benefits conferred upon staff. That is a wide-ranging remit. I just wonder whether we have the power, resources, facilities and ability to monitor staff. I am not aware of having conferred benefits upon any of those who might be described as my staff. Nevertheless, that question could arise. Therefore, I wonder whether we are entering an area that we have no real authority, skill or ability to monitor.

The second point relates to consultancies. Again, I have no interest to declare. I wish, perhaps, that I had. The wording is still, I believe, ambiguous. People can be directors of consultancies, or consultants to consultancies. They can be very large or small firms. They can have a very large or a very small list of clients. The benefits—some would say the dubious benefits—that would result from a Member being a consultant would be conferred, presumably, upon all those clients.

The report that we are being asked to agree to refers to clients who directly or indirectly benefit from the advice of a Member. That is a wide-ranging phrase. All I ask the House to consider is that at some stage in the future there will be a case that attracts a lot of media attention, in which some client is indirectly receiving the benefit of the consultancy of some hon. Member. If that does not lead to doubt and uncertainty, I do not know what will.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** If in doubt, go to the Clerk.

**Sir Roger Moate:** I accept what the hon. Gentleman says, but in practice it means that if one has doubts, one must declare the list that contains the names of every single client of a particular agency. That is the only way ultimately to resolve the doubts. Every client of a consultancy or company must surely be receiving some indirect benefit from somebody, if that person is a director or consultant of that company. I do not believe that the House would accept such woolly phraseology in law. We shall get ourselves into difficulties by using such woolly phraseology here.

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** We are not talking about an indirect benefit in a general sense. We are talking specifically about the relationship that the member of the firm, who is a Member of Parliament, will have to that client, in pursuance of representations to a Minister or when speaking in the House, as a result of which he benefits as a consequence of his membership of that firm. We are talking about the active participation by a Member of Parliament in that relationship. It has nothing to do with the Member of Parliament indirectly benefiting for some other reason. It arises out of the work that he does for that client here in his parliamentary capacity.

**Sir Roger Moate:** Whether it arises directly or indirectly as a result of all those things, it is unsatisfactory.

My third point relates to our discussion about the location of property. There are reasonable interpretations of that, but we cannot leave it as wide as it is. We have left it very wide and very woolly, and it is still unsatisfactory. I hope that it will not happen, but in times to come we may find ourselves in difficulties because of the phraseology that we shall endorse tonight.

11.33 pm

**Ms Angela Eagle** (Wallasey): The hon. Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) has just made an interesting speech, which I suspect points towards a move to statutory control and away from self-regulation. Nevertheless, I welcome the report. It sticks firmly to the principle of self-regulation. I suspect that at this stage we ought to stick to it and ensure that it is tight enough to work. I welcome the debate on the report, which has already been delayed too long. Indeed, at least one register, possibly two, has been published under the old rules while the report has been in existence. I welcome the progress that we are making tonight in ensuring that we tighten the rules.

I agree with hon. Members who have said that the report aims to protect Members of Parliament. I note that the hon. Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), who originally voted against, has now come around to seeing things that way, and I agree with his observation that the world is changing and that we need to respond to it.

Why is it important that we do so? Given what we have seen in the past few weeks, we hardly need to ask that question. What we are discussing goes to the heart of our democracy, especially to its legitimacy. It is crucial to engender among the electorate trust in Members of Parliament and to counter a cynicism and disillusion with politics that has become obvious in some quarters in recent years.

It was Woody Allen, I think, who said that politicians as a profession were one notch below child molesters in the public esteem. Perhaps he knew from experience, but I

hope that what we are doing tonight will raise the rather low esteem in which our constituents hold us. We are debating serious matters, and the onus is on us to prove our honesty in an open and transparent way that engenders trust.

The report sensibly recognises the problem of self-assessment and the inconsistencies that result from it. It proposes to reduce those inconsistencies by sensible changes to the register. Only pecuniary interests are to be registered, which is absolutely right. We must maintain a register that is not too cumbersome but contains enough detail for it to be a meaningful document to which the public can refer when necessary.

I wish to deal quickly with a few of the changes that the report proposes. It proposes to divide category 5, financial sponsorships, into two new categories—sponsorship and occasional gifts. A somewhat spurious distinction is drawn between what we call the Hastings agreement money that is paid to Labour Members who are sponsored by a trade union and private donations to local associations of other political parties. I welcome the fact that declarations of donations of more than £500 must now be disclosed, but I do not understand the exemption for donations and quotas that are not linked to a Member's candidacy.

That spurious distinction caricatures the reality of trade union sponsorship and the way in which local branches of trade unions operate in local constituency Labour parties. The suggestion that union votes affect the outcome of parliamentary selections is not so true these days, and the charge that votes can be bought in a local constituency Labour party is wrong. I do not believe that I understand that distinction, and I should have preferred it if it had not been made.

I strongly support the switch to the use of questions on the registration form instead of the descriptive headings which characterised the old form because they make it harder for ambiguities to creep in and for misunderstandings or obvious omissions to emerge.

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** I apologise for interrupting the hon. Lady, but one has emerged in the debate, and it may also be on her mind. I refer to the role of an intermediary between the donor and a constituency party organisation. It must be made clear that, if an hon. Member associates himself with a fund-raising appeal aimed at potential donors but the resulting donations are then remitted direct to the local party organisation, it would not seem to constitute acting as an intermediary. I think that that has wide application for all parties.

**Ms Eagle:** We possibly need to have a watching brief of what happens with various local methods of fund raising, which ties the debate to the issue of the funding of political parties and other matters, but I shall not stray from the motion. As a member of the Select Committee, I should want to keep a close eye on such matters for possible inclusion in future reports.

I also welcome the change to category 9, under which shareholdings are listed. It was an anomaly that the holding of 1 per cent. of the issued share capital of a company had to be declared, regardless of the size of that company, whereas nothing below that had to be declared. Under the old system, substantial shareholdings in large companies, which were worth a great deal of money, could go undeclared, while smaller——

*It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion,* MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Question necessary to dispose of them, pursuant to order [24 June].*

*Question agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House approves the First Report from the Select Committee on Members' Interests of Session 1991-92 (House of Commons Paper No. 326) relating to the registration and declaration of Members' financial interests, provided that the recommendation in paragraph 84 of the Report relating to the declaration of any relevant registered interest at the time of tabling an early day motion shall apply only to the Member in charge of such a motion.

## Lobbying

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

**Mr. Bowen Wells** (Hertford and Stortford) *rose*——

11.41 pm

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith** (Wealden): I mean no discourtesy to my hon. Friend, but I believe that I have the floor.

I am grateful for the opportunity to debate the report on parliamentary lobbying. It is true that the report has been on the table for nearly two years, but a delayed debate is better than no debate. I imply no criticism of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. After we had completed part of our report on lobbying, we were interrupted by having to consider one or two complaints, which lasted a long time. We then went back to work, but, by that time, the election was nearly upon us.

I do not think that anything fundamental has happened in the past two years which would alter or allay the concerns which gave rise to the Committee's inquiry and report, so let me try briefly to summarise those concerns. The first and most basic is that, over the past 15 years or so, we have experienced a significant growth in all types of lobbying activities. There is nothing new or intrinsically wrong with lobbying; it is probably the second oldest profession and, to my mind, it dates back to the time when King John was lobbied by the knights, who got the best of the bargain.

Lobbying can be seen as the sign of a healthy democracy in that organisations, interest groups, charities and individuals want to bring their views and problems to the attention of Members of Parliament, Departments and Ministers. What is new, however, is the increased organisation and professionalism of that process. Much lobbying is conducted by or on the advice of professional consultancies, which charge substantial fees for their services—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) must resume his seat or leave.

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** I am obliged to you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

As I was saying, much lobbying is conducted by or on the advice of professional consultancies, which charge substantial fees for their services and are in competition with one another for the available business.

Because of that competitive environment with large sums of money at stake, there is naturally a concern that traditional lobbying, which is undoubtedly an aid to healthy parliamentary democracy, may evolve step by imperceptible step, into forms of covert pressure and persuasion that could ultimately damage our democracy —*[Interruption.]* There seem to be two debates going on at the moment, and I do not know what is happening below the Gangway. However, I hope that hon. Members who are paying attention to this debate have heard what I have said.

The next area of concern is the increasing use made of the facilities of the House for promotional or lobbying activities. I will say no more about that tonight. It is a matter more for the domestic Committees than for the Select Committee on Members' Interests. To some extent, that issue is already being tackled by measures such as the limitation on passes for the staff of hon. Members. However, the issue figures prominently in the evidence that the Committee took during its inquiry, and that concern should not be discounted.

The next concern is perhaps felt more keenly outside the House than inside. The dividing line between professional lobbyists and politicians is no longer perceived by many people outside this place to be clear. There is no law or rule of the House that prevents a Back-Bench Member from accepting paid consultancies, some of which involve work closely akin to that of professional lobbyists.

Those links with the commercial world outside Westminster bring great benefits to the House in many ways. However, we must also recognise that the House is unusual among Parliaments in the developed world in allowing hon. Members such freedom. Some do not allow outside interests. I declare that I have a range of outside interests and that might prejudice me in favour of the report that we considered previously and the report that we are debating now. However, people will know where I stand, and if they think that I am influenced by outside interests, so be it.

If that freedom is to be justified, freedom must be counterbalanced by adequate safeguards. Our rules for registration and declaration of financial interests are, as we have agreed tonight, the most important safeguard. To apply similar rules to the professional lobbying firms would, in the Committee's opinion, reinforce those safeguards and provide a cross-check for the register.

The Committee's report is more in the nature of a Green Paper than a White Paper with a fully finished set of proposals. In the light of the concerns that I have mentioned, the report suggests that the House should decide, in principle, that a register of professional lobbyists should be established. Such a decision, which I am disappointed that we cannot take tonight because we are debating the matter on an Adjournment motion, would be a green light to the Select Committee to enter discussions with the lobbying profession about the details. We have drafted guidelines and a code of conduct in the annex to the report, which are intended as no more than a cock-shy.

The report reaches three firm conclusions about the proposed register. First, like the Register of Members' Interests, it should be founded on a resolution of the House and not on statute law. Its enforcement would therefore be a matter for the House and not for the courts.

Secondly, the register should, at least to start with, cover only professional lobbyists—that is, firms or individuals who are paid to lobby on behalf of clients or to advise clients on how to lobby on their own behalf. The report refers to a group of professional lobbyists including some household names which are in sympathy with the concept that we should enter discussions with them about setting up a register.

If there were professional lobbyists, that would exclude two much more numerous classes: for example, those in the public affairs departments of some of the country's big firms, who lobby on behalf of their immediate employers rather than on behalf of outside clients. Hon. Members understand who we mean. The other group involves charities, professional bodies, industrial associations and similar pressure groups that lobby on behalf of the industries or groups that they represent.

Thirdly, the register should list firms and their clients, but it should not follow the equivalent registers in the United States and Canada—we went to Canada to

examine the Canadian system—in attempting to record each individual lobbying project or act of lobbying. If that were the case, one would probably have a list as long as one's arm.

As a result, the proposed register would be quite limited in scope and should not impose an undue administrative burden or costs on the Department of the Clerk of the House.

Hon. Members who have read the report will have noticed that it did not pass through the Committee without controversy. There was a minority view, which might be expressed during this debate, that the House would gain nothing from the establishment of a register of lobbyists. It is argued, in particular, that registration by the House would confer recognition and respectability on the lobbying firms which they might not deserve but which would boost their credibility with potential clients.

I remember that we came to the conclusion that that would be one of the drawbacks, but some hon. Members subsequently changed their minds. The House would be put to great trouble, so it is argued, and expense in establishing and maintaining the register, but its effect would be to encourage the development of professional lobbying rather than to control it.

Those are the arguments, which I have fairly set out, against our proposal. I understand the arguments, but I do not regard them as outweighing the arguments for taking action. There seems to be a clear case for more openness about lobbying activity.

**Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): My hon. Friend referred to openness in lobbying. Paragraph 10 on page 1i of his excellent report states that the Committee took evidence

"from three of the larger trade unions."

In particular, it took evidence that the Confederation of Health Service Employees had six sponsored hon. Members and that the Transport and General Workers Union had 33 sponsored hon. Members. Paragraph 11 states:

"Those questioned made no secret of what they expected from their MPs."

Paragraph 12 states:

"The TGWU official told us 'Clearly if a Member of Parliament . . . has failed to do that . . . it would be perfectly legitimate for us to say, "Look, the relationship isn't working".'"

Paragraph 15 states:

"What is more a paid lobby of 33 MPs is so huge as to make one wonder whether it does not constitute a political party in its own right".

Would my hon. Friend be prepared to comment on that section of his report?

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** I am obliged to my hon. Friend. If I were to embark on any comment, it might disturb the thread of my argument, and I prefer any points to be made in another way by other hon. Members. A little discretion at this point is important for me. I heard what my hon. Friend says. I understand and I am obliged to him.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): The hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) has raised an important issue. After that evidence was given by, I think, Mr. Regan-Scott, the trade union official involved, the union dissociated itself from that comment. It is simply untrue. I must assume that he got out of bed the wrong side that morning.

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. One can see how these matters lead to important difficulties, and I do not want to rehash strongly held points on either side of the argument. I want to stick to the general matter of the need for lobbying. My hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewksbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) might feel that my remarks only justify his point.

Let me repeat that there is a clear case for more openness in lobbying and greater transparency. Members of Parliament and Ministers might be well aware who the lobbyists are and who the lobbyists' clients are, but, even if that is so, and I suspect that there are many gaps in most hon. Members' knowledge, the public also have a legitimate interest in knowing more about those who make a living out of influencing the decisions of Government and the Parliament which they elected.

Several countries with comparable systems to ours have come to the same conclusion and have established a system for registering lobbyists. The report contains much evidence about that, particularly about the Canadian arrangements which are based upon an Act of Parliament and which came into operation in 1989. A committee of the Canadian House of Commons recently reviewed the operation of the Act. It stated:

"Overall . . . the Act has added a measure of transparency to the activities of lobbyists. The public now has an opportunity to know who, for pay, is attempting to influence certain government decisions . . .. The disclosure of lobbying activities is intended to increase public understanding of, and faith in, the operation of government. Ensuring that there is less secrecy surrounding lobbying activities will have the added benefit of discouraging lobbyists from engaging in unseemly behaviour."

That leads me to the second consideration that weighs strongly with me. Lobbying in Britain today has reached such a level of significance that some basic ground rules are necessary to show the dividing line between what is acceptable practice and what is unacceptable. At one time, it was reasonable to hope that the profession might develop its own standards and guidelines, and the machinery to police them. During our inquiry, it became clear that that hope was unlikely to be realised. If there is to be a code of conduct, it would have to be either imposed by statute—I do not think that the Government or the House would support that—or introduced by the House with registration as the carrot and the powers of the House to punish contempt as the stick to punish any who may transgress against the code.

That is the course recommended in the Committee's report. I await with interest the views of hon. Members on that central recommendation.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Mr. Deputy Speaker——

11.55 pm

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton)** *rose*——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. There appears to be some confusion.

**Mr. Newton:** The confusion is that I was told that it would be appropriate if I were not called next, in order to preserve the practice of going from one side of the House to the other. I had originally intended to speak at this

*[Mr. Newton]*

point, but the reason for my hesitation is that I received a stare of a different sort by a route that perhaps I should not describe—it was not entirely the usual channels.

I am pleased to be able to respond to the requests, most notably those from the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who must feel as though it is his birthday, having got two things that he wanted on the same evening after pressing for so long.

My role in this debate, as may be the case for the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), is one of listening to the views expressed on an occasion when, as with the main report on Members' interests a year ago, the purpose is to gain some idea of the feel in the House as a whole on the recommendations made by the Committee about lobbying. For that reason, I do not intend to say a great deal. As I said, I am in listening mode.

In fairness to the House, I am a little sceptical about the strength of the case for what is proposed in the report. I make that observation as a personal one, rather than as a great statement of Government policy. Obviously, we will consider what is said tonight.

Perhaps I can best give my reasons for approaching the recommendation in a slightly sceptical way by adverting not only to the two points that my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) properly emphasised or rehearsed as reasons for the reservations expressed by some Members of his Committee—that is, the question of the considerable additional bureaucracy that almost certainly would be required to maintain such a register, and the possibility that the establishment of such a register would effectively be seen as giving a seal of approval to specific activities by specific firms in a way that might not be precisely what the House would wish. It may be that one could prevent people from putting "Approved lobbyist to the House of Commons" on their notepaper, but I am not sure that the House would generally regard that outcome with great enthusiasm.

I must confess to having to question whether the real beneficiaries of this proposal would not be such lobbyists by that sort of route, rather than the House in gaining some great improvement in its protection from lobbying, or, indeed, an enhancement of the standards of lobbying. As I said, I shall ask questions, rather than give views that are set in concrete. Those questions will need considerable examination before the House would wish to go down this route.

I am reinforced in my view by considerable doubt about whether the distinction, which I understood my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden to be seeking to draw, between professional lobbyists and others who are engaged in almost the same line of business could be sustained for long. It is worth my placing on the record the second half of paragraph 2 of the report, in which the question of definition is approached.

The report says:

"We also use the expression 'professional lobbyist', by whom we mean someone who is professionally employed to lobby on behalf of clients or who advises clients on how to lobby on their own behalf. There is, in addition, another category of paid lobbyist, much larger numerically: those whose job it is to make representations on behalf of their employers or particular interests such as charities, professional bodies, industrial or commercial associations, or other pressure groups. We readily appreciate that some of those to whom we refer as 'lobbyists' or 'professional lobbyists' will not recognise themselves as such, or consider that their actions amount to lobbying. We recognise, too, that apart from political consultants of various kinds, members of some other professions who are most unlikely to consider themselves as 'lobbyists', solicitors or accountants, for example, may act in a representative capacity or give advice the nature of which amounts to 'professional lobbying'."

That paragraph gives a pretty clear indication of some of the definitional problems that would arise in a restrictive approach to the register and of the immense practical problems that would arise if a more broadly based definition was adopted. It could easily produce a position in which almost every paid worker of every large voluntary organisation or national charity in the country, together with the public relations managers of many larger firms and a whole range of other people, extending at the extreme to solicitors or accountants, who are specifically mentioned as undertaking activities that amount to professional lobbying, would be on the register. The difficulties of a register that was as widely drawn as that, if it proved difficult to sustain the narrower definition, as I suspect that it would, would be immense.

I make a last point about the questions that the House would need to think through before it went down that path. The Committee, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden very fairly acknowledged, said in effect that it would be much better to have a voluntary code of registration by the industry itself rather than a register that was imposed, as is raised as a possibility by the report. I rather share the view that such a voluntary code would be better.

As it could be argued that the main beneficiaries of the proposal would be those who wished to engage in this activity rather than those of us who are subject to it, I am inclined to think that the most appropriate course would be to make a further effort, if that were possible, to promote the establishment of a voluntary code by the industry. I recognise the reasons why the Committee shied away from that. However, the House as a whole may wish to consider whether the right next step would not be for the industry to make a further effort, with encouragement from the Select Committee, rather than for the House to go down the path that raises the difficult questions on which I have touched. I conclude where I began: I am listening, although I felt it right to express those causes of scepticism.

12.2 am

**Mrs. Margaret Beckett** (Derby, South): I was somewhat amused to hear the Leader of the House say that this was an issue that needed considerable consideration—a view with which I wholeheartedly concur. As the report has been around for two years, it has had quite a lot of consideration already. We are tonight only, after all, at the very preliminary stage of considering the issues raised in the report rather than proceeding to recommendations. Nevertheless, I welcome the opportunity for the House to make some observations on the report. I shall be as brief as possible so that hon. Members who wish to contribute to the debate will have the opportunity to do so.

I of course take the point made by the Leader of the House about the danger that having a register would confer status on the so-called "professional lobbyists" rather than act as a check on their activities. However, the

report makes it clear that these issues exercised the minds of the members of the Select Committee from the beginning and were given much consideration.

I have to admit that it seems to me that, just as with the establishment of the very first register and the decision to establish a register of the interests of Members' staff, it is inevitable that, sooner or later, a register of this kind will be set up—and it may as well be sooner rather than later. I expect that, once it has been established, people will look back and wonder why we took so long to recognise the necessity and inevitability of such a scheme.

Even though the report is two years old, one thing shines through. Of common concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House is the extent to which Members of Parliament are vulnerable, and becoming increasingly vulnerable, to the activities of lobbyists. This vulnerability derives primarily from defects in the services provided for Members. I realise that there have been substantial improvements, but we all know perfectly well that, given the work load and the volume and complexity of legislation, Members are simply not adquately staffed to enable them to give issues the scrutiny that they merit.

Nor is the House itself staffed on the scale commensurate with the requirements. In a sense, this is rather like the old issue of gentleman and players. The House is still behaving like a bunch of gentlemen, dealing in a rather amateurish way with legislation, while hon. Members are continually and increasingly receiving the attentions of people who in this area are very much professionals.

Running through many comments on this issue, although not necessarily through the Select Committee report, is the fact that particular danger and particular vulnerability to the professional lobbyist arise in respect of the provision of finance or services. That does not seem to me to be the case. It seems to me that the greatest danger to which hon. Members are exposed, the matter in respect of which they are most vulnerable, is the insidious service which can be provided to Members who want to scrutinise legislation conscientiously.

I refer to apparently high-quality information, which seems to make an almost incontrovertible case and is presented in an easily accessible manner to a Member of Parliament who is not adequately resourced to check its quality properly. Professional lobbyists can make a case which seems so outstanding that the arguments must carry. Members are not adequately staffed to counter those arguments to the necessary extent.

Members of Parliament are particularly vulnerable to the so-called professional lobbyist, partly because it is less likely that there will be a clear indication as to the identity of the person on whose behalf he is working. Referring to paragraph 2 of the report, the Leader of the House mentioned the concern about whether problems would be caused for trade unions, charities and other non-profit-making organisations. However, paragraph 53 makes it clear that none of those organisations objects to being included in a register or to the provision of a register. Indeed, they believe that lobbying, even of the kind that they undertake, should be fully in the open. They are not prepared to see themselves and their circumstances used as an argument against the existence of a lobby.

The second matter in respect of which Members of Parliament are particularly vulnerable to the professional lobbyist is a refinement or extension—I do not know which to call it—of the issue of lobbying. I am thinking of a group of individuals or companies who put their professional services at the disposal of a range of clients. That could make less clear the pattern of interests being built up and represented.

A third danger could arise from the extensive development of lobbying firms, and it could take the form of a quid pro quo arrangement. Someone could say, "You did not support me on this issue, but perhaps you would like another client better. Surely you will not turn me down every time I come to you with a perfectly sound case." I am sure that all hon. Members can imagine professional lobbying companies, many of them skilled, putting such a case effectively because they represent a range of interests. Such a company is much more likely than one which represents just one interest, such as a trade association, to build up a more general acquaintance with hon. Members.

By such means, a person who is associated with a professional lobbying enterprise is likely to gain access to this place. He could be an associate of a member of staff or use some form of pass which would afford greater access than the House would wish to see and which is not readily available to members of the public.

I welcome the report's approach. There is merit in the suggestion that the firm rather than the individual lobbyist should take responsibility. That is a practicable and workable suggestion. We have recently seen the value of a proposal for a proper clients list published by those who lobby. The report contains words which were probably uttered by the late Robert Adley. In a passage about the growth of lobbying the report states:

> "I personally think it poses quite a grave threat to the working of Members of Parliament and the extent to which it has grown over the last few years is quite frightening."

That was reported two years ago, and the words have gained increasing force.

12.11 am

**Ms Angela Eagle** (Wallasey): I support the proposal to establish a register of lobbying interests. Such a register is essential to ensure transparency so that people who have direct professional contact with hon. Members can be identified by the public. Relationships must be open and above board, and that can be proved by comparing the Register of Members' Interests and the proposed register of lobbying interests.

The Select Committee report highlights the almost exponential growth in the turnover of the mushrooming number of professional lobbyists. It has risen from an estimated £3·25 million in 1983-84 to an estimated £9 million in 1991. Growth is at the rate of 20 to 25 per cent. a year, and that points to the urgency of the need to establish a system by which we can keep a check on what is going on.

No one associated with the report or taking part in the debate would, I hope, deny the importance of lobbying or the fact that the right to lobby elected representatives is fundamental to democracy. An explanation of its growth is that the increasing complication of our legislative process has led to a multiplication of lobbying interests to deal with some of those complications.

In addition, over the years, support facilities for hon. Members have become increasingly inadequate, despite the welcome interest in our office costs allowance. Our constituency work load has increased enormously at the same time as we have been arraigned by complex legislation, which we must consider at short notice. In

*[Ms Angela Eagle]*

those circumstances, the support provided by a good briefing, whatever its source, can offer help and relief to anyone contemplating legislation in the Chamber or in a Standing Committee on a Bill or statutory instrument.

Oddly enough, I gave evidence to the Select Committee inquiry before being elected. I drew a distinction between those companies that lobby, professionally, on behalf of a range of clients and sell their professional services, and those people who, like me, might pop into the House to organise a nurses' lobby, talk to sponsored Members or contact Back-Bench groups on a particular subject which was exercising the mind of the organisation for which they worked—in my case, the Confederation of Health Service Employees, COHSE. Professional lobbyists, however, are likely to be here day in, day out, dealing with the same hon. Members.

The lobbying to which I have been subjected since I was elected varies depending on whether the lobbyist is a professional one, with a list of clients or a member of a particular trade union or professional association. My entertainment budget in my old job was extremely modest and hardly compares with that of some professional lobbyists, judging from the lunches and dinners to which I am invited on a regular basis. Those lobbyists also end up at our party conference and various other venues to establish their contacts.

I agree with the distinction between lobbyists that the report has drawn. The register would be a welcome means of improving openness. It would also cast some light on the important issue of privileged access to Westminster, which some lobbying organisations may be acquiring for profit. If we are to protect the reputation of Parliament, we need to support the report's recommendations.

12.17 am

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): We are talking about bodies that are paid to influence Members of Parliament and Departments. We are not talking about the sacred right of ordinary people to write to their Member, get hold of him at his advice surgery and lobby him at Westminster. The hon. Member can then decide whether to take up the matter raised. That right to lobby remains inalienable. We are talking about those who are paid to lobby, however, and who do so because they have an interest in the revenue gained.

When I was first elected to the 1974-79 Parliament, the then Labour Government were in the process of legislating to take into public ownership the ship repairing, aerospace and shipbuilding industries. They had a perfect right to do so. That policy was, however, opposed by the Conservative party.

An organisation, International News Services, was employed by a particular ship repairer to ensure that ship repairing was excluded from the legislation. That organisation made use of fake shop stewards—all the genuine shop stewards who opposed the firm's policy and who believed in public ownership were sacked. It also hired the private Dining Rooms of the House. It is a continuing scandal that those rooms are hired secretly—a practice that should end. Nobody knows who hires them. They are used mostly by PR organisations who pay Members to get the facilities and all the panoply of the Palace of Westminster.

I object to that, but if people want to do it they should not be ashamed of it and do it in secret. It is time that those bookings were published. International News Services books those dining rooms and encourages Members of Parliament to attend dinners and lunches. It hired a yacht on the Thames and encouraged Members to go down into the Thames—*[Interruption.]* I should say that it encouraged Members to go to the yacht moored in the Thames, if hon. Members want to make little jokes about the matter. It also sent people to Heathrow because the Labour Government did not have much of a majority. When John Stonehouse disappeared, the majority disappeared entirely.

When meeting certain Members from Northern Ireland, representatives of International News Services would bundle them into a cab and try to take them to a dinner and get them intoxicated so that they were not available to vote at 10 o'clock. They used to bring people to the House. I was with a group of Labour party Whips, who asked a group of people what they were doing here. The International News Services representative, a man called Alan Turnbull, went into the Strangers Bar and shouted. A Conservative Member came and he said that those five people were with that Member. Those five employees of Bristol Channel Ship Repairers turned round and said to the two Whips, "Watch out, we're going to get you for this." So threats were uttered.

If Members went on the Terrace, half a dozen alleged shop stewards—who were not shop stewards at all—would come and say, "What about Bristol Channel Ship Repairers?" That was the background.

When I raised the matter on points of order on the Floor of the House, the then Speaker referred it to the Select Committee on Administration. The Chairman of that Select Committee was an employee of International News Services. The Chairman of the Standing Committee that dealt with the legislation was a parliamentary adviser, an employee of International News Services.

So the tentacles of lobbying ran deep in the 1970s, and that caused me concern. My interest has been encouraged ever since because, although the methods have become less blunt, the tentacles still exist.

I go not by my own views but by those of lobbyists. Many years ago, the then Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, employed a head of press in his office at No. 10, a man called Trevor Lloyd-Hughes, who had been a lobby correspondent here. Trevor Lloyd-Hughes got to know all the ways of this place and No. 10, and when he left he established a public relations organisation with all the connections already to hand. A brochure that he put out to a restricted circulation said that he

"Organised lunches and receptions, some within the Houses of Parliament, attended by important people. Arranged for business leaders, including the heads of American, French and British companies, to have private meetings with eminent personalities in London, including Cabinet Ministers, former Prime Ministers, the Queen's Principal Private Secretary, former British Ambassadors, and men at the very top of the United Kingdom diplomatic and Civil Service."

According to Sir Trevor, his methods have been successful. He said:

"We have obtained important tax concessions from the British government over their legislation on North Sea oil revenues. Saved the international motor car and motor cycle industries based in the United Kingdom millions of pounds by

persuading the government to exempt them from provisions in the Trade Descriptions Acts. Won British government financial backing for a major development in Turkey."

Lloyd-Hughes is often dismissed as a lobbyist of the old school, now gone. But it is worth reminding Members that the constituency agent to a member of the current Government, the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) produced a brochure offering

"Contact with ministers and civil servants in departments such as the DTI and Energy in order to enhance their understanding of the needs of your industry and company. Arrangement of luncheons and dinners for ministers, MPs and MEPs to meet and speak to company directors and managers and, if desired, their guests. Arrangement of carefully tailored social events, such as theatre, opera and sporting occasions, affording seniro company personnel the opportunity to brief legislators . . . on the company's needs and interests."

That was in 1989, so Trevor Lloyd-Hughes and his cohorts are not all that far out of date.

The point is that, if certain people, by buying the services of a commercial lobbying organisation, can gain more than the ordinary person, that is wrong. It should not be possible to buy influence. It is one thing to give information and for members of the Government to make a judgment and come down on one side or the other, but Trevor Lloyd-Hughes said in his brochure that Ministers, having agreed on a decision with him, asked him how best to present that decision. That means that the PR merchants are getting to the heart of Government, and recent events do not contradict that assertion. Indeed, they show that a PR merchant had got to a number of Cabinet Ministers and a junior Minister at the Northern Ireland Office, who perforce has had to resign because of the exposure.

How much is going on behind the scenes? That is the question that lingers in people's minds. The register would achieve two things. First, it is true that to be on a register with the imprimatur of the House of Commons would confer a cachet and prestige. Therefore, removal from the register would be an important penalty, as it would remove the cachet and the prestige.

The code of conduct that would accompany the register would be scrupulously obeyed, because the danger of removal from the register would bring with it removal of the advantages conferred by registration. Although I accept that a cachet and prestige would be conferred, that would also mean a power in our hands, because removal would become a formidable weapon to enforce the code of conduct that we think desirable.

The aim of a register and code of conduct is to ensure openness, so that people know what is happening. The reality is that ordinary citizens cannot buy influence—they can achieve it only by pressure. People often underestimate their ability to put pressure on Members of Parliament.

The recent campaign by sub-post offices has been a masterly success. They did not employ any public relations companies or commercial lobbying organisations: they just put sheets of paper on the counter saying that the policy of the Department of Social Security could result in closures and asked people to sign a petition against that. They signed in their millions. Every hon. Member received letters from individual constituents. That sort of pressure still remains the best way to influence Members of Parliament.

However, there are disturbing trends that I do not like, and which I suspect a large number of hon. Members do not like. It is one reason why, two years ago, a Committee with a Conservative majority produced a report recommending a register. If people want to find reasons for a register, they need only look at Mark Hollingsworth's book "MPs for Hire".

When I entered Parliament, an hon. Member could not say that Members of Parliament were available for hire. One did, and he was reported to the Select Committee for breach of privilege, and the Committee said that it was. I am referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), who wrote in *Labour Weekly* that Members of Parliament were available for hire.

Now it is a matter-of-fact phrase—people do not jib at it. Indeed, there have been scenes on television programmes of Members of Parliament saying, "Yes, I am open to offers for lobbying services." People take the view that Members of Parliament are, after all, for hire. That is another reason why we need a register.

Some of the lobbying organisations are very arrogant indeed. Lloyd-Hughes claimed, for example, that he could set up all-party groups and have parliamentary questions tabled. It is interesting to examine the all-party groups. The secretariats for some of them are provided by commercial lobbying organisations. It is a strange business that such organisations can provide a secretariat for a lobbying group that is involved in the very subject for which the commercial lobbying organisation is receiving money.

The report revealed that Ian Greer Associates, one of the biggest and, some would say, most powerful and influential lobbying organisations in this place, paid between £4,000 and £10,000 to Members of Parliament who introduced new business to the organisation. That is in the report. It is not anything fresh. The Committee asked Ian Greer Associates about declaration of the money. Ian Greer simply refused to give the High Court of Parliament any information. We asked whether he had advised the Members to declare the money. He said that he had not got round to doing that, but in retrospect he thought that perhaps it might have been a useful thing to do.

So a person who was, it could be argued, buying influence by obtaining business through Members of Parliament and paying substantial sums of money for it, refused to provide a Select Committee with information about the numbers and names of people involved. That is an arrogant attitude.

The other thing that grieves me is that we are here supposedly to represent the people who sent us. It seems wrong to me that people should seek to obtain financial advantage from commercial lobbying organisations over and above their salary. I consider the salary of a Member of Parliament adequate. I know that some Conservative Members of Parliament regard it as a foolish attitude to say that £30,000 a year is adequate, but I find it so.

I believe that it is wrong that Members of Parliament should have outside interests, particularly interests related directly to their activity here. That is another reason why we should have a register. Large sums of money change hands in such circumstances. We can only guess what they are, but the Committee ascertained that amounts of between £4,000 and £10,000 were paid by Greer Associates for the introduction of new clients.

I heartily recommend the book by Mark Hollingsworth. It points out that, for example, Ian Greer attended a private meeting of the Tory trade and industry

*[Mr. Bob Cryer]*

committee in March 1989. Some Conservative Members jibbed at that, because it was a private meeting. Ian Greer was there apparently because the chairman of Plessey was to speak and Greer was employed by Plessey against a GEC takeover and wanted to do some lobbying in the influential Back-Bench Conservative trade and industry committee. Again, the lobbyist claims that he does not pay money to Members of Parliament.

The book refers to a letter from, as it happens, a Labour Member of Parliament, the former Member for Derby, South, Mr. Walter Johnson. It says:

"In late 1983, after retiring from Parliament, Johnson wrote in appreciation:

'As you will kindly recall, you agreed to pay me a fee of £1,000 for services to your company and that this would be paid in the form of paying a bill for a holiday.

I very much regret that I have not been able to help you as much as I would have wished but, as you know, I have always been available if you wanted me, and this position still prevails.'"

When people talk about Members of Parliament being available for hire, that is the sort of thing that they cite. The same Mr. Johnson was involved in maintaining Associated Octel's campaign to retain lead in petrol—arguably, not one of the most altruistic campaigns that a Member of Parliament could support.

There is a powerful case for a register, which would help to curb the excessive zeal of some lobbyists. A code of conduct would also help. The Government ought to register the occasions on which commercial lobbyists meet Ministers acting as Ministers. They do not register them at present.

When I was a Minister at the Department of Industry, I received a letter from the self-same Mr. Lloyd-Hughes inviting Ministers to a private dinner to discuss manning arrangements in industry. At least two Ministers accepted, but I was the exception. I would not have lunch with Lloyd-Hughes for all the tea in China. That was at the heart of Government. I have no doubt that that sort of lobbying still goes on, and it should at least be registered by the Government, so that it would be possible to identify the occasions on which commercial lobbying has taken place.

Lobbyists can get to meet members of the Cabinet, Ministers of State, and Under-Secretaries of State—whereas ordinary people find it difficult to do so. Despite that difficulty, fortunately, some campaigns led by ordinary people have sufficient power and verve to be successful, and we want that to continue.

Although we welcome this short debate, it is two years since the report. Some critics say that is because the Government do not regard this issue as important. I have been campaigning for a register of commercial lobbying organisations since 1974. Some lobbyists, to do them credit, are happy about accepting a register.

**Mr. David Harris** (St. Ives): They would love it.

**Mr. Cryer:** The hon. Gentleman says that they would love it. If they do, it will be that much more hurtful and damaging to lobbyists removed from the register, and that sanction is important.

Because this short debate is two years overdue, the evidence to accompany the report is not available from the Vote Office but only to order. That is one drawback of a report appearing after a two-year gap. I urge the Government to take action and to establish a register and a code of conduct—and let us ensure there are no grounds for outside criticism that Members of Parliament are for hire.

12.37 am

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): It is unfortunate that the House has had to wait two years for this important debate. I may point out that many of the abuses to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) referred will be dealt with under the new registration arrangements, where they relate to Members of Parliament.

I take a different view from my hon. Friend about the way the Government work. I do not believe that lobbyists necessarily corrupt or that the use of lobbying organisations is necessarily wrong. I see a positive and meaningful role for the lobbying industry in this country.

My hon. Friend referred to the role of lobbyists in providing material to right hon. and hon. Members. Earlier this evening, the House debated the THORP issue, and a British Nuclear Fuels lobbyist was in the House and advised me during that debate. His advice was most important, and to some extent had some influence on the debate. It is important that people representing various industries and organisations are available to brief Members of Parliament, because they often provide critically important information that, even with additional research, right hon. and hon. Members would not be able to obtain.

What worries me is that some of these lobbying organisations are shoddy. That was always Robert Adley's case in Committee. He stated repeatedly that some of these people are poor operators and waste people's money by pretending to sell a service when they have no expertise in how this place works.

I have met lobbyists from lobbying organisations outside the House of Commons who really do understand how this place works. They have a better knowledge of how Government works than many hon. Members. They understand the pressure points in Departments. They understand how to obtain access to Ministers.

Yes, they use Members of Parliament on occasion. I do not object to that. All I ask is that the whole process should be utterly transparent—this is what the debate in Committee was all about—so that we know when we meet someone who they are, who they represent, what their motive is and what they want. So long as we understand that, surely we are all adult enough to cope with the pressures that commercial organisations might exert on us.

In many ways, therefore, I am a positive supporter of that industry. I see the lobbyist as the advocate. He is the advocate for a particular case, which people outside the House of Commons are often unable to put, because they do not understand the way the case has to be presented to government. I have seen cases presented to Governments by outside organisations whose presentation has been appalling. It has taken a lobbyist to come along, clean it up and present it in a far more effective way—often in an abbreviated form but hitting on the essential issues.

That is only one way of influencing Government decision taking. There are other ways of doing it. The critical way is in Parliament. We are but one route. At the end of the day, we take the final decision on many issues. We vote in the House of Commons Division Lobbies on

recommendations put to us by Ministers. Of course, the Whips are there, but we have the right to stand up in Parliament and put our case.

Furthermore, we have access to Ministers, in the same way as any outside lobbying organisation or any industry. It is all part of the balance in the operation of government. It is designed to ensure that all these organisations, Members of Parliament and others can play their part in trying to influence the way in which decisions are taken.

**Mr. Cryer:** I agree with my hon. Friend, but I am sure he agrees with me that, even if we accept that commercial lobbying organisations can provide information to my hon. Friend and every other Member of Parliament, it should not be necessary to pay money to any Member of Parliament in order to obtain representation. A Member of Parliament should form his judgment on the strength of the case, not on the strength of any cheque that is presented to him.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I unequivocally and unconditionally subscribe to the view expressed by my hon. Friend. It is wrong that Members of Parliament should be paid by lobbying organisations. We are sent to the House of Commons to represent outside organisations and our constituents, and to ensure that the case is put to Ministers. However, it is a perfectly healthy part of the democratic process, when no remuneration is involved, for organisations to make direct representations to Ministers, or for them to come to us and ask us to put their case to Ministers. It was because we were of that view that many of us believed that it was possible to knock heads together in the industry and get them to come up with some arrangement whereby they would set up a voluntary register.

I must draw the attention of hon. Members to paragraph 71 of our report. It is an indicator of how far we went to try to find another way of resolving this difficulty. I hope the House will forgive me if I read it:

"We very much regret that the option of a Register, administered by the industry itself, and with an industry-wide code of conduct and effective disciplinary procedure seems not to be an option at present . . . since this would have many attractions. If the industry had a more unified and professional structure, it would be in a better position than anyone else to discern abuses and the House need not be concerned with the problems and expense of administration. Although such a Register would inevitably be voluntary in the first instance, it might be possible, given the emergence of a professional body of sufficient standing, eventually to establish a statutory framework, which would assist that body to administer the Register."

That was what we set out to do. I know that the Chairman of the Committee held a number of discussions with outside organisations to try to knock their heads together and to achieve an arrangement that would avoid our having to take decisions in Parliament. We were perfectly prepared to accept and to back that arrangement with some statutory framework, but we failed.

In responding to the previous debate, the Leader of the House said, " I think that the Select Committee should think again." I say to the right hon. Gentleman that I just do not think that it will work. I wish that it could be worked out on that basis, but there is not the will among organisations to get together on that basis. That is why many of us were driven into a compromise arrangement. We did not particularly want to go down that route, but, because we could not get them to stand together and take on the responsibility of policing the industry in a way that was acceptable to Parliament, based on the transparency that people such as myself, who support the industry, wanted, we ended up taking this course.

I am sorry to detain the House, but I asked for this debate at business questions for about 20 weeks. Each week, I asked the same question. The Leader of the House was used to my request for a debate.

The Committee made a simple recommendation: that the House should take a decision in principle to establish a register of professional lobbyists. I shall tell the Leader of the House why it is important that that is carried. When lobbying organisations outside realise that we really mean business, which means that the Select Committee is faced by an instruction from the House to get this matter sorted out, they may then decide to agree an arrangement that would preclude Parliament from being involved.

I am saying, give the Committee the power to get on with the job and take it a stage further by giving it the right to establish a register, and it may then be able to come back with a report at some stage recommending an alternative approach acceptable to Members. It would be acceptable to people such as myself, because we accept that, if such an approach is backed up by a statutory framework it will meet many of the reservations that hon. Members have expressed.

**Mr. James Arbuthnot** (Wanstead and Woodford): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

*Motion, by leave, withdrawn.*

## EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).*

### Plant Variety Rights

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8487/90 and 5902/93 + COR 1, relating to plant variety rights; and supports the Government's intention of securing a system which is deregulatory in nature but which ensures a healthy United Kingdom and European plant breeding industry whilst safeguarding the interests of farmers and seed producers.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

### Civil Defence

That the draft Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 18th May, be approved.

### Overseas Governments (Debts)

That the draft Debts of Overseas Governments (Determination of Relevant Percentage) (Amendment) Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 26th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

*Ordered*,

That Mr. Paul Channon be discharged from the National Heritage Committee and Mr. Michael Fabricant be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

## PETITION

# UNESCO

12.47 am

**Mr. Bowen Wells** (Hertford and Stortford): I have the honour to present a petition from the United Nations Association and friends of UNESCO that has been signed by some 25,000 petitioners who believe that Britain should return to full membership of UNESCO. The principle reason is best summed up in the preamble to the UNESCO constitution, which was adopted on 16 November 1945 at the United Nations conference in London and entered into force in November 1946.

Crucially, the text, as amended in 1976, reads:

"The Governments of the States, parties to this constitution on behalf of their people, declare that, since wars begin in the minds of men it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled The humble petition of the people of the United Kingdom sheweth

—that it is an increasing shame that the United Kingdom still has not joined UNESCO

—that UNESCO was established in the aftermath of the Second World War for the countries of the United Nations to fight together against the evils of war and construct the defences of peace

—that current world events show that UNESCO is needed as much as ever; 172 countries believe that UNESCO is a vital part of the UN family and actively participate in the organisation's work

—that as a founder member in 1946 and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the UK has a responsibility to join once more with UNESCO's member states and work with them towards universal literacy, scientific development, the promotion of a free press and the preservation of our cultural heritage for future generations.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House proceed with rejoining membership of UNESCO expeditiously

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

*To lie upon the Table.*

## Railway Jobs (York)

*Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

12.50 am

**Mr. Hugh Bayley** (York): At Question Time today, I raised the subject of the 532 recently announced redundancies at Asea Boveri Brown Transportation's York carriage works and a further 364 redundancies at the company's other works in Crewe and Derby.

The redundancies are clearly a disaster for the individual workers and their families and are also a severe blow to York's economy and to the British balance of payments. They are, however, the reflection of a problem rather than the problem itself. Put simply, the problem is that the Government do not have, or at least do not appear to have, a strategy for rolling stock replacement and renewal or, indeed, a strategy for the railway manufacturing industry in general. If they do have a strategy, they are too shy to tell the public what it is or give it the necessary urgency to safeguard the needs of the travelling public and of the train builders—the companies and their work force.

The reason a real strategy for rolling stock renewal is needed becomes clear when one considers the nature of the British Rail fleet of passenger vehicles. British Rail has 11,000 passenger vehicles, which typically have a life of 30 to 40 years. An annual replacement programme of some 300 to 400 new vehicles would be needed to retain the existing fleet with the existing age profile. It would require an investment of £250 million to £300 million per year. If, on top of that, one were to predict a modest increase of 1 per cent. a year in traffic on the railways as a result of the country pulling itself out of recession, we should need an extra 120 vehicles a year—an investment of some £90 million.

If one believes what the Government say—I hope that it is true—about a shift of traffic from road to rail, and if one were to build in a further modest 1 per cent. increase in rail traffic each year, we should need another 120 vehicles, making a total annual investment in new passenger railway carriages of about £500 million. That compares with the Government's figure announced in the autumn statement for investment in new passenger carriages of £150 million. There is a large gap between the two figures.

The kind of projection that I am suggesting is not pie in the sky. In the late 1980s, Network SouthEast estimated that it needed 400 new carriages to be built each year. It negotiated with ABB. On the strength of Network SouthEast's projection of its future needs, ABB invested £15 million in its York carriage works to meet the demand that Network SouthEast suggested that it would need to contract for in the years to the turn of the century.

In terms of carriage building, ABB has created a rolling stock factory in York which is a centre of excellence not just in British or European terms, but on a worldwide basis. People from Europe who visit the factory say that they have nothing like that in Germany, Italy or France. The York factory is a world-class facility.

The factory has the capacity to build 400 carriages a year. Until recently, it was operating at half-capacity. As a result of the redundancies announced two or three weeks ago, it is now operating at one-third capacity. It could soon be operating at zero capacity, because, if further orders do not come through, the works will close. Despite all the investment, that factory will no longer produce carriages.

What a shocking betrayal of British engineering that would be. What a dreadful waste of the £15 million invested by ABB. What kind of message would that send to other foreign companies considering investing in our country if a company takes the plunge, negotiates with customer, invests £15 million and then finds that the orders do not flow? What a damning indictment of Government policy that would be. The works would have closed, simply because the Government did too little too late to save them.

The Government did too little because they came up with £150 million rather than the £500 million necessary for an adequate replacement programme for the existing British Rail fleet. The Government are too late because they dithered. They announced £150 million in November, but the following summer we have still no clear indication when or if an order will be placed.

**Mr. Mark Wolfson** (Sevenoaks): As the hon. Gentleman is aware, I have a common interest in the issue, across the country and across the Floor of the House, particularly with regard to the speed or lack of it of the Government's announcing their decision to go ahead. I appreciate that it is for British Rail to make the decision, but I support the hon. Gentleman's argument that modern new rolling stock is long overdue for Kent commuters, for whom standards are still pretty appalling.

The Budget contained a very positive announcement to opt for leasing. In my Budget speech, I clearly supported that leasing plan and I welcomed the fact that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had said that the Government were going to give a high priority to the future of manufacturing industry. On the issue of the works in York and the order that Network SouthEast so badly needs, a number of points come together.

Let us implement the Government's good decision in the Budget. The essential needs of Kent commuters should be met. The operational needs of Network SouthEast, with the coming of channel tunnel trains, should be raised to much higher standards than at present, and the hon. Gentleman's constituency should be assured of a better future.

**Mr. Bayley:** I welcome that intervention by the hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) and I absolutely concur with him. It is not just a Labour Member like me from a northern manufacturing constituency who believes that the order for Network SouthEast trains needs to be placed, and placed now. That view is shared by Conservative Members who represent constituencies in Kent and other counties served by Network SouthEast. It is also the view of the Railway Industry Association, and of my hon. Friends the Members for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and for Livingston (Mr. Cook). My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston wrote to his opposite number in the Department of Trade and Industry today to press the point. It is also the view of the Transport Select Committee and of the Engineering Employers Federation.

I am not asking the Minister to back a lame duck. The class 465 vehicle which is built in York is the train to reshape the railways. It is the universal Networker. It will run equally on an old southern region third rail

*[Mr. Bayley]*

electrification or north of the Thames on a pantograph. The Government say that they want a leasing market in secondhand trains, which implies an interchangeability of rolling stock between lines, and the class 465 developed by ABB will provide precisely that. It would bring London's cummuter services into the 21st century.

The York-designed and York-built body shell of a 465 is the only body shell in Europe that has the European Community's full crash safety certification—none of its competitors has that. For the first time, this country has a train with major export potential to other countries in Europe.

That is not a pipe dream. The York works has already won a European order. It is building the Strasbourg supertram, which it won in competition with many French rail manufacturers. Price and quality at the York works now have an international reputation which will be put at risk if the York works do not get what any other exporting industry in any other country would need—that is, a base load of home production to keep it secure and on which it can build for export success.

British Rail and the Government are juggling with two orders—one for the west coast main line and one for Network SouthEast. I have called on the Government before to increase the amount of investment from the £150 million of leasing finance authorised in the autumn statement to £300 million. I repeat that bid now. If the Government want, as they say, to increase rail investment as they move towards privatisation, that increase in investment should happen. I do not want an either-or choice. Both the west coast main line and London commuters deserve a better service.

If a choice has to be made, I urge the Minister and British Rail to opt for Network SouthEast, for four reasons. First, if the contract goes to ABB, Network SouthEast trains would be wholly built in the United Kingdom. Competitors would not build a UK train—they would buy half of it, the body shell, from abroad. Secondly, the York carriage works is a centre of excellence and will close if it does not receive an order. It is as simple as that. We cannot beat about the bush; that would happen. We would lose the last base in Britain at which whole suburban trains with modern aluminium carriages are built. That cannot be allowed to happen.

Thirdly, Network SouthEast's London commuter services are clearly a public service railway. They cannot operate without Government support. The west coast main line is a commercial railway. Chris Green, the managing director of InterCity, says that it is completely commercially viable to invest in InterCity trains running from London to Manchester and further up the west coast main line. If that is the case, and if the Government are committed to private sector involvement in a privatised railway, they should give him the green light and say, "Go ahead, you have a commercial opportunity which yields a substantial return; go into partnership with the private sector, do that on your own account, and leave the Treasury-authorised £150 million for a public service, high-need railway for London commuters."

Fourthly—the hon. Member for Sevenoaks identified this point—Networkers, if used on the Kent lines, would increase the capacity of those lines by about 50 per cent. because the trains are bigger and take more passengers and also because they accelerate more quickly than existing trains, so one can fit more train movements on a single line within an hour. That extra capacity is essential because, when the channel tunnel opens, the train paths will be needed on existing lines between the tunnel and London for several years to come. That capacity must be freed up, and the Networkers at York could do that.

In his statement on 3 June, the Minister announced that the Government were creating three passenger rolling stock companies. He said that the Government had two measures to encourage continued investment in rolling stock after privatisation: first, the £150 million which I have already mentioned and, secondly, a new clause in the Railways Bill to enable the franchising director to offer some sort of "comfort" to rail investors. I am not sure what "comfort" means. It is neither immediate nor specific. In terms of saving the York works and Britain's ability to build modern trains, an immediate and specific response is needed.

I have two sets of questions that I want to ask the Minister. The first are short-term questions relating to ABB and the York works. What will the Government do to keep the York carriage works in business so that rail travellers in Britain and the British economy will continue to benefit from British-built trains? When specifically will British Rail and the Government decide how the £150 million will be spent? When will British Rail be able to sign a contract, and when will the contractor who wins the work be able to start construction?

The second set of questions is equally important and relates to the longer term. Does the Minister agree that the country needs a strategy for rail investment and a clear programme for rolling stock renewal? Can he see a time when the railway industry in Britain will be able to plan ahead and we shall get the rolling stock necessary to meet the needs of the public, or will the Government allow the railway manufacturing industry to continue to lurch from crisis to crisis and have Members of Parliament like myself asking the House for emergency action to keep what could be a highly successful foreign exchange earning industry above water?

We have the potential for a major British engineering manufacturing success, which could be put in jeopardy. We should not be lurching from crisis to crisis. For heaven's sake, let us not let the British train manufacturing industry go the same way as the British bus manufacturing industry went after deregulation. I have nothing against Mercedes or Volvo buses—they are fine vehicles—but, they do nothing for employment in Britain or for our balance of payments. It would be a tragedy if the rail manufacturing industry were allowed to go the same way as the bus industry.

1.7 am

**The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman):** I welcome the opportunity to answer the points made by the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley). He stoutly defended the interests of his constituents who work in the ABB factory. I pay tribute to ABB for its investment in modernising that facility. My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) stoutly defended the interests of his constituents, who are passengers. I have only 11 minutes in which to answer the key points, so I will concentrate on the main issues raised by the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley).

I regret the loss of the 532 jobs at the ABB works in York. Those redundancies cannot be blamed on the Government's proposals for the reform of the railway industry. They have a lot to do with the recession in the United Kingdom and the consequences for British Rail —British Rail is not immune from the pressures of a recession—and with the understandable, but optimistic, expansion plans of the industry, including ABB, over the past few years.

To answer one of the hon. Gentleman's points, I believe that Britain should have a domestic rolling stock manufacturing industry. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we need that. We do not want, in five or 10 years' time, to have to rely on French or German manufacturers.

The hon. Gentleman asked what the strategy was. The strategy is perfectly clear. We want to move increasingly to the private sector assuming responsibility for design, for the placing of orders and for the financing of rolling stock for the railway industry. That is a very clear objective. It will take a number of years, because British Rail has a number of obligations that it must continue to discharge. I do not rule out British Rail or the public sector placing further orders.

It is important to step back and look at the present state of the industry. We undeniably have quite significant over-capacity, as the hon. Gentleman has been frank enough to admit in the past. The Railway Industry Association, in its publication "Beyond Future Railway", estimates that the present annual capacity of the industry is about 2,200 vehicles per annum.

Over the past five years, between 1988 and 1992, the industry has delivered to British Rail about 500 vehicles per annum. That is one quarter of the present capacity, and includes a peak year of delivery in 1990. The association's most optimistic forecast of likely orders up to the year 2000 runs at about 1,100 vehicles per annum—50 per cent. of present capacity.

I put it to the hon. Gentleman that that combination of circumstances has resulted in a position that does not present appealing options. As Minister for Public Transport, I accept responsibility, in working with the industry, to ensure as good a use of that capacity as possible. However, the industry will have to rely on orders coming from beyond British Rail, a point with which I shall deal in a minute.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the £150 million of special lease finance. I do not accept that as the sum total of orders that I should like to see placed in this financial year. The £150 million is not the ceiling for this year. It is not an annual figure, and it is not in British Rail's external financing limit. Undoubtedly, because it is the first major lease of its kind for rolling stock, special considerations will have to apply to the terms and conditions of the lease.

It is up to British Rail to make a decision; it is not up to Ministers to decide between the two options. There had to be two options because, at the urging of both ABB and GEC, British Rail decided to hold a competition for value for money between two run-on orders. If British Rail had decided to use the facility for a brand new design of rolling stock, it would have taken a considerable time to draft a specification and to allow industry to prepare the necessary tools and jigs for manufacture. That is not the case here.

I do not accept that there has been delay. British Rail decided on the two options to compare before Easter, as it said it would. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a week when a conclusion will be reached; that is not within my gift. I cannot specify precisely when a conclusion will be reached. British Rail will decide on the best offer, and then, I hope, manufacture will start shortly. Once the decision has been taken—it is an invidious decision between Networkers and 225 stock—I shall immediately start work with British Rail on helping it to prepare with industry a true operating lease that meets the Treasury's criteria of a lease that does not count against public expenditure. That is a commitment that I have made.

I do not regard it as a choice for all time between the Networkers or the 225 HSTs mark 4 stock for the west coast main line.

I should like to see both manufactured in due course, but the condition is that if British Rail decides to pursue an order for the class not initially chosen, it must meet the Treasury's criteria, which, as the hon. Gentleman will know, were laid out at the end of May.

I have been asked what steps the Government are taking to facilitate the development of this leasing market, which is most important. In its latter stages, the Railways Bill was amended to allow the franchising director to designate certain new rolling stock as what are called franchise assets. The Bill now enables the franchising director to require that successive franchisees use that rolling stock. The purpose, of course, is to extend the guaranteed lease life of the asset. That is most important, because it reduces the residual value risk to the lessor.

We have taken those steps, but industry and, in particular, the private capital markets will have to accept some residual value risk. That is minimised if there is a standard design or one that does not require very much change from order to order or between the uses of rolling stock on different routes. It will be helpful if the manufacturer offers to maintain the rolling stock to a high standard and to carry out technological improvements throughout its life. I have offered to meet the Railway Industry Association, representing ABB, GEC and others, in July to discuss its views about how best to develop the leasing market for rolling stock.

I turn now to the foreign market. As I explained earlier, even if British Rail and franchisees, through the leasing market, were to meet the most optimistic forecasts of the Railway Industry Association, only about 50 per cent. of this country's current capacity would be used. Thus, foreign orders are essential to the well-being of the industry.

Within the European Community, of course, orders have to meet the requirement laid down in the utilities directive. In other words, British Rail, when it is placing orders for rolling stock of a new design, must advertise and must accept qualifying tenders from other manufacturers in the Community. That applies also to the nationalised railway undertakings in the EC. This will take time, as there are long lead periods in the placing of orders.

As for the situation outside the Community, I have to say that the market is very competitive. I congratulate the British industry on winning some excellent orders abroad in the last few years. The pressure must continue. The Government and the Department of Transport will do everything they can to help ABB and the other manufacturers.

I believe very strongly that we must introduce more long-term planning into rolling stock procurement. Assuming that the Railways Bill will be enacted, I can tell

*[Mr. Roger Freeman]*

the House that the rolling stock companies, initially under public ownership, will be set up by 1 April 1994. We want those companies to pass into private sector ownership in due course.

British Rail will very shortly appoint advisers on the reorganisation of the ownership of rolling stock and on the move from public sector ownership to private sector ownership. But RailTrack has been asked to prepare a 10-year indicative budget for infrastructure investment. There is a good case for the franchising director and industry to work together and to look forward by up to 10 years in making provision for new rolling stock.

I look forward to the meeting that is to take place on, I believe, 6 July, when the wider issues of the railway industry will be discussed, as it relates to York, with the hon. Gentleman and with my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). We need the co-operation of industry, British Rail, the franchising director and the Government in planning for the future prosperity of the rolling stock manufacturing industry.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes past One o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Tuesday 29 June 1993*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

ALLIED IRISH BANKS BILL

*Read the Third time, and passed.*

HARRIS TWEED BILL *[Lords]*

*Amendment agreed to; Bill, as amended, considered; to be read the Third time.*

GREATER NOTTINGHAM LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT BILL

*Considered; read the Third time.*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## EMPLOYMENT

### Labour Statistics

1. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been unemployed for 12 months or longer in Yorkshire and Humberside.

**The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth):** 91,235.

**Mr. Gunnell:** The Minister is well aware that that figure, which I believe is the April 1993 figure, represents a considerable increase over the two years to that date. The long-term unemployed have increased from 26 to 36 per cent. of the total. He is also aware that the Government's plans for very little coal mean that the numbers are likely to increase. [HON. MEMBERS: "Question."] What specific measures is the Minister proposing to deal with the long-term unemployed in Yorkshire and Humberside?

**Mr. Forsyth:** I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not mention the fact that unemployment fell in his constituency last month by some 4 per cent., or 141 people. However, he is right to draw attention to the fact that, because we have had a long and difficult recession, our concern should be focused on the long-term unemployed, which is why the Government have announced this year an extra 600,000 differing opportunities to help those people who find themselves out of work—the long-term unemployed—back into employment as recovery continues.

**Sir Donald Thompson:** To be unemployed for a year is a terrible thing. Will my hon. Friend ensure that he liaises carefully with the Department of Trade and Industry so that the regional aid package is not so distorted that even more people are left unemployed in Yorkshire and Humberside? I am fully aware that the numbers of unemployed have been decreasing in the past few months, and we all hope that that continues.

**Mr. Forsyth:** I assure my hon. Friend that we do liaise closely with the Department of Trade and Industry. I know the interest that my hon. Friend has taken in securing jobs for his constituency and for Yorkshire and Humberside as a whole, and I know that he will welcome developments such as the 700 jobs that have been created at Kimberly Clark and the 500 jobs at First Direct in Leeds. Those are a result of the success of the Government's policies, to which my hon. Friend has contributed such a great deal.

### Defence-related Industries

2. **Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to assist defence-related industries to retrain staff in non-defence-related fields.

**The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Hunt):** Through the training and enterprise councils and the Employment Service, a broad range of programmes are available to help people affected by changes in defence-related industries.

**Mr. Jones:** What help are the Government giving to those companies attempting to diversify into non defence-related markets? For instance, T. I. Dowty in my constituency is currently negotiating a merger with Messier-Bugatti of France. Will the Secretary of State press the Government to reflect the special needs of areas most affected by defence rundown in next year's local government grant settlement?

**Mr. Hunt:** I understand that Gloucestershire training and enterprise council is involved in Dowty and has set up a job shop to advise people who are affected in any way. There is also a wide range of training opportunities.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point, let us recall that at the last election, the Liberal Democrat party proposed that there should be a 50 per cent. reduction in expenditure on defence by the turn of the century. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman explained what the consequence of that would be in job losses to his constituents.

As regards the future, we are always looking at ways in which we can increase the competitiveness of the economy. Output in the aerospace industry has increased by more than 35 per cent. in the past 10 years, which is good news.

**Mr. Burns:** Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Marconi companies in Chelmsford have paid a heavy price as a result of the peace dividend and the world recession in defence contracts? Will he join me in congratulating those companies and English Electric Valve on the efforts that they are making to diversify into non-military contract winning, to help to sustain the employment market and we hope, at a future date, to bring new people into work? Will he also ensure that the Essex training and enterprise council does all it can to help retrain those defence workers who have been made redundant, who desperately need work and must be given work as soon as possible?

**Mr. Hunt:** First, I have already met the chairman of Essex TEC, Mr. Lawrence. I was able to have some words with him, and I look forward to further discussions. My

hon. Friend is right to say that it is vital for the training and enterprise council to be involved in the way he describes. As for the second part of his question, I am happy to announce that the United Kingdom will participate fully in the Konver programme to assist regions affected by the decline in the defence industry. That will involve a total amount of about £15 million, through the European social and regional development funds.

**Mr. Dobson:** Will the Secretary of State confirm that, during the past three years, no fewer than 82,000 jobs have been lost in defence-related industries? Will he confirm that, during those three years, Tory Ministers have successively denounced Labour's proposals to shift people from defence to civilian work as ill-thought-out nonsense? Will he also confirm that if the Government had taken the Labour party's advice, many of the 82,000 people who have lost their jobs would not be on the dole but would be doing other useful work instead?

**Mr. Hunt:** First, I am happy to be in my new post, and look forward to many exchanges with the hon. Gentleman across these Dispatch Boxes. Secondly—sad to relate—he has again come to the Dispatch Box with some ill-thought-out nonsense. There is a wide range of training and retraining opportunities for people who have worked in the defence-related industries, and we will continue to ensure that resources are directed down that avenue.

Thirdly, I wish that the hon. Gentleman had welcomed my announcement about our acceptance of the new European programme. Finally, he criticises the Government, but what would have happened under Labour, with its 27 per cent. reduction in defence expenditure? What would that have meant in job losses throughout the United Kingdom?

## Working Week Directive

3. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment has been made of the effect on British productivity of the 48-hour working week directive.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The working time directive will be damaging; not as damaging as in its worst form, but sufficiently damaging and unjustified for us to seek to challenge it in the European Court.

**Mrs. Lait:** I thank my hon. Friend for that answer and congratulate Ministers on their success in the negotiations. Does my hon. Friend agree that the British Government have guaranteed that there will be no compulsory time limit for working hours, and that that has been welcomed by employers throughout the European Community? *[Laughter.]*

**Mr. Forsyth:** I agree with my hon. Friend. If Opposition Members, who are chuckling, had had their way, while Taiwan and Japan were loading up ships with consumer goods, in Britain we would have been switching off the lights.

**Mr. Stevenson:** Coming back to switching off the lights, does the Minister accept that an industry in the United Kingdom that has had a productivity record second to none—the coal industry—has had that record thrown in its face by the closure of half the industry? Is not the threat to productivity in the country not the 48-hour week directive but Government policy?

**Mr. Forsyth:** Manufacturing productivity in Britain has led the way in Europe. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that the coal industry and other industries have to be competitive. Labour costs in Europe grew at a rate of 4 per cent. a year throughout the 1980s. That compares with a growth in Japan of zero per cent. throughout the 1980s. Competitiveness is the name of the game, and I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends have not always supported the policy changes needed in the coal industry to achieve competitiveness.

**Mr. Anthony Coombs:** Is my hon. Friend aware that recent figures from the German motor industry association show that manufacturing costs for cars in Britain are some two thirds of those in Germany? That is why many German companies are now sourcing from Great Britain for their components. Does he agree that to adopt any directives, particularly the social chapter, would undermine Britain's competitive position, as it is presently undermining the position of many countries in Europe?

**Mr. Forsyth:** I could not agree more. The flexible labour policies that we pioneered in the 1980s helped to make our car industry such a success. We are exporting British cars to Japan. I agree with what my hon. Friend said about Japan. When the departing chairman of Mercedes Benz warns that the products will no longer say "Made in West Germany", or "Made in Germany", but "Made by Daimler-Benz" because the costs of manufacturing have risen so high in Germany, alarm bells should be ringing throughout Europe among those socialists who still wish to go ahead with the social chapter, which is making industry uncompetitive.

**Ms Quin:** Given what the Minister said about competitiveness, how can he explain the fact that, in the 1993 world competitiveness report, the United Kingdom had slipped from 13th place to 19th place? That would seem to be the opposite of what the Minister is saying. Is it not grotesque that, when we have officially 3 million unemployed in Britain today, all the Government can do is go to Europe and suggest that those in work should work even longer hours?

**Mr. Forsyth:** It is extraordinary to be lectured by the hon. Lady about improving Britain's competitiveness, when on every occasion she has supported those who have argued for measures that would add to our labour costs and reduce our competitiveness.

**Mr. Evennett:** Does my hon. Friend agree that unemployment is the major economic issue facing the European Community, and that we should be giving business men greater flexibility to export and to create more jobs and not to destroy jobs?

**Mr. Forsyth:** I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. That is why it is so important that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was able to persuade our colleagues in Europe in Copenhagen of the importance of putting the emphasis on competitiveness. Europe is not an island; unless it embraces the arguments that we won in three successive general elections in Britain, jobs will be lost and the numbers of unemployed will increase. That is the lesson of the past few years. Our arguments are now being

taken on board by our partners in Europe. Only the Labour party is still stuck in the time-warp of the early 1980s.

### Invalidity Benefit

4. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people claiming unemployment benefit in the past five years have switched to receipt of invalidity benefit.

**Mr. David Hunt:** Relatively few.

**Mr. Mullin:** Has not leaning on people to take sickness or invalidity benefit been one of a number of devices by which the Government have managed to massage downward the unemployment figures? Is there any truth in the suggestion that staff in jobcentres receive some incentive or bonus for reducing the figures? Can the Secretary of State tell us about that please?

**Mr. Hunt:** I do not know why Labour keeps trying to peddle such untrue accusations, particularly when they have been categorically denied in press releases issued by the key individuals involved—Mr. Fogden of the Employment Service and Mr. Stibbard, chief statistician at the Department of Employment. Mr. Fogden said:

"There is absolutely no truth in the accusation that computer failures or pressure to move people on to sickness benefit are responsible for the fall in unemployment."

It would be a good idea if the hon. Gentleman turned from the nonsense over statistics to examine the fact that unemployment has fallen four months in succession, and unfilled vacancies are at a two-year high. The trouble is that what is good news for Britain is bad news for the Labour party.

**Mr. Thurnham:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is not so much a question of the benefits that people receive as of the help that they need to get back to work? Do not the Government have a good record of helping people with disabilities to get back into jobs?

**Mr. Hunt:** I could not agree more, because that is a key area. I just wish that, instead of messing around with statistics and accusing the Government of allegedly fiddling them, Labour Members concentrated on the fact that it is not an argument about statistics. Every one of the statistics is a case of human difficulty faced by the individual and his or her family. The sooner that the Opposition focus on that the better. The only fiddling with the figures is coming from the Opposition. They are fiddling with figures while the economy turns. It is about time that they started to recognise the truth of the present situation.

### School Leavers

5. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the co-ordination of training and enterprise councils and further education colleges on the training of school leavers.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe):** The precise arrangements for co-ordination are decided locally. However, TECs and further education colleges operate within a framework of contractual relationships in respect of the training of school leavers. This is reinforced by partnership arrangements among the colleges, local schools, the careers service and TECs.

**Mr. O'Brien:** Is it not time that the Government took some initiative? School leavers denied discretionary grants because of restrictions on local government expenditure find that they have to report to TECs for training and are then sent on the same courses. Is it not time that the Government stopped that administrative nightmare and allowed school leavers to continue training under local government auspices, supported by TECs? When will the Minister do something about tidying up that area?

**Miss Widdecombe:** The facts speak for themselves. The current system works extremely well—particularly at the hon. Gentleman's own TEC in Wakefield. In the latest month, only four young people in the 16-to-18-year-old category are still waiting for an offer after eight weeks. Therefore, it appears that the training arrangements are working extremely well.

**Mr. Alan Howarth:** Will my hon. Friend use to the full the powers that the Government have in relation to training and enterprise council corporate plans, to ensure that they do not relegate to a low priority the training of disabled school leavers, whose potential ought to be valued for humanitarian and economic reasons?

**Miss Widdecombe:** My hon. Friend will be aware of the considerable number of Government initiatives to promote training and employment opportunities for the disabled in general and for young people. The most recent notable initiative was access to work. I share my hon. Friend's concern.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** If the training schemes are working comparatively well, as the Minister claims, why is it that only one third of youth trainees obtain a vocational qualification, between 30 and 40 per cent. of young people fail to complete further education courses, and 16 to 19-year-olds in Britain do worse than most comparable advanced industrial countries? The Government, who have been in power for 14 years, have failed our young people. Is it not time that they stopped using youth unemployment as a political football, and did something practical for the generation that they are losing?

**Miss Widdecombe:** I find that a trifle rich, coming from a party which has consistently opposed all the training initiatives that this Government have implemented. The majority of youth trainees get into a job, transfer to another course or have another positive outcome. That is a reasonable measure. What chance would they have under Opposition policies, which basically give no guarantee and the dole?

### Training Programmes (Isle of Wight)

6. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met representatives from the Isle of Wight training and enterprise council to discuss delivery of training programmes.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I met the acting chairman of the Isle of Wight training and enterprise council two weeks ago, with my hon. Friend.

**Mr. Field:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although it is one of the smallest training and enterprise councils in the country, the Isle of Wight TEC holds its own among the giants in the country? Does he understand that, as the Isle of Wight does not have assisted area status, unlike most of Scotland and Wales, the island has to depend heavily on its TEC—rather more so than similar areas?

**Mr. Hunt:** I recognise that my hon. Friend has argued vigorously for assisted area status for the Isle of Wight, but he will recognise that that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, and the proposals made by him are now with the European Commission.

The Isle of Wight TEC does an excellent job and provides a good example of what can be achieved when the local Member works closely with the local TEC. Some Opposition Members could learn from that. I was interested to hear some of the imaginative and innovative ideas that were suggested and which I hope will be followed up.

## Labour Statistics

7. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for unemployment in the west midlands.

**Miss Widdecombe:** In May 1993, on the seasonally adjusted basis, there were 282,300 unemployed claimants in the west midlands region.

**Mr. Burden:** Does the Minister accept that those figures are disgraceful, and that they show that the west midlands has a worse unemployment record than the national average on most indicators, including youth, female and long-term unemployment? Is she aware that 50 per cent. of those unemployed in the Bartley Green ward in my constituency have been out of work for more than a year? Is she further aware that there are 35½ people chasing every job?

Will not the Minister's words ring hollow to those people? When will the Government do something about long-term unemployment, following 10 consecutive rises in the numbers of long-term unemployed?

**Miss Widdecombe:** Does not the hon. Member think that it would be better if he told his constituents the good news about both his constituency and the west midlands? Does he not believe that he should draw his constituents' attention to the flourishing motor industry—so important to the west midlands—and to the fact that unemployment in his constituency, and not just the local area, has fallen by 2 per cent. since last month? Does not he feel that that would be a positive, kinder and more humane message than preaching gloom and doom?

**Mr. John Marshall:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the west midlands can benefit from the rise in motor car production in Britain when it is falling dramatically in Germany? Does she agree that unemployment in the west midlands will suffer if we adopt a national minimum wage, or if we ever adopted the job-destroying principles of the social chapter, as advocated by the Opposition?

**Miss Widdecombe:** I have pleasure in confirming that just about every Opposition policy would make it harder, not easier, for employers to employ. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the motor industry and to the rise in vehicle registrations by 8·9 per cent. and in car production by 23·8 per cent. Why does not the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) take that message to his constituents and try to give the unemployed some hope?

**Mr. Grocott:** If the Minister has finished ranting for a moment, may I ask her to reflect on a simple truth? Even in the great depression of the 1930s, the west midlands sustained employment in manufacturing industry, and even took unemployed people from other more depressed parts of the country, but under the Government in the 1980s, there was a collapse of engineering employment in the west midlands. Does she blame the workers or the trade unions for this, or does she know—as I and most people in the west midlands know—that the real cause is a Government of unique economic and industrial incompetence?

**Miss Widdecombe:** I was under the impression that in the 1980s we were still suffering from the problems that we inherited from the Labour Government in the 1970s—*[Interruption.]* However, I am happy to talk about peaks —*[Interruption.]* I know that the Opposition do not want to hear about this, but they are going to hear it whether they like it or not. If we are to talk about peaks in the 1980s, perhaps we should point out that in the west midlands there has been a substantial fall in unemployment since that peak, due to the policies of the Government and the revitalisation of the motor industry, none of which would have happened under Labour policies not only of a national minumum wage but of hedging and prescribing for employment instead of getting on and creating it.

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** In welcoming my hon. Friend to her position at the Department of Employment, may I ask whether she has compared the figures for Japanese-owned motor car companies in Japan, America and mainland Europe with the figures for the United Kingdom? Has she noticed that such companies are cutting production everywhere but in the United Kingdom? What does that tell my hon. Friend about the conditions for manufacturing industry in Britain compared with the rest of the world?

**Miss Widdecombe:** I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks of welcome, which were noticeably lacking from the Opposition Front Bench. Of course my hon. Friend is right. The inward investment that Britain is experiencing, compared with the difficulties being experienced elsewhere, stands as factual proof of the worth of the Government's policies. I should like to hear the Opposition welcome that inward investment instead of brushing it aside.

## Union Membership

8. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to encourage membership of trade unions.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** It is for trade unions themselves to encourage union membership by demonstrating that they can provide effective services and that they have the ability to adapt to the needs and aspirations of individual employees in the modern working environment.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** We all expected a reply of that nature from the Minister. Will he turn his attention to the Economic League, which has ceased its activities after 73 years of lying and sneering about trade unionists to discourage activity in the workplace? Will he find out what happened to the records of the Economic League and will he put an end to discrimination against people in the work force on the grounds of their real or supposed political opinions?

**Mr. Forsyth:** I have no responsibility for the Economic League, but I gather that the hon. Lady's first attempt at a question was to invite the Government to say what their plans were to discourage trade union membership. I am sure that she will join me in recognising that the reforms that we carried out in the 1980s made trade unions far more willing to consider the interests of their membership and gave the membership far more control over the trade unions. That was a welcome step forward.

The position on discrimination against people on grounds of trade union membership remains the same as it has always been. It is against the law for employers to discriminate against people on the grounds of trade union membership.

**Mr. Dunn:** The worst example of trade union coercion was in the 1970s when people were forced to join trade unions against their will. Does my hon. Friend agree that the greatest disincentive to joining a trade union is the link between the trade union movement and the Labour party?

**Mr. Forsyth:** I agree with my hon. Friend. The trade union movement would be much better if it disengaged from the Labour party and the Labour party would be much better if it had the guts, the power and the ability to disengage itself from the trade union movement.

On the point about the closed shop, I also have a long memory. It comes ill from Opposition Members to pose as the champions of individual rights when they consistently opposed our plans to give individuals the right to join a trade union of choice.

**Mr. Galbraith:** Do not the Government actively discourage trade unionism? Did not the Government ban trade unions at Government communications headquarters and change the trade union Bill now before the House to allow employers to bribe their employees to give up trade union membership? Do not those actions speak louder than any mealy-mouthed words from the Minister?

**Mr. Forsyth:** No, it is not true that the Government made an amendment to the trade union Bill to allow employers to bribe people not to be members of a trade union. That is against the law and will continue to be against the law. It is true that some people choose not to have their terms and conditions negotiated by collective bargaining arrangements, and the Government believe that they should be free to make that choice while remaining members of a trade union. There are a million trade union members whose terms and conditions are not negotiated by collective bargaining and they must be rather puzzled by the Labour party's position, which is to tell them that their trade union membership is worthless.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** Will the Minister commend to the rest of the United Kingdom the practice which applies in Northern Ireland whereby trade unionists who pay their political contribution are denied the right to join the British Labour party?

**Mr. Forsyth:** My responsibilities do not extend to Northern Ireland, but I will happily draw that matter to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

## Labour Statistics

9. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many months, since May 1979, the northern region has had the highest regional unemployment rate in mainland Britain.

**Miss Widdecombe:** I regret, in each month.

**Mr. Milburn:** For those who miseed the Minister's reply, she said that in each month since May 1979 the northern region has had the highest level of unemployment in mainland Britain. Is the Minister not ashamed of her Government's record? What message does she believe that it conveys to the 168,000 people currently unemployed in the northern region, who lack nothing in the way of skill or enterprise but apparently everything in the way of active Government support? Does she not realise that without new investment, the weekly haemorrhage of job losses and training cuts will continue unabated and her Government will stand guilty of simply writing off the north?

**Miss Widdecombe:** The way to write off the north would be to deny all that is happening there. It would be to deny the inward investment and the fact that it has 17 per cent. of Japanese manufactures in this country. It would be to deny that unemployment in the north now and last month fell much faster than unemployment nationally. It would be to fail to point to the vacancies that are being filled and to the substantial training programmes. I say to the hon. Gentleman what I said to his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden): why will he not bring hope instead of misery to the unemployed?

**Mr. Jopling:** Will my hon. Friend understand that the overall unemployment figures in the north cover wide differences? Will she take a particular interest in the situation in west Cumbria, which will be affected by yesterday's announcement of a delay in the opening of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant? In itself, that is welcome in that it will ensure that when the plant eventually opens it will be safe, but in the short run it will inevitably give rise to serious unemployment. Will the Minister and her right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of Employment take a great interest in the problems of west Cumbria?

**Miss Widdecombe:** I can assure my right hon. Friend that I will take that interest. I agree with what he says about the long-term prospects. THORP is a major example of inward investment, with some £1·6 billion advanced by overseas customers, and it will support 3,000 permanent jobs. That is the sort of message of hope that I was endeavouring to bring to Opposition Members and I have pleasure in telling my right hon. Friend that I will keep in touch with him on this issue.

**Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** Is the Minister aware that in my constituency of Blyth Valley over the past few years there has been an increase of 40 per cent. in the number of young people between the ages of 18 and 25 on the unemployment register? When will she and other Ministers

get on their bikes and go up there and create some jobs in the north east instead of giving us waffle from the Dispatch Box?

**Miss Widdecombe:** All I can say to the hon. Gentleman is that if inward investment, increasing vacancies and falling trends in unemployment are waffle, then his constituents want waffle.

## Works Councils

10. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the EC's plans to introduce statutory works councils.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The Government believe that statutory works councils would greatly damage the United Kingdom's competitiveness, and if such proposals are made we will veto them.

**Mr. Riddick:** At a time when European countries are in danger of pricing themselves out of world markets, is it not the height of folly for the European Commission to be proposing statutory works councils, which would be costly to industry, bureaucratic and wholly unnecessary? Will my right hon. Friend assure me that the Conservative Government will resist those proposals to the bitter end? Does not industry support the Tories because the Tories support policies which benefit and help industry?

**Mr. Hunt:** I give my hon. Friend the unqualified assurance that he seeks. At the last Social Affairs Council in Luxembourg, my hon. Friend the Minister of State and I made it clear to our fellow Ministers that the most important item on the agenda of the European Community is the reduction of unemployment, which is rising in almost every European Community country except the United Kingdom. That will be achieved by introducing measures which improve competitiveness and not by the Commission's proposals.

**Ms Eagle:** Why is any idea of co-operation in the workplace anathema to the Conservative party? Surely productivity and morale will improve if the work force is not subject to authoritarian rules and macho management. Why do the Government always oppose, for spurious cost reasons, proposals designed to secure co-operation between the work force and management and to ensure that workers have positive rights in the workplace?

**Mr. Hunt:** The Government have pioneered many innovative and imaginative forms of co-operation in the workplace, but we shall not allow co-operation to be introduced in legislative form. That would be highly restrictive, but it is what statutory works councils would introduce. We would then be back to the bad old days of the 1960s and 1970s. I know that Opposition Members enjoyed those days because they gave power to a few trade union leaders, but the vast majority of people in this country do not want to return to that form of legislated co-operation. We want the voluntary partnership that has become so evident under this Government.

**Dr. Liam Fox:** Is my hon. Friend aware that some multinationals have estimated the cost of the proposal at between £500,000 and £1 million per year? Would that not be bad for business, bad for Britain and bad for Europe as a whole in the world market?

**Mr. Hunt:** I agree with my hon. Friend. I should like each European Community proposal to be tested first for its effect on the competitiveness of the European Community. We need such a test to prevent the introduction of proposals which will merely further undermine competitiveness and result in further job losses.

**Mr. Dobson:** If the Tory party's policies in the past 14 years have been the acme of competitiveness, why does Britain have the second biggest trade deficit in Europe and the biggest trade deficit of any European Community country with the rest of the world?

**Mr. Hunt:** All right. If the hon. Gentleman wants facts, let him listen to these: inflation is at its lowest for 30 years, interest rates are lower in this country than anywhere else in the whole of the European Community, manufacturing output is up by more than 2 per cent., manufacturing productivity is up by 7·8 per cent., retail sales up by 3 per cent., consumer spending up by 2·3 per cent., car registrations up by 7·5 per cent., housing starts up by 17 per cent., and—the most chilling factor for the Labour party—strikes at their lowest level for 70 years. That is the record on which we fight.

## Aerospace Industry (Redundancies)

11. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of redundancies which have occurred in the aerospace industry since 1 January 1992; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The information is not available.

**Mr. Jones:** Is the Minister not concerned at the fact that tens of thousands of the most skilled workers in our biggest industry—British Aerospace—are losing their jobs? This must be a tragic waste. Does the hon. Gentleman know that at the British Aerospace works in Broughton in my constituency more than 1,000 people have lost their jobs in the past year? Will he investigate the proposal by Raytheon to buy Corporate Jets from British Aerospace, bearing in mind the fact that Corporate Jets has lost 269 jobs in my constituency? Will he attempt to secure from the new company a guarantee that my constituents will have more than three years' work if it buys from British Aerospace?

**Mr. Forsyth:** It is true that the aerospace industry has been hit by the downturn in the world market. The 1980s saw growth of about 36 per cent. in sales. With the skills that the British aerospace industry has, I am sure that we can achieve that again in the 1990s. The question that the hon. Gentleman has put to me is one for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. However, I know that the hon. Gentleman has worked long and hard in the interests of his constituents who are involved in executive jet production. I understand that British Aerospace, in considering the sale of the company at Broughton, intends to secure a guaranteed work period of about three years as part of the arrangement. The sale has been referred to the Director General of Fair Trading, and I cannot say any more at this stage. I can, however, promise the hon. Gentleman that both my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and my right

hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment are very conscious of the importance of retaining jobs in this successful industry, which is vital to Britain.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Malnutrition and Infant Mortality (Iraq)

Q1. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what is his most recent information from UNICEF about the alleged infringements of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child involving malnutrition and infant mortality in Iraq.

**The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major):** No such information has been received from the United Nations Children's Fund, but we remain in close touch with United Nations agencies about the humanitarian situation in Iraq.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Has the Prime Minister been briefed by the Foreign Secretary and by Sir Michael Burton about the visit by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) and Tim Llewellyn to the paediatric hospital in Baghdad, where we saw lines of infants with swollen tummies and swollen private parts expiring as a result of malnutrition-related diseases such as marasmus? Does the west have any obligation to do something for injured infants who are without pharmaceuticals or medicines as a result of the missile attack on Baghdad? Would it not be wise, for reasons that I gave to Sir Michael Burton and the Foreign Secretary, at least to hear what the Iraqi people have to say?

**The Prime Minister:** I am, of course, aware of the hon. Gentleman's humanitarian concerns and of his discussions and his report to the Foreign Secretary. However, I think that he is misguided in the way in which he attributes responsibility. To be frank with the hon. Gentleman, I have to say that it is not the responsibility of external countries that the difficulties in Iraq, which led to the devastating situation, have been brought about. We very much wish that this were not the situation. However, it is, and over recent months we have done what we could to put it right. With regard to the attack, I shall not respond directly to the hon. Gentleman as the matter was widely discussed in the House yesterday.

### Engagements

Q2. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 June.

**The Prime Minister:** This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

**Sir Michael Neubert:** Does my right hon. Friend share my sense of injustice about the fact that, on the only occasion this Session when I have the good fortune to be able to ask him a question on television, the BBC is showing Wimbledon on both channels? Would not the watching public be immensely encouraged to learn that we are today considering the Criminal Justice Bill and that the police are going to make fighting crime and protecting the public their top priority, unencumbered by unnecessary paperwork?

**The Prime Minister:** With no disrespect to my hon. Friend's question, I think that that is the best decision by the BBC that I have heard for some time—game, set and match to the BBC, I think. I agree with the substance of my hon. Friend's question. What most people in this country wish to ensure is that our police service is doing the job we most wish to see it do, that is to say, not pushing paper but catching criminals.

**Mr. John Smith:** Is the Prime Minister aware that it is three months to the day since the House debated the Government's White Paper on the coal industry? Does he recollect that the public, the press and some of his own Back Benchers were led to believe that 12 pits would be saved by that White Paper? Why is it that, only three months later, three of the 12 pits face closure?

**The Prime Minister:** I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows that there have been severe geological problems at some of those pits, resulting in an excessive level of cost. British Coal has talked to the men about the problems. I understand that at Rufford the men voted to close the pit when the existing face is exhausted and at Markham they agreed to immediate closure. British Coal is still committed to the market-testing exercise.

**Mr. Smith:** Does the Prime Minister not understand what is happening to the miners—that if they do not vote for closure they lose redundancy payments? Does he not understand what is happening in the market? British Coal is now offering coal at a knock-down price which would give the consumer much cheaper electricity than he or she could get from any other source. If the two privatised generators still will not buy at that price, does that not prove that the market is rigged against coal and that, if it goes on, pit after pit will close and will shall lose a vital industry?

**The Prime Minister:** The reason for taking the decisions on coal some months ago was to make sure that there is a viable industry that can continue in the future. It will be a smaller industry than once it was, for it has been shrinking in size year on year over the past 30 years. That is a fact of life which the right hon. and learned Gentleman, I and every hon. Member well understand. It is the market for coal which will determine the size of the industry. The Government have made it clear that they are willing to provide a subsidy to help the deep mining industry secure supplementary coal to generators at world prices. That was and is the position.

**Mr. Smith:** Does the Prime Minister not remember clearly that the House was led to believe that 12 pits would be saved as a result of the White Paper? Why does he not come clean and admit that the White Paper was a fraud and is now exposed as a fraud? Is it not a perfect example of the style of the Prime Minister and his Government that they produced a White Paper for 36 hours' publicity, which has not survived for three months in the real world?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. and learned Gentleman might perhaps have observed what Mr. Scargill had to say at lunchtime when he said:

"The Labour leadership is more interested in opinion polls and images rather than principles and real policies."

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** During his busy day, has the Prime Minister had the opportunity to read the letter from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) in *The*

*London Literary Review*, in which he gives inaccurate medical information on the state of child health in Iraq? Will the Prime Minister remind the hon. Gentleman that United Nations Security Council resolutions 706 and 712 of August and September 1991 authorised Iraq to export $16 billion worth of oil to buy medicines over a six-month period but that those arrangements have never been implemented?

**The Prime Minister:** I have not seen that particular letter, but my hon. Friend is quite right about the proposition that has been available to Iraq for well over a year whereby it could export oil and, in return, have medical and other equipment. The Government of Iraq —Saddam Hussein—chose not to take up that option. For that reason, he is primarily to blame for the present difficulties in treating people who are sick and ill in Iraq.

Q3. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Hanson:** Will the Prime Minister confirm to the House and to the many pensioners lobbying Parliament today that the Conservatives have spent millions of pounds of taxpayers' money on tax relief to the wealthiest members of Lloyd's, while continuing to persist with their policy of putting VAT on gas and electricity? Does he appreciate that that is typical of the present Government?

**The Prime Minister:** It is typical of the hon. Gentleman to misrepresent the position. The fact is that the success of Conservative policies over the years has enabled pensioners' incomes to increase by 30 per cent.—37 per cent. net of housing costs—since 1979. The hon. Gentleman should perhaps remind himself, and tell others, which party tried to cut the Christmas bonus, cut spending on the national health service, failed to uprate pensions and let inflation get out of control and wreck the savings of millions of pensioners.

Q5. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** I share my right hon. Friend's approval that Wimbledon is monopolising all channels, but, in the context of the necessary review of public spending, may I ask for an assurance that there will be a rigorous clamp-down on all those who are claiming benefit on fraudulent grounds at the expense of those most worthy of help in society, to whom benefits should be targeted?

**The Prime Minister:** I can give my hon. Friend both assurances. I assure him that the Government will honour their pledges to uprate state retirement and child benefits and so protect the most vulnerable in society. I also assure him that those who try to defraud the benefits system will find it increasingly difficult to do so. They will come up against a Government anti-fraud policy which expects to net savings of nearly £1 billion this year. We want those resources so as to make sure that they are available for those who need them most. I make no apology for protecting taxpayers from those who seek to abuse the system.

Q6. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Dr. Jones:** In view of the revelations at the trial of Christopher Clunis, who stabbed and killed Jonathan Zito, will the Prime Minister accept that although most people suffering from schizophrenia are not dangerous, the failure of the Government's care in the community policy means that dangerous mentally ill people are walking the streets? What does he intend to do about that, and will he now order a public inquiry into the case and its implications for community care, as requested by Mr. Zito's widow?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Lady may not know it, but the care in the community policy has been a cross-party policy in the House for many years. Everyone is deeply sorry to hear about that tragic case, and I have deep sympathy for Mrs. Zito and the other relatives concerned. Nevertheless, I am sure that our community care policy is right for the patients concerned. It is right to encourage them generally to lead as independent a life as possible away from large-scale institutions. To that end, we now devote spending of more than £2 billion per year, and we have increased it substantially to ensure that the resources devoted to it are able to meet the problems which exist.

I have to say to the hon. Lady that picking out a tragic case such as that in the way that she did does no credit to her.

Q7. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Evennett:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the United Kingdom is the only leading country in Europe experiencing economic recovery? Will he further confirm that while other countries in the European Community languish in recession, our economy has low inflation, falling unemployment, low wage settlements and the highest growth rate in Europe? Does he agree that that is good news for British business men and exporters and will help the nation to get roaring forward again economically?

**The Prime Minister:** I believe that it is good news for everybody, with the possible exception of some Opposition Members for whom good news is extremely bad news. Britain was the first country in Europe to go into the recession; it is now among the first to emerge. Although conditions abroad throughout the Community may be difficult for some time, the Community itself and others are now forecasting that we shall have the highest growth rate in the Community this year and the highest growth rate again next year.

**Mr. Molyneaux:** Have Her Majesty's Government given any commitment to the Labour party's proposals for joint authority over Northern Ireland, as set out in the documents published this morning?

**The Prime Minister:** The first I heard of the apparent proposals by the Opposition spokesman on Northern Ireland was when I read that astonishing story in *The Guardian* this morning. I have no means of knowing

whether *The Guardian* story is right or wrong. I hope that it is wrong, but, as Opposition Members seem to have questions planted upon them by *The Guardian*, it does not seem unreasonable to me that they may plant their policies upon *The Guardian* themselves. I can only say that that policy, if it is the policy of the Labour party, is a recipe for disaster. If it is true, I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will request the resignation of his spokesman this day. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has the obligation to tell the people of Northern Ireland whether or not that is the policy of the Labour party.

**Mr. Brandreth:** May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on literally flying the flag in support of Manchester's Olympic bid? Does he agree that the bid is bringing more money, more jobs and more prestige to an area of this country which is already world class?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my hon. Friend. I believe that hosting the Olympic games in Manchester would be good for the north-west, good for Britain and good for the Olympics. That is why the Government are determined to do all that they can to back Manchester's bid to bring the Olympics here for the millennium. We have provided full support for that bid. I was delighted to welcome the International Olympic Committee to Downing street yesterday. I shall be meeting the president of the IOC next month, and I look forward to going to Monte Carlo to help to promote the bid in September. The Olympic games which mark the year 2000 will have a special significance and I want to see those games here in Britain—in Manchester.

# Personal Statement

3.32 pm

**Mr. Michael Mates** (East Hampshire): This is the third and, I trust, the last personal statement upon resignation that this House will hear during this Session. I did not want to make it, I did not want to resign, but now I can at last explain what I have been doing and why. I think that I owe it to the House, I owe it to my colleagues, I owe it to my family and friends, and I owe it, above all, to my constituents to whom I am ultimately accountable.

First, I think that most people here will know how desperately sad I am to have relinquished a job which I loved and which has been the greatest challenge of my political life. I am more grateful than words can say to the Prime Minister for giving me the chance; to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who has led our team in one of the most difficult jobs in the Government with wisdom, courage, honour and utter integrity, and who has gained huge respect throughout Northern Ireland and here for his performance; to the ministerial team—good friends all —with whom I have been so happy to serve, not forgetting my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), whose recent promotion so delighted us all in the Office and all his friends in the Province; to the officials, both in the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland civil service, under the outstanding leadership of two dedicated permanent secretaries; to all the staff throughout the departments for which I had responsibility; and, above all, to my own team, my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), my Parliamentary Private Secretary; to Nigel and Alison, to Nannette and Neil, Joanne and Lisa, Susan and Liz, and my escorts in Northern Ireland. I have never known such a dedicated and happy team whose loyalty and devotion has been overwhelming.

My right hon. Friend the new Minister of State, who has my heartfelt good wishes as he takes up my reins, starts with the advantage of the best team that a man could want.

During these past weeks, I have kept silent. I have kept faith with the system, and I have said nothing without the express permission of No. 10. I have no criticism in this matter of the Prime Minister—far from it—or of the Government, or of the two Attorneys-General with whom I have corresponded. But I do have something to say about the law enforcement agencies, which, when the House has heard me, will, I hope, cause the Government to set up an urgent independent inquiry into what has happened.

I do not know whether Mr. Asil Nadir is innocent or guilty. No part of any of my representations has sought either to plead his innocence or to try to establish it. That is for the courts. Those who have alleged that I was trying to help him to escape from the consequences of any of his actions have totally misunderstood what I have been trying to do.

The House may have heard how my involvement began, in the autumn of 1991, through a constituent who brought me details of alleged wrongdoing by the authorities in the case of Mr. Nadir. I asked to meet Mr. Nadir. That was the first time that I had met him or anyone associated with his businesses. He gave me his account of what happened and was able to corroborate most of what he said.

Some of his complaints concerned his advisers in the City; others concerned official institutions: the Inland Revenue, the Serious Fraud Office and the police. There have been many more allegations over the past weeks of involvement by others: other national agencies, international agencies and other arms of various Governments. Many of those allegations have been wrongly attributed to me. I shall not pursue this line this afternoon, but of course I would be happy to tell anything I know about these matters to an independent inquiry.

With Mr. Nadir's permission, I spoke to Mr. Anthony Scrivener QC, until recently chairman of the Bar. It was clear that the defence team were concerned at some of the matters that had arisen during the course of the prosecution. He confirmed that he thought that the Attorney-General should be made aware of what was going on.

I met the then Attorney-General to express my concern. At his request, I then wrote to him the first of the letters that have brought me to the position in which I find myself today. The only persons who had copies of those letters were the Attorney-General, Mr. Nadir and the Serious Fraud Office. It is a matter perhaps of speculation who leaked the letter to the press last week.

It was claimed that I was embarrassed by this leak. Far from it: three days previously I had asked the Attorney-General's permission to publish all the correspondence between us, because I felt that it was the only way to bring out into the open the reasons for my involvement. The Attorney-General indicated that this might give him some difficulty. I respected that view and will continue to do so, although I would readily make this correspondence available to any inquiry.

Of course, I understand why the press would publish a letter or any other material leaked to them. I make no criticism of them for that. I just ask that, with me gone, inquiring journalists now ask the following questions. Why was material being selectively leaked to them? Whose agenda was being served by its publication? Why was the Serious Fraud Office talking to the press? The other law departments remained commendably tight-lipped and leak-proof, but the Serious Fraud Office spoke to the press and was even prepared to be quoted—for example,

"We kept asking why he is doing all of this",

a senior Serious Fraud Office source said to a newspaper.

"There was growing irritation at the repeated need to provide information enabling the Attorney General to respond to the points raised by Mates."

Many have asked why I became involved in this case and why I continued my involvement after I joined the Government. I must say at once that, on the latter point, I took careful advice that it was proper for me to pursue this matter as a Minister. Let me simply lay out the facts as they were presented to me at the beginning and as they developed in the months that followed. I leave it to the House to judge, and I hope ultimately to an independent inquiry to decide, whether what I did was right or wrong.

I start with a raid on South Audley Management, a property management company controlled by Mr. Nadir's family, on 19 September 1991. The raid was highly publicised. The press and television had been warned in advance and were in attendance when the raid took place. Inevitably, the publicity surrounding the raid had a serious effect on the share price of Polly Peck International, or PPI as I shall now call it. The following day, 20 September 1991, Mr. Nadir was asked to go to the Serious Fraud

Office headquarters in Elm street for an interview, during which time his presence was announced by the SFO to the press. That resulted in an inevitable blaze of publicity as he left the building.

On 30 October, the SFO mounted a highly publicised raid on the headquarters of PPI in Berkeley square. In fact, 10 minutes before the police arrived, journalists had knocked on the door and told PPI staff that they were there in answer to an invitation from the SFO.

There is a further point. By that time, PPI was already in administration. By arrangement with the administrators, the SFO had already had full access to PPI headquarters and to all the documents there. Its people were already working inside the building. The SFO was effectively launching a raid in the full glare of publicity against the administrators. This clearly had a cumulative effect on the public's perception of both PPI and Mr. Nadir. When Mr. Nadir returned from a trip abroad to assist the administrators, the media were given advance warning of the intention to arrest him at the airport, so they were there in force to watch the event. A process of what some might call trial by media had begun, aided and encouraged by the Serious Fraud Office.

For its part, the SFO has consistently maintained that its investigations and thus its ability to bring the case to trial have been hampered and delayed by its inability to operate in Turkish-controlled Northern Cyprus. The defence therefore offered an opportunity to short-circuit the problem. In June 1991, it commissioned Binder Hamlyn, one of Britain's leading accountancy firms, to carry out its own investigation into the relationship between Polly Peck in London and its subsidiaries in Northern Cyprus, which formed the basis of the charges.

The SFO's first response was that Binder Hamlyn must have been shown forged documents. When the defence then presented the SFO with a report from an independent forensic expert, on the SFO's approved list, saying that that was not so, it changed its ground and, despite requests from the defence to go to Northern Cyprus to check the accounts, it has maintained that that would be impossible because Northern Cyprus is not a recognised country.

It is well known that the police have on occasions visited Northern Cyprus to make inquiries in connection with criminal proceedings in this country. I simply do not understand why they could not follow the usual practice. Two police officers visited Northern Cyprus just after this. Now, it is claimed, they were returning illegal immigrants, which shows that police officers do visit Northern Cyprus. However, there is evidence that the officers asked detailed questions about the assets of Polly Peck subsidiaries in Northern Cyprus and, at the very least, there is a severe inconsistency here.

There seems too to be some inconsistency over who made the complaints that the SFO was investigating. The present charges do not arise as a result of a complaint by the stock exchange and there is evidence of improper collusion between a senior officer of the Inland Revenue and the Serious Fraud Office. While the Serious Fraud Office denies any such collusion, the officer involved has admitted it to a journalist, whose name I know and who would be happy to give the details of this illegal collusion to an independent inquiry. Mr. Nadir and his advisers believe that he has been denied the opportunity properly to prepare his defence. They also believe that he has in the process been denied his rights under the law.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he should bear in mind that Mr. Nadir still stands charged with serious offences in this country on which at some future date he may stand trial. In accordance with the House's strict rules on matters of sub judice, I hope that he will not follow in detail the line on which he now appears to be embarking. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take to heart my cautionary words.

**Mr. Mates:** Indeed, I will, Madam Speaker—I am happy to do so. Perhaps I can assist you and the House if I tell you that I have had this script looked at very carefully by a senior lawyer with exactly that in mind. I have no —*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the House has its own sub judice rules which it imposes on itself and which I am imposing on the hon. Gentleman. Therefore, I caution him seriously about the area on which he now seems to be embarking.

**Mr. Mates:** During the raid on Polly Peck's headquarters in October 1990, many documents were seized. Professional privilege was claimed by Mr. Nadir's lawyers and it was agreed that the documents would be placed in sealed bags until the issue was resolved by independent counsel.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I am extremely reluctant to continue to caution the hon. Gentleman. It is a personal statement and it is normally heard uninterrupted, and I am reluctant to interrupt. However, I caution the hon. Gentleman that we have our sub judice rules in the House and I will see that they are carried out.

**Mr. Mates:** Madam Speaker, I am embarrassed. Does it help you if I say that what I am saying now is what I received in writing from the Attorney-General? He has written to me about these matters and I am simply reporting to the House some aspects of the handling of the case. It has nothing to do with what is going on in court; it is the handling of the case by the authorities. If you tell me that the House cannot hear this——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. What the hon. Gentleman is saying may well be used during a pending case, and that is my concern. I ask the hon. Gentleman to re-examine his notes and to see that the House is given the information that he wishes it to have which is not sub judice and which cannot be used in a future trial. That is the point that I am trying to get across.

**Mr. Mates:** Madam Speaker, I hear what you are saying. Please trust me. I am not talking about matters that will be the subject of the charges and the proceedings in court. I am talking about the handling of the case, which I was looking into—quite properly, I have been told—with the Attorney and over which I have now lost my job. I think that the House is entitled to know about it. In fact, these matters are already in the public domain.

It was agreed that the privilege that was claimed about the documents would be assessed by independent counsel. He found that the vast majority of the documents in the sealed bags were privileged documents. But before counsel saw the documents——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I cannot allow this statement to continue with the use of information which, whether or not it is in the public domain, may well be used in a court

*[Madam Speaker]*

of law. I hope that the hon. Gentleman realises the seriousness of the action that he is now taking. I have a responsibility in this House to carry out its rules and regulations. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will look carefully at his notes.

**Ms Clare Short** (Birmingham, Ladywood): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. There can be no point of order. Two weeks ago, I cautioned the House that there can be no interruption of a personal statement. I am extremely embarrassed to have to interrupt the hon. Gentleman. I will take no points of order. I believe that the hon. Gentleman has taken seriously the words that I have been trying to put across to him.

**Mr. Mates:** Indeed I have. This passage in my speech has been confirmed in writing to me and has been passed on to Mr. Nadir's advisers and others by the Attorney-General. I could have published the letter. It is written to me. If I had it with me, I could read it to the House. No one could stop me from reading out a letter from a Minister to a Member of Parliament. That is not covered by any sort of privilege at all.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I inform the hon. Gentleman that I certainly do have the authority to stop him reading it out if I thought it to be sub judice. *[Interruption.]* The House is very restless, and understandably so. It must now come to order. We must hear the hon. Gentleman a little more.

**Mr. Mates:** It was agreed that this dispute—and confirmed to me by the Attorney-General that it was agreed—would be solved by an independent counsel looking at the papers to see whether they were privileged. The point that I wish to make—which has been acknowledged—is that, before the counsel saw those papers, the SFO had opened the bags. It has admitted that two bags were opened but claimed that that was due to a misunderstanding. In fact, more than two bags were opened, because other papers from other bags have found their way into the hands of the administrators. That is another unsatisfactory part of this story which needs to be investigated.

But that was not the only occasion on which privileged papers, vital to Mr. Nadir's defence, had been mishandled. In March of this year, Mr. Nadir's house was raided by the solicitors for the trustees in bankruptcy. As well as taking various personal effects—one of which I later replaced in inscribed form—they took away all of his privileged defence papers. He protested and was informed in writing that, if he wished to see the papers, he should make an appointment to see them. He was told to specify in advance which papers he wanted to see, and to call at the trustees' offices during working hours when he could examine them, but not take them away. I remind the House that they were his own papers.

I turn finally to what the House may view as the most serious aspect of this whole affair, namely, that quite improper pressure has apparently been exercised by the SFO upon the trial judge, Mr. Justice Tucker.

**Hon. Members:** Oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I am now requiring the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat. He must resume his seat.

**Mr. Mates** *rose*——*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Let me hear the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Mates:** This has been reported in the newspapers, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. It has nothing whatsoever to do with publicity or newspapers. I am listening to a personal statement from the hon. Gentleman, not what appears in the newspapers. It is the hon. Gentleman's personal statement that I want to hear.

**Mr. Mates:** It is this sequence of events, Madam Speaker, above all, that demands an independent inquiry. If one cannot come to the House and tell it what is wrong with the system—if one cannot speak in this place, not about innocence or guilt, not about trial, not about sub judice, but about what has gone wrong with the system—what is the point, Madam Speaker, of being here?

**Madam Speaker:** It is after the trial that the hon. Gentleman must give his information. That is the point.

**Mr. Mates:** On 6 November during the hearing in court of an application to vary Mr. Nadir's bail, counsel for the SFO said that the police were investigating a complaint that there was a conspiracy to bribe Mr. Justice Tucker, the trial judge, and that he should consider standing down because it might be necessary to interview him. The allegation was that a sum of money would be paid to the judge following the success of the application to vary bail.

At a subsequent hearing in court in December, the chief superintendent responsible for investigating the allegation of attempted bribery told the court, when cross-examined, that he had never had evidence that would justify interviewing the judge, nor had the police ever declared their intention to do so. The only conclusion is that the SFO misled the judge about the intentions of the police. The House will also realise that the mere making of such an allegation in court could compromise any chance of the judge being seen to be impartial. Quite rightly, he refused to give up the case.

Then, at a hearing in March 1993, another bizarre suggestion was made by counsel, namely, that the police were investigating a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. The suspected conspirators were, said counsel, Mr. Nadir, Mr. Wyn Jones, Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan police, Mr. Anthony Scrivener, QC, and the judge himself, Mr. Justice Tucker. Needless to say, the police have never questioned the police, Mr. Wyn Jones or Mr. Scrivener. This appears to have been a deliberate attempt to destabilise the defence.

The day before, as on the day before so many preparatory hearings, Mr. Nadir was arrested. He was cautioned and interviewed on suspicion of a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, and the co-conspirators that I have mentioned were named. At the end of the interview his solicitor inquired whether any other of the suspected conspirators had been arrested or interviewed. The House will not be surprised to know that the answer to that was no.

I have the verbatim transcripts of the court proceedings, which substantiate everything that I have

said. Of course, I shall make them available to an inquiry. *[Interruption.]* Relax, Madam Speaker; I am on safer ground now.

I reported this to the Attorney-General in a meeting. I have undertaken to retain the confidence of those meetings, but I think that I can say that I had to give him a moment to get over his surprise. He felt sure that I had got it wrong and that the alleged conspiracy was against the judge rather than involving him. He now knows that I was right.

At that meeting I told my right hon. and learned Friend that I was increasingly uncomfortable with my position as interlocutor in the matter while a member of the Government and I urged him most strongly to speak directly to Mr. Scrivener and the legal advisers about it, lawyer to lawyer. Mr. Scrivener tells me that, so far, no such meeting has taken place.

That concludes the factual account of the highlights of my involvement. I hope that all the House—this is not a party political matter—will now realise that only an independent inquiry can resolve this whole business and bring about the conditions in which it can be seen that there will be a fair trial for Mr. Nadir.

The cumulative effect of what happened in March and April—the alleged bribery of the judge, the conspiracy to pervert the course of justice and the seizing of the defence papers—left Mr. Nadir in a state of severe depression and despair. It was in that context that a decision was taken to raise his spirits, and in that context I made the fateful decision to give him the watch.

I must emphasise that none of us had any idea that he might leave the United Kingdom. It came as a complete shock and was an action of which I strongly disapproved. It has clearly damaged his standing in the matter; and right hon. and hon. Members can see what it has done to me.

I have asked myself two questions. First, do I regret doing what I did? Well, given the effect that my actions have had on me and all around me, I bitterly regret what has happened. Secondly, in the same circumstances, would I get involved again? I hope that I would have the courage to do so. From the beginning, I have been persuaded that something was amiss within the system, and I have grown ever more convinced as events have unfolded. Surely we are here, either as Front or Back Benchers, to take up questions of apparent injustice, and if we should ever flinch from such a duty the reason for our existence as Members of Parliament would be much diminished.

As for me, I was guilty of one foolish indiscretion, but I have done nothing else improper and I hope that, when this whole story is told, this House will consider that throughout this affair I have acted as an honourable Member.

**Mr. Andrew Faulds** (Warley, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In the presence of the Attorney-General, is it not absolutely a requirement that he should now make a statement about this highly unsatisfactory matter?

**Madam Speaker:** I have not been told that any Minister is seeking to make a statement.

## BILLS PRESENTED

### Human Rights (No. 2)

Mr. Graham Allen presented a Bill to provide protection to individuals and in the courts of the United Kingdom for the rights and freedoms specified in the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; to entrench those rights and freedoms; to further provide for the establishment of a Human Rights Commission; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 219.]

### Sale of Goods

Mr. Nigel Griffiths presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the sale and supply of goods: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 220.]

### Trade Descriptions

Mr. Nigel Griffiths presented a Bill to amend the Trade Descriptions Act 1968; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 221.]

### Unfair Contract Terms

Mr. Nigel Griffiths presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the extent to which under the law of England and Wales and Northern Ireland civil liability for breach of contract, or for negligence or other breach of duty, can be avoided by means of contract terms or otherwise, and under the law of Scotland civil liability can be avoided by means of contract terms: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 222.]

### Product Recalls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths presented a Bill to establish for the protection of consumers a new system of recalling unsafe goods; to amend the Consumer Protection Act 1987; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 223.]

### Consumer Guarantees

Mr. Nigel Griffiths presented a Bill to provide for consumer guarantees; to amend the law relating to the sale and supply of goods; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 224.]

### Consumer Credit (Amendment)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths presented a Bill to amend sections 138 to 140 of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 relating to extortionate credit; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 225.]

### Fair Trading

Mr. Nigel Griffiths presented a Bill to provide for a general duty to trade fairly; to amend the law relating to fair trading; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 226.]

## WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 98(5) (Matter relating exclusively to Wales).*

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES)

That the Matter of Local Government in Wales, being a Matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to the Welsh Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

**Madam Speaker:** With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

SCHOOL INFORMATION

That the Education (School Information) (England) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1502) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Education (School Performance Information) (England) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1503) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

MEAT (HYGIENE)

That the Fresh Meat and Poultry Meat (Hygiene, Inspection and Examinations for Residues) (Charges) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1360) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Farmed Game Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) (Charges) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1359) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

POST OFFICE

That the Post Office (Abolition of Import Restrictions) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1324) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

*Question agreed to.*



## Workplace Childcare

4.1 pm

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to impose upon employers meeting certain specified criteria the duty to make provision for child care and related facilities for their employees; and to provide for exemptions in certain cases.

The Bill would make it mandatory for employers of more than a certain size to provide workplace creches or nurseries, or some other appropriate child care.

In the 1980s, there was a steep rise in the number of women with children under five who went out to work. In 1981, they were 25 per cent. of the work force, but by 1991 the number had nearly doubled to 43 per cent. Yet it seems to me that the Government have entirely failed to meet that challenge. This country has almost the worst child care provision record in Europe. Only Portugal has worse facilities.

I am not arguing that all women should go out to work or that workplace creches are a suitable form of child care provision for every woman. I would argue that women want a range of provision that includes community nurseries and a tax regime that enables them to meet some of their child care costs——

**Mr. Paul Flynn** (Newport, West): And some men.

**Ms Abbott:** Yes, one that enables some men to meet some of their child care costs.

A genuinely enlightened Government, anticipating the needs of the labour force in the year 2000 and beyond, would take a positive policy position on workplace nurseries. Some Conservative Members may argue that, if some individuals make a private decision to go out to work, if is up to them to make private provision for their child care, and that there is no role for Government. On the contrary, I would argue that the nation's children are the nation's responsibility and—what is more—good child care, accessible to all, makes good practical sense. It makes good sense for children because we in Britain have a patchwork of child care provision and children's access to child care depends on where they live and how much money their parents have.

Hon. Members may have read recent surveys from the United States that show that inner-city children with access to good pre-school child care provision are likely to do better in school and are less likely to engage in crime and juvenile delinquency. If we take issues of law and order seriously, we should consider the role of pre-school child care in making children grow up to be law-abiding and fulfilled citizens.

Good child care makes sense for mothers because it enables women to go back to work and use their skills and training. Perhaps even more important, if proper child care, including workplace nurseries, were available in Britain, millions of women currently dependent on social security could go back to work and stand on their own two feet.

Good child care makes good sense for companies, which would not be wasting money on training people and it would reduce their staff turnover. A recent survey revealed that the cost of replacing even a bank clerk can be as high as £5,000 when one adds up the cost of advertising the post and training.

Above all, good child care makes sense for the nation. If we are to compete in the single European market in the 1990s and beyond, we need to maximise our use of human resources, and access to child care is a way of maximising the use of female human resources. Many trained and skilled women who go back to work after maternity leave have to take jobs for which they are over-qualified or part-time jobs simply because they cannot get good child care.

If we are engaged in a debate about what to do about the millions of single mothers dependent on social security, we have to take the issue of child care seriously. Living on social security is a degrading experience and few people do it willingly. If only the Government were willing to facilitate a range of child care, millions of women would be able to go out to work and support themselves.

Irrespective of legislation, the Government have a greater role to play in child care. Whitehall has more than 8,000 employees and 27 buildings, but only two workplace creches. The House of Commons has 116,000 sq m of space, 1,207 offices, 14 restaurants and nine bars with another bar being built, yet no creche. It seems to me that the House has ample facilities for drinkers but nothing for children. The House of Commons Commission said recently that there is no space for a creche. That is patently absurd. If we have thousands of square metres of space and hundreds of offices, I do not see why room cannot be found for a creche. It is a question not of room but of understanding the issue and having the will to do something about it.

The Government claim that child care can be left to the market. The market will never be able to provide child care on the level or scale that the current demographic pattern requires. If child care provision is left to the market, inner-city working-class children who could most benefit from high-quality child care will be denied access to it.

To give the lie to the Government's position, the market, in the shape of employers, is now saying that the Government definitely have a role to play. In the past few weeks, major employers, including ICI, Rover and Shell, have set up a group called Employers for Child Care, which is committed to providing child care and calling on the Government to take a lead, play a role and plan provision.

The arguments against child care provision often come from people who have no responsibility for children and who believe that the issue can be brushed to one side. However, I put it to the House that, when we consider the changing labour force, the increasing numbers of working people who have children under five and the need to compete in Europe, the number of workplace nurseries we currently have—only 300—is derisory.

We all agree on the need to invest for growth. What more crucial and important investment could we make than in the nation's children and in their care? The Bill would play a role in providing a range of child care. Women throughout the country would welcome practical initiatives by the Government.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Ms Diane Abbott, Mr. Malcolm Chisholm, Mr. Alan Simpson, Mr. Paul Flynn, Mr. Tony Banks, Mrs. Helen Jackson, Mrs. Alice Mahon and Mrs. Barbara Roche.

### Workplace Childcare

Ms Diane Abbott accordingly presented a Bill to impose upon employers meeting certain specified criteria the duty to make provision for child care and related facilities for their employees; and to provide for exemptions in certain cases: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 227.]

## Points of Order

4.10 pm

**Mr. Tom Clarke** (Monklands, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Tourism is one of Scotland's most important industries. This afternoon, the Secretary of State for Scotland is holding a press conference in Edinburgh to announce Government policies for the structure of the tourist industry. I understand that the Secretary of State will also outline Government policies in that respect in a written answer to the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch).

I am sure that you, Madam Speaker, agree that that is totally unacceptable and an insult to the House. The House was entitled to hear from the Secretary of State for Scotland, to question him and to give its views on the important issue of Scottish tourism. This is not the first time that such a thing has happened. On previous occasions, you have condemned that practice as being completely unacceptable. I invite you to do the same again and to ask the Secretary of State to come to the House to explain the Government's proposals for that vital industry.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware that it is for a Minister to decide whether he announces a change of policy by means of a written answer or at the Dispatch Box. it is not for the Speaker to determine the way in which a Minister makes a statement to the House.

**Mr. John McFall** (Dumbarton): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Tourism is Scotland's biggest industry in terms of employment that it offers, and many communities in the highlands and islands and elsewhere depend for their life on tourism. The Secretary of State's proposals will have a major impact on many parts of Scotland. His action, apart from being grossly disrespectful to the House, says nothing for the attitude of the Scottish Office towards the Scottish people, in announcing a decision in that way. We have previously brought our worries about the Scottish Office's growing disrespect to the Floor of the House. To articulate those worries again, we put it to you today, Madam Speaker, that the Secretary of State has an obligation to respect and to make a statement to the House, so that it may deliberate on the issue, for the good of the people of Scotland.

**Madam Speaker:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the ruling that I just gave. The Minister concerned has already made a statement, by means of a written answer. It is not for the Speaker to instruct Ministers whether they should make a statement at the Dispatch Box or give a written answer. If any change to that convention is to be made, the Select Committee on Procedure should be requested to review the matter so that the changes that the hon. Gentleman is seeking may well take place.

**Mr. Michael Jopling** (Westmorland and Lonsdale): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I want to raise a matter with regard to the personal statement made a few minutes ago. It has always been my understanding that personal statements were vetted by the Speaker before they were made, and——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I am sorry, and I apologise for interrupting the right hon. Gentleman. He is a long-standing Member of the House and I have great regard for his knowledge of procedure. However, the House has just heard a personal statement, and according to "Erskine May", no reference to a personal statement should be made afterwards. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will be good enough to consider the matter later and to refer it to me again. As he knows, I try to apply the rules and regulations of the House without exception. It would be better if the matter were left there at this stage.

**Mr. Jopling:** If you wish, Madam Speaker, I shall not refer to today's events; instead, if I may, I shall refer to the practice of personal statements in general. I imagine that I can do so at any time.

I have always understood that personal statements were subject to clearance by the Speaker and that, in return, they were heard uninterrupted. It is clearly a delicate matter for anyone, even the Speaker, to interrupt a personal statement, and it should be done only when absolutely necessary.

I do not want an answer now, but I wonder whether you would consider overnight and possibly give an answer next week on whether the practice for all personal statements ought to be extended to include resignation statements. I understand that resignation statements are not now subject to vetting by the Speaker. Should all such statements in future become subject to the approval of the Speaker of the day?

I can understand how difficult it is for a Speaker to make a decision on the hoof, as it were, about a personal statement involving sub judice matters. Will you consider the matter overnight and perhaps make a statement either tomorrow or next week, as you wish, on whether you think it wise to refer the matter of personal statements to the Procedure Committee?

**Madam Speaker:** The right hon. Gentleman knows well that he has the authority to refer the matter to the Procedure Committee. If he leaves the matter with me, I will consider it, without necessarily giving any commitment about reporting to the House.

**Mr. Harry Cohen** (Leyton): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you study the operation of the sub judice rule in the House? Certain Members, including myself, are unhappy about the way in which the law operates at the moment. I have in mind, for example the case of Mr. Alan Clark, a former Member of Parliament. When hon. Members first sought to question him about his involvement in the Matrix Churchill affair, Mr. Clark claimed that he intended to sue a newspaper, and that therefore the matter was sub judice. He did not subsequently sue the newspaper or take any further action. Hon. Members were denied the opportunity of questioning Mr. Clark on that issue because of the sub judice rule. That is clearly an inadequate operation of the rule, and I ask you, Madam Speaker, to look at the matter for the longer term.

**Madam Speaker:** The operation of the sub judice rule is undoubtedly a matter for the Procedure Committee. The Committee recommended the rule to the House which, in turn, accepted it. I invite the hon. Gentleman to write to the Procedure Committee about the point that he has made.

# Orders of the Day

## Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*

*As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.*

[MADAM SPEAKER in the Chair.]

### New Clause 14

APPEAL AGAINST ORDER FORFEITING DRUG TRAFFICKING CASH

'.—(1) The following sections shall be inserted in the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990, after section 26—

"*Appeal against section 26 order.*

26A.—(1) This section applies where an order for the forfeiture of cash ("the forfeiture order") is made under section 26 above by a magistrates' court.

(2) Any party to the proceedings in which the forfeiture order is made (other than the applicant for the order) may, before the end of the period of 30 days beginning with the date on which it is made, appeal to the Crown Court or, in Northern Ireland, to a county court.

(3) An appeal under this section shall be by way of a rehearing.

(4) On an application made by the appellant to a magistrates' court at any time, that court may order the release of so much of the cash to which the forfeiture order relates as it considers appropriate to enable him to meet his legal expenses in connection with the appeal.

(5) The court hearing an appeal under this section may make such order as it considers appropriate.

(6) If it upholds the appeal, the court may order the release of the cash, or (as the case may be) the remaining cash, together with any accrued interest.

(7) Section 26(3) applies in relation to a rehearing on an appeal under this section as it applies to proceedings under section 26.

*Appeal against section 26 order: Scotland.*

26B. Any party to proceedings in which an order for the forfeiture of cash is made by the sheriff under section 26 above may appeal against the order to the Court of Session.".

(2) The Act of 1990 shall be further amended as follows.

(3) In section 26 (forfeiture of drug trafficking cash), after subsection (3) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(4) Proceedings on an application under this section to the sheriff shall be civil proceedings.".

(4) In section 28 (procedure), the words "or appeals" shall be inserted after the word "applications" in each place where it occurs in subsection (2).

(5) In section 30 (forfeited cash to be paid into the Consolidated Fund), the following subsection shall be added at the end—

"(3) Subsection (2) above does not apply—

(a) where an appeal is made under section 26A or 26B above, before the appeal is determined or otherwise disposed of; and

(b) in any other case—

(i) where the forfeiture was ordered by a magistrates' court, before the end of the period of 30 days mentioned in section 26A(2); or

(ii) where the forfeiture was ordered by the sheriff, before the end of any period within which, in accordance with rules of court, an appeal under section 26B must be made.".

(6) The amendments made by this section apply only in relation to orders under section 26 of the Act of 1990 made on or after the date on which this section comes into force.'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

4.18 pm

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean):** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Madam Speaker:** With this it will be convenient also to discuss Government amendment No. 19.

**Mr. Maclean:** The new clause inserts two new sections —26A and 26B—in the Criminal Justice (International Cooperation) Act 1990. The new section 26A provides a right of appeal against an order made under section 26 of the 1990 Act for the forfeiture of cash which a magistrates court was satisfied represented the proceeds of drug trafficking. There are currently only limited rights of appeal in England and Wales against such orders, and application for "case stated" can be made on the grounds that the order was wrong in law or in excess of jurisdiction, but the merits of decision cannot be re-evaluated.

The matter was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) and by the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd) last year. We have since decided that it would be right to correct the situation. New section 26A will allow any party to the proceedings to appeal to the Crown court—or, in Northern Ireland, a county court—within 30 days of the order being made.

In effect, this right will not apply to prosecutors, as it is an appeal against the forfeiture of the cash. The appeal will take the form of a re-hearing, and the magistrates court will, on the application of the appellant, be able to release some of the cash to enable the appellant to meet his legal expenses for the appeal. The court hearing the appeal may make such order as it considers appropriate, and, if it upholds the appeal, may order the cash, together with accrued interest, to be released. The standard of proof for the re-hearing is the civil standard—the same standard as is applicable in the original hearing.

New section 26B expressly provides a right of appeal in Scotland, to the Court of Session. The rest of the new clause makes the necessary consequential changes to the 1990 Act. Subsection (5) disapplies section 30 of the Act, which provides that forfeited cash is paid into the Consolidated Fund where an appeal is made under section 26A, until the appeal is determined and until the time for making an appeal has expired.

Similar arrangements may apply in Scotland, where the period will be determined by the rules of court. That will mean that the forfeited cash can be retained in an interest-bearing account, pending the lodging and determination on an appeal, when it may have to be returned. That would not be possible if the money went straight into the Consolidated Fund, as is currently required by section 30.

The clause also makes it clear that the proceedings in Scotland under section 26 will be civil. That is necessary in order to ensure that the appropriate Scottish appeal provisions apply.

I think that the House will agree that this is a reasonable and sensible clause, and I commend it to the House.

**Mr. Alun Michael** (Cardiff, South and Penarth): The Minister always sounds sweetly reasonable when he brings yet more changes to this Bill. What he has said today sounds sweetly reasonable. The remarks that I shall address to this group of amendments will apply also to the next group, and I do not intend to repeat myself.

These are yet further changes which appear to be technical and helpful, but I must warn the House of the dangers of the process that the Bill is going through. This is yet more amendment, accepting points that have been made in criticism, to a Bill that started in the House of Lords, went through all its processes there, has been extensively amended in Committee, for which there is no effective revising period, and how now arrived at this stage.

I am not sure that there is a great deal to worry about in the amendments that the Minister has tabled. He has made it clear that they address issues that have been raised in earlier debates, and that they are designed to be constructive. However, there is a danger in the process of making law on the hoof. Will the Minister assure us that he has burned the midnight oil on this group of amendments to ensure that they are absolutely right? The Criminal Justice Act 1991 is an awful warning to legislators who come to the Dispatch Box with that sort of confidence. I hope that the Minister will think carefully and tell us whether he is that confident.

It is important to make these remarks at the outset of the debate, because we should remind ourselves that the Bill began by dealing only with drug trafficking, insider dealing and money laundering. It has been extended considerably. For instance, it has been extended, with the Opposition's support, to include terrorism, and it has been extended in response to Labour demands on matters such as previous convictions and the unit fines system, which led to a need for amendments to the 1991 Act. However, as will be clear from further debates, the Bill is still a missed opportunity.

This is a very late stage in the Bill's consideration. It started in the House of Lords many months ago and went into a sort of frozen state for several months after it was introduced in the House, when presumably all sorts of midnight oil was burnt in the Treasury, if not in the Home Office. In accepting amendments at this stage, the House should be assured by the Minister that they have been introduced with full and adequate care and consideration.

**Mr. Maclean:** The warnings of the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) are particularly apposite, not just for this Bill but for any legislation where new clauses are introduced for the first time on Report. I accept that it is not the ideal way to create any legislation. The legislation will be important and will be subject to interpretation by the courts no matter how watertight and unambiguous we think we have made it. The hon. Gentleman quotes the Criminal Justice Act 1991 as a warning. Hon. Members from both sides of the House burned a considerable amount of midnight oil scrutinising that Bill, and they all believed that the system would work well, with its provisions for unit fines and previous convictions. No one, as I recall, popped up to warn that it would be wrong.

**Mr. Michael:** That is a calumny that the Minister continually repeats. The Opposition gave warnings, and I can state that with confidence. Further warnings were given on that issue, which is not before us now, in October, when it seemed that Ministers then in office were rushing to implement it in a way that would bring out faults rather than strengths. I wish that he Minister would not repeat what is not correct but would accept that a foul-up was made—I accept that he has an alibi—by the previous Home Secretary and Minister of State, Home Office.

**Mr. Maclean:** I am not sure how many hon. Members could claim to have an alibi that would stand up in court. I say merely, let us look at the record of voting on the Bill, for which many Members on both sides of the House have many previous convictions to be taken into account. But let us not jump to a discussion that we shall probably have on later amendments.

I take on board the hon. Gentleman's point, but we have checked the clause carefully. I have burnt a little midnight oil considering the clause and many others. I am more reassured to know that my officials and parliamentary counsel have burnt considerably more than I have. We might have liked to make some other technical and difficult amendments, especially on shipping, but we decided that, because they would be so technical and because we could not guarantee that they would be as perfect as we would like, we would not table them. We shall debate that matter in a new Bill in another Session.

I take the general warning on board. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman likes what we are proposing. The amendment is sensible, and I am glad to have his support for it.

**Mr. Michael Shersby** (Uxbridge): As the House knows, I am parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales. I wish to declare that interest, in case any comments that I may make relate to matters in which it is interested.

New clause 14 deals with an appeal against an order forfeiting drug trafficking cash. Will my hon. Friend the Minister be kind enough to explain for my benefit the precise way in which that will operate?

I am concerned about the extent to which the new clause could invite an almost automatic appeal. The court may order the release of cash to which the forfeiture order relates as it considers appropriate to enable an appellant to meet his legal expenses. If, consequently, the court allows the appeal, the remaining cash, with any accrued interest, must be released. Will my hon. Friend assure me that the new clause will not encourage automatic appeals against that offence?

**Mr. Paul Boateng** (Brent, South): In answering the question asked by the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), will the Minister say whether the Home Office had discussions with the Lord Chancellor's Department about the implications of the new clause for legal aid applications? For instance, will somebody who appeals against an order made in the magistrates court be able to apply, as one applies in an ordinary appeal from the magistrates court to the Crown court, for legal aid at the magistrates court and the Crown court, or will the legal aid already granted for the magistrates court hearing be extended to cover an appeal, within the relevant period, to the Crown court?

Where will an appellant's application to the magistrates court for legal aid be made, and will any sum forfeited by order of the court be taken into account in determining the applicant's eligibility for legal aid? Is it intended that, in

due course, we shall consider amendments to the regulations governing legal aid to enable these issues to be aired?

4.30 pm

**Mr. Maclean:** First, I tell my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) that I do not think that automatic or frivolous appeals will be made, as there will always be a risk of an order for costs being made against the appellant if the appeal fails.

The court hearing the appeal can make such order as it considers appropriate, and if it upholds the appeal, it can order the cash, with accrued interest, to be released. Generally, we must trust the court to make the right determination of the amount of cash that it should release. Obviously, we shall keep this matter under constant review. It is not as if there will be very many appeals or very many cases; these are unique cases.

The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) asked about legal aid. I confirm that discussions have taken place with the Lord Chancellor's Department. Again, we are content that few such appeals and applications will be made. No legal aid will be available in the Crown court, but the proposal allows for the release of cash to meet the costs of such an appeal.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

**New clause 15**

POWER TO EXTEND CERTAIN OFFENCES TO CROWN SERVANTS AND TO EXEMPT REGULATORS ETC.

'. Schedule (*Extensions and exemptions*), which confers power on the Secretary of State to make regulations extending certain provisions to Crown servants and to make regulations exempting persons from certain offences, shall have effect.'. —*[Mr. Maclean].*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Maclean:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** With this it will be convenient also to discuss the following Government amendments: Nos. 20 to 24, No. 38, No. 26 and No. 27.

**Mr. Maclean:** The new clause and schedule give the Secretary of State the power to make regulations to extend money laundering offences to Crown servants, and to exempt certain persons who are employed by supervising bodies from the failure to report offences under clauses, 18, 19, 47 and 50.

The power to extend the offences to cover Crown servants is necessary, because some Crown servants—I am thinking in particular of employees of the Department of National Savings—carry out duties and tasks that, in many respects, do not differ from those carried out by employees of banking and financial institutions in the private sector. The latter are, of course, covered by defences. The former, however, might not be, by virtue of Crown immunity.

We do not think that that difference in treatment can be justified. In any case, we are required by the EC directive to apply the offences and, in particular, the failure to report offences to all credit and financial institutions. The Department of National Savings undoubtedly falls into that category, despite its Crown status, and it is right that the offences should in due course be extended by regulations to cover such employees.

The power does not put the general concept of Crown immunity into jeopardy. It is limited to specified money laundering offences—the acquisition offence, the offence of assisting another, the failure to report an offence, the tipping-off offence and the offence of prejudicing an investigation.

The exemption for supervisors from the suspicious reporting offence is necessary to enable us to combat money laundering through the regulatory system rather than at the expense of that system. We do not want to place on the supervisors a burden so onerous that it interferes with the performancce of their regulatory duties. We are obliged, under the directive, to impose on supervisors an express obligation to report suspicions of money laundering. This we shall do by regulations under the European Communities Act 1972.

With such an obligation in place, there is no need for the criminal offences to apply in addition. Indeed, if they were to do so, it might seriously harm the ability to exercise supervisory functions properly, as detecting suspicious transactions is a task for which regulators could easily be held responsible because of their special access to company accounts. We have therefore sought the right level at which to require supervisors to report their suspicions, without making them so anxious about the consequences of not doing so that they neglect their regulatory functions.

It is much better that the prime responsibility for reporting signs of money laundering or suspicious transactions should be given to the institution handling the money, and that the supervisors should be left with responsibility for ensuring that proper systems and practices are in place.

We have found a solution that fulfils all the requirements of the directive without undermining the integrity of the regulatory system.

Amendments Nos. 20, 21 and 22 make consequential changes to clause 77. The provisions in subsection (2) of that clause relating to schedules 4 and 5 is being removed and replaced by the provisions of amendments No. 23 and 24. The other two amendments to schedule 4 will ensure that it takes full account of the new sections being put into the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 by the new schedule.

I recommend the new clause and the amendments to the House.

**Mr. Robert Maclennan** (Caithness and Sutherland): When and how did the need for this provision come to light? Who recommended the change?

**Mr. Maclean:** The need for the new provision came to my attention within the last two weeks. I am not sure when it came to official attention. The advice of officials was that this was the best and most appropriate way of making the changes. If I had more information, I should happily give it to the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Maclennan:** If the hon. Gentleman thinks that it is appropriate that a matter of such complexity should be brought before the House in this manner, I disagree. This is not a suitable way to legislate. We have had too many experiences of bad legislation in this field being passed without proper consultation or publication of the

*[Mr. Maclennan]*

Government's intentions. On the face of it, what the Minister has said seems reasonable, but it is quite clear that he has no idea of the background to this proposal. Perhaps the Members of another place will want to look at the matter more closely.

**Mr. Maclean:** The amendment does not make any great or fundamental change. We already have complex law dealing with the reporting obligations of all those employed in the field of financial services. Here, we are applying the law to Crown servants, and making the necessary changes with regard to supervisory organisations.

I spoke in greater detail than usual because I wanted the House to be fully informed of the provision's effects. The fact that I spoke in such detail does not necessarily mean that this is a whole new area of law, or that we are introducing a new concept that was not considered by the Standing Committee in the context of other aspects of the Bill or, previously, by the House.

**Mr. Michael:** The Minister ought not to be too defensive about these issues. He will recall that the Standing Committee dealt with a number of similar points. These are not matters in respect of which the parties divide, so we had a sensible discussion. I agree that it is necessary to get the law right and to ensure that it works. In that sense, if the Minister is responding to comments that have been made, we are reassured to some extent.

However, we need to ensure that we do not create another complication and other problems. For instance, later amendments take up points that I made in Committee. I refer to the need to ensure that legal advisers working in other capacities are not exempt when they act in their non-legal capacity. I am glad that the Minister has responded by introducing amendments with which we shall deal later. I hope that he does not feel that he must defend every line of late amendments. He ought to ensure that the short time available to both Houses is used to secure practicality and to make things absolutely right.

**Mr. Maclean:** I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks. During my time in Parliament, I have never before been accused of being too defensive, but I am grateful to him for defending me for the second time, the first being in Committee. Clearly, he cannot drop his past profession; he has defended me without my even requesting a legal aid solicitor.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

## New Clause 1

### CRIME PREVENTION MEASURES AND NON-CUSTODIAL SENTENCES: CODE OF PRACTICE

'. The Secretary of State shall produce a Code of Practice regarding appropriate liaison between the courts, the police and local authorities regarding the most effective use of non-custodial sentences and other measures for the prevention of crime and reoffending.'.—*[Mr. Michael.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Michael:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to discuss also amendment No. 11, in the Title, line 21, after 'drugs', insert

'to make further provision with regard to disposals.'.

**Mr. Michael:** Before I speak to new clause 1, may I offer a personal word of explanation? I am sure that the Minister did not intend to insult me by suggesting that my past was so murky as to have been in the legal profession. I should make it clear that my professional background is that of journalist, youth and community worker and representative of the people, not as a——

**Mr. Maclean:** The hon. Gentleman was a magistrate.

**Mr. Michael:** The Minister was referring to my period as a magistrate; I take that as a compliment.

New clause 1 would fill a major gap in Britain's system for tackling crime. It would put right something which is wrong. I remind the House that this is the second Criminal Justice Bill in recent years which has failed to deal with the real problem facing communities and individuals across the country—and, indeed, the police on our streets. That real and urgent problem is the enormous rise in crime, which the Government have failed to tackle.

Crime and its prevention are matters of enormous concern to everyone today. In 1992, a staggering 5,594,416 offences were recorded by the police. That figure represents an increase of 121 per cent. on the figures for 1979 when the Conservative party came to power. It includes an increase of 324 per cent. in robbery, an increase of 149 per cent. in burglary and an increase of 162 per cent. in car crime compared with the 1979 figures.

That is an appalling record, by any definition. The actuality of crime on the ground is far worse than the figures suggest, because we know that only about one third or one quarter of offences that are committed are reported to and recorded by the police. In other words, about 20 million crimes are being committed each year.

4.45 pm

The reality behind the statistics is grim: women and the elderly are afraid to go out at night, and the fear of crime affects the quality of life of many people. Surveys of local concerns put crime at or near the top nearly every time. In such circumstances, the Government should be launching a comprehensive policy to fight crime, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), the shadow Home Secretary, said pointedly yesterday. They should be spearheading a strategy to reduce the level of crime in society.

The elements of that strategy are quite clear if one listens to the advice of those with experience of crime and crime prevention. There is a remarkable degree of consensus on how to tackle crime locally. It involves a partnership between the police, the local authority, local residents, local business and local statutory agencies, as well as voluntary organisations to analyse crime patterns in any given locality and then to develop a package of measures to tackle the problem.

The Government frequently pay lip service to that concept. Indeed, the press release machine at the Home Office works overtime, using some of the words that I shall use in my speech. However, the Government have consistently failed to develop a mechanism to ensure that such a partnership materialises on the ground.

The Government have a project mentality on crime prevention, which is perfectly exemplified by the safer

cities project. Twenty projects were set up and proved successful, but they will now have their funding withdrawn as the Government move on to another 20 cities, which will receive vastly reduced funding for the same work. The projects have proved successful, but they are short-termism of the worst type. We do not need endless projects; we need a national approach and a national plan for tackling crime.

The new clause would provide a mechanism for liaison between the courts, the police and local authorities to reduce crime and reduce reoffending. It deals not only with discussions on effective non-custodial sentences but with early informal intervention when young people start to go off the rails—and, my goodness, that certainly needs to be done with a greater sense of urgency and with greater Government support. I refer to, for example, the informal advice and help which can follow a caution, and bail support and enforcement, which we shall discuss. It is vital that steps are taken at that stage to stop reoffending.

I must point out to the Minister and to the House the degree of attrition in the criminal justice system. If one takes the figure of 100 to represent the number of crimes committed and then considers the number recorded before reaching the number of crimes that are before the courts and in which sentences are passed, one gets as low as 2 per cent.

Only 2 per cent. of offenders end up being sentenced in court. That figure is deteriorating—it is down from 3 per cent. last year, according to the Home Office's own figures and reports. The figures underline the need to consider not only what happens in court—sentences and punishment—but what happens in the community where most crime occurs.

It maddens me to hear the Home Secretary and junior Ministers talk about partnership, because they clearly do not believe in a partnership approach. If they do, the litmus test will be the vote on the new clause. The litmus test of the Government's sincerity will be their acceptance and support of new clause 1. I hope that they will support it, but I shall be surprised if they do.

The Morgan report was published in August 1991. It was followed by delay and procrastination. Labour Members, understanding the importance of preventing and reducing crime, continually demanded that the Government give their response to the report.

In December 1922, the then Home Secretary smuggled out his response, which was to reject "Safer Communities". I remind the House that that report is subtitled "The Local Delivery of Crime Prevention through the Partnership Approach". Ministers pay lip service to that approach, which is what the new clause is all about.

The Morgan report's recommendations are directly relevant to the new clause. The report stated:

"The lack of a clear statutory responsibility for local government to play its part fully in crime prevention has inhibited progress"

in reducing crime. It continues:

"There is confusion at local level about the various centrally funded schemes with a crime prevention element, and concern about potential overlap and duplication of effort".

I confirm that that is the case, and it is, if anything, getting worse as time goes on.

The Morgan report then lists the advantages of local authority involvement. The local authority is responsible for so many services which impinge on crime prevention. It provides permanency and continuity, and it provides for the legitimate and productive involvement of local people. The report therefore concludes:

"Local authorities working with the police should have clear statutory responsibility for the development and stimulation of community safety and crime prevention programmes, and for progressing at local level a multi-agency approach to crime prevention."

Sadly, that approach was rejected.

Although Ministers pay lip service to the concept of local partnership whenever they visit a project or local area and see success on the ground through the voluntary co-operation of agencies or a little seed money, they do not seek, and have not sought, to put in place the necessary nationwide framework to support and encourage the effectiveness of local initiatives. That is what the new clause seeks to provoke them into doing.

The new clause does not go all the way, but it would provide a starting point for effective crime prevention work. In the longer term, I hope that the modest proposal will in due course be followed by a statutory duty on local authorities. The then Home Secretary failed the litmus test in December 1992, when he rejected the Morgan report. Will the Minister fail today? Is the present Home Secretary serious about dealing with crime? The code of practice which we propose would enable him to implement a clear Labour policy. That might upset him, but it would not upset victims throughout the country who suffer because of lack of that type of policy. Nor would it upset the police, who see the value of it. It would certainly not upset local authorities, who have been crying out for it.

That clear Labour policy says, in effect, that the Government should take responsibility for supporting a new dynamic partnership between the police, the local authorities and the community to tackle at a local level, where most crime takes place. The Minister must heed the warnings that have been flooding in from experts on every side in recent years. I refer to statements by experts that have led to headlines speaking of a

"nightmare scenario warning over inner cities."

The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis said recently that, unless the Government took action to stem developments today, the police would be armed as a matter of course within 10 or 20 years. Such statements have led to headlines about a

"choice of gun law or regeneration."

The partnership approach that we seek has support locally in many communities. Local Labour councillors have increasingly sought to work with the police. The police have increasingly recognised the value of working closer with local authorities. We must make it clear that the police, local authorities and local communities are on the same side in the fight against crime. By dragging their feet, the Government are failing to provide the framework and structure to allow that to develop.

The new clause also calls on the Government to enable those local partnerships to make proper and effective use of non-custodial sentences. There are offenders for whom prison or secure accommodation at a younger age is the only option. But there are two problems. The first is that the right ones often do not seem to reach that point quickly enough, and serious concern is again being voiced about the work of the Crown Prosecution Service and its failure to prosecute effectively and successfully. Some hon. Members heard that very complaint today from representatives of the Police Federation.

The second is that the lack of early intervention and a failure to achieve the full potential and effectiveness of community-based sentences leads to people returning after committing ever more serious offences.

If simple common sense does not dictate the need for a new initiative to make community-based sentences effective, we must consider the costs of imprisonment. Recent estimates—they have no doubt increased since they were prepared—put the cost at £386 per week per man in prison and £563 per week per woman. The figures are far higher for young offenders.

Save for those for whom there is no alternative, there should be a way of using the money more effectively. Making community-based sentences more effective, more challenging and more stringent must be good sense, and the Government should give that their full support.

Many other aspects should be tied in with the initiative proposed in the new clause, one being to make cautioning more effective. There is concern that, after the first caution, it becomes of less meaning to some youngsters. The Government could do something about that, by accepting some of the practical suggestions that my hon. Friends and I made in Committee.

In relation to drugs—a major aspect of the Bill—cautioning-plus is needed for those who are cautioned for the possession of a small quantity of drugs. Immediate counselling is vital, as has been shown in experiments in south Wales. It is clear from those experiments that, in the normal course of events, many people starting to take drugs are not brought to the attention of voluntary organisations until a late stage.

Let us adopt a common-sense approach to the problem. We must make the system effective, by cutting crime and giving new confidence to the police, to the community in general and to every individual. That is the agenda of the Opposition, which we address in the new clause.

My hon. Friends and I support the Government strongly in dealing with drug trafficking, just as we support them in the other issues that appeared in the Bill when it was first presented to us and in some of the provisions that have been added since, such as those relating to terrorism. But we have made it clear that what the Government propose is not enough. Crime must be tackled now, in the community, where most of it is committed.

The new clause would enable the Government to enhance that initiative and to do a little to change the Conservative party's well-deserved image of being soft on crime and soft on the causes of crime. In that connection, Conservative Members may now be embarrassed about the fact that, on 1 June 1993, the Home Secretary stated in a departmental press release:

> "It is time we changed the 'its-nothing-to-do-with-me' attitude which has crept into our communities. Crime is everyone's concern. We must involve the whole community in working with the police and the courts to face up to this challenge."

I urge the right hon. and learned Gentleman to put his money where his mouth is. We are beginning to believe that every incoming Conservative Minister receives an injection which enables him to grind out identikit phrases, criticisms of others and appeals for partnership.

We need to rewrite what the Home Secretary said on 1 June. He should have said, "It is time we changed the 'it's-nothing-to-do-with-me' attitude which has crept into the present Government. Crime must be the concern of every Minister. The Government will back the whole community in working with the police and local authorities to face up to the challenge."

Had he said that, he would have been saying something sensible about the need to tackle and reduce crime. But having made such a statement, he would then have had to act on it. The way for the Government to show that they are serious in wanting to do that is for them to accept our new clause, which represents the litmus test of the Government's seriousness in wanting to tackle crime.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien** (Warwickshire, North): I support the new clause. The Morgan report showed that we must have a partnership in the community with the police and local authorities if we are to achieve what we desperately need, which is to fight back against crime. Unfortunately, the Government have not been prepared to respond as positively to that need as we would have liked.

The Government seem not to appreciate that every individual in the land who pays taxes or buys goods in the shops, who is insured against anything or who pays charges to enter any public building, is likely to be paying towards the massive cost of the increasing crime rate in Britain.

We need more policing and more effective sentencing, and we must ensure that the criminal justice system operates more effectively, but we must also ensure that the whole community is involved in the fight against crime. Only by that means shall we succeed.

Since the Conservatives came to power in 1979, when they claimed that they would be tough on law and order and would reduce the crime rate, crime in my county of Warwickshire has increased enormously. The rate of car thefts and household burglaries has not trebled but quadrupled, and it is clear——

**Mr. Shersby:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have been paying close attention to the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I understood that the new clause was concerned with the establishment of a code of practice. We seem to be debating the whole question of criminal justice. Is that in order?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I had presumed that the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) was giving some background in order to put forward his views in favour of the new clause, but it is always important that the background does not become the foreground.

**Mr. O'Brien:** I am conscious of what you say, Madam Deputy Speaker. The new clause refers to local authorities. I am seeking to demonstrate the need for the whole community to work together, as the new clause suggests, with the police to ensure that crime is reduced and that crime prevention is enhanced. That is really what the new clause is all about.

5 pm

Since 1979, in my county of Warwickshire, car theft and burglary have quadrupled. Crime in Warwickshire has risen from 13,000 offences in 1979 to 45,000 in 1992. No doubt the 1993 figures will also show an increase. Rural areas in particular would benefit from such a new clause and a code of practice. In rural areas there is fear about the increasing crime rate. That fear is not readily recognised by the media. In the village of Arley in my constituency, we recently had severe problems with increasing crime. Various meetings have had to be held, bringing together

not only the police, myself and the local authorities but the whole community in the effort that the new clause envisages. Various elements of the community understand the need to work together to ensure that a fight back against crime is conducted by a united community.

The public will not be deceived by calls for longer sentences or for more prisons to be built if the resources to implement what we are calling for in the new clause and in our policy are not forthcoming from the Treasury. The real fight back against crime requires that we put more funding into police forces in particular. If the police and the local community are to have a code of practice, that code of practice must include a police force which is able to play its full part in the fight back against crime and resources must be made available for it.

We know that the Government are not prepared to put resources into increasing the number of full-time police officers. We know that the Government propose that there should be a freeeze on spending on future police recruitment over the next few years. That will not enable the police to fulfil the role that we envisage in the new clause.

It is essential that the police are provided with resources to do what the local community wants, and the local community wants more police officers on the beat, dealing with crime in the community. Therefore, the community needs a Government who are prepared to back the police and provide the necessary resources for more police officers, for more equipment to be provided, and for local communities to be able to understand that they have the protection that they so desperately need and demand.

Unfortunately, the Government have decided that they will put their restrictions on spending before the fight back against crime. They do not seem to accept that we lose one way or the other. We lose if we do not put money into the fight back against crime. The community will end up having to spend more money on charges, insurance, prisons, and on providing resources to deal with the end result of crime rather than trying to deal with the crime problem at the start, as the new clause envisages, by encouraging the community and the police to work together and by providing the necessary resources to enable that to be done.

The Government are deluding themselves or providing themselves with a false economy by trying to restrict spending, whereas spending is very much needed——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman is now going rather wide of the new clause, which incidentally makes no reference to communities.

**Mr. O'Brien:** It certainly refers to local authorities. I am trying to suggest that local authorities and communities are synonymous, but perhaps I am wrong to do so. I take your point, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Local authorities provide many of the facilities which support local communities, such as youth services and council housing, but much of the provision has been reduced by the Government's policies. We seek to ensure that we establish the necessary liaison between the courts, the police and local authorities. That liaison must be backed up by resources and provision for decent housing, job creation and, most important, youth services.

Over the past six years, the Home Affairs Select Committee, of which I am a member, has been investigating increasing juvenile crime. In my county we have seen severe cuts in the youth service. If the police, local authorities and the courts are to have the liaison that will ensure effective crime reduction and crime prevention policies, we need to put resources into youth services, effective housing and job creation. If we undermine that community provision and the community values upon which that provision is based, crime will fester and many of our young people will be alienated.

The writer Alan Massie once said:

"A civilisation in decline digs its grave with relentless consistency. The hallmark of such a decline is the selfish ego and a lack of concern and caring about community values."

The new clause is aimed at promoting those values and that co-ordination. The undermining of community values, community provision and community support has led to many of our young people living in an alienated sub-culture. Thankfully, few of them are turning to crime. They are told by the Government that they are supposed to stand on their own two feet without being given any opportunity to do so through the provision of accommodation, jobs, or any of the——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I have been very tolerant of the hon. Gentleman. He must not use this new clause, which, after all, advocates a code of practice, to make a general statement about the ills of the country.

**Mr. O'Brien:** The code of practice is part of the policy which is needed to provide back-up—community support—for what the Labour party calls its policy of being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. That phrase can be repeated time and again because it sums up what is needed in this country. A code of practice would embody what we want in terms of provisions to be tough on the causes of crime. It would emphasise that we cannot allow the individualism and lack of community spirit that the Government have allowed to develop to undermine the fight back against crime.

We on this side of the House are prepared to put our words and our support behind the need for a tougher policy of that kind, but we would also be prepared to put the resources behind it. The code of practice suggested in this new clause is the start of the basis of a policy of bringing together the police, the community and local authorities, and ensuring that the Morgan report is implemented, as it should have been implemented, by the Government, and ensuring also that there is recognition of the appalling problems which exist in my constituency and my county and are not being addressed by the Government. I call upon the House to support the new clause.

**Mr. Shersby:** This is an interesting new clause. The proposal has been discussed by the Police Federation from time to time. It has also come up in the Home Affairs Select Committee, and there has been a good deal of debate about the need for some sort of code of practice over the past couple of years.

This new clause, which calls upon my right hon. and learned Friend to produce a code of practice, is designed, it appears, to provide liaison between the courts, the police and local authorities concerning the use of non-custodial sentences, and other measures for the prevention of crime and reoffending. I wish to talk about some of those other measures, as well as the code of practice referred to specifically in the new clause.

*[Mr. Shersby]*

First, there is a need for more secure accommodation for juvenile offenders—a matter of great concern to local authorities. Unhappily, we do not have enough such accommodation in this country. That is a matter to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ruchcliffe (Mr. Clarke) addressed his mind when he made his announcement a month or two ago about the new secure accommodation order that he was contemplating.

However, every hon. Member knows that there are great difficulties in finding suitable secure accommodation for juvenile offenders. It therefore behoves all local authorities to take very careful account of this, because it is one of the other measures that need to be addressed.

**Mr. Michael:** The hon. Gentleman said that his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) addressed his mind to these matters. I do not think that he did. It was his predecessor, well over two years ago, who addressed his mind to the need for secure accommodation. Since that date, not one extra place has been provided—partly, I think, owing to the conflict between the Home Office and other Government Departments. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is a scandal that, after that length of time, the problem to which he has pointed, and on which I agree with him, has not been addressed?

**Mr. Shersby:** I certainly do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. Two or three previous Home Secretaries have had representations from me on behalf of the police, as has the Secretary of State for Health. This is an area which is divided between the Secretary of State for Health, who is responsible for juveniles and for providing additional secure accommodation for youngsters who cannot be sent to prison, and the Home Secretary, who is responsible for the generality of secure accommodation.

My point—I do not make it in a party political spirit—is that there are some local authorities in this country who are not very keen on providing secure accommodation, whereas it is in the national interest that every local authority should address itself to the problem.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) made some comments about the failure of the Crown Prosecution Service to prosecute. This is a matter of considerable interest at the present time to magistrates courts in this country, and not least to the Uxbridge magistrates court, which has lobbied me recently about the lack of work and is puzzled by the fact that the Crown Prosecution Service is apparently not prosecuting as vigorously as it might. I hope that my hon. Friend, when he replies, will say a word or two about that.

We have had a fairly wide-ranging debate on this new clause, and I do not intend to go down the same road, but I want to pick up some of the points that have been made.

5.15 pm

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth quoted the remarks of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about the carrying of firearms by police officers in 10 years' time. I want to place it on record that the Police Federation of England and Wales is strongly opposed to the carrying of firearms. That is why it welcomes very much indeed the prompt action taken by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary in authorising trials of the side-handled baton and other equipment which will enable police officers to defend themselves and to provide local communities and local authorities with the kind of policing that they require to deal with crime in 1993.

The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) referred to the problem of crime in rural areas. Local authorities, and indeed the local police, have a very considerable problem, because there are often only two police officers on duty in a rural area. If they suddenly receive a large visitation of individuals from an urban area, they may find themselves considerably extended in dealing with it.

The new clause asks the Government to produce a code of practice that would involve the courts, the police and the local authorities in a combined effort. I have some sympathy with that. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will be able to tell the House what steps the Government intend to take to involve local people more widely.

My own feeling is that the police and community consultative councils have a valuable role to play in this process. I attend my local police and community consultative council whenever I am able to get away from the House—which has not been very often during the past year—and I believe that these councils play the kind of role that the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North and his hon. Friends have in mind. They are groups of individuals drawn from the local authority, chaired by a local man or woman, and attended by senior officers, to discuss local policing matters and the way to tackle crime in the area concerned.

Yesterday, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced his proposals for the new police authorities. They have one very considerable benefit: they will give local police commanders very much more say in the way resources are deployed in future, working together with the police authorities. They will give them the power to decide how the money allocated by the Home Office will be spent—whether on more manpower, or on a combination of manpower and equipment, and all the other things that the police need in order to do their job.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will have something constructive to say on this new clause. It is an idea that has been mooted in the House by hon. Members on both sides, as well as in the Select Committee, over the past year, and I believe that it deserves serious consideration.

**Mr. Maclean:** I listened to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) with growing interest, and then amazement, as he introduced the new clause. I thought for a moment that I had perhaps been transported to Thursday's wide-ranging debate on all aspects of law and order, because we heard recounted—to borrow a phrase from you, Madam Deputy Speaker—all the ills of society. A strong impression was given that this new and wonderful Labour party clause would cure those ills.

**Mr. Michael:** I hope that, in responding, the Minister will take seriously what we said at the beginning, which was that the new clause would be merely a start. It is the best that we can get into the geography of the Bill, which, as the Minister knows, limits the possibility of putting amendments forward. It is therefore a starting point—not

the solution to all the problems. I hope that the Minister will address it with that in mind and in the positive and helpful spirit in which the motion was moved.

**Mr. Maclean:** I shall address myself to the exact contents of the new clause but, in coming to that, I shall also attempt to deal with some of the wide-ranging issues on which Opposition Members touched and on which, in some cases, Madam Deputy Speaker, they were pulled up by you for wandering far and wide.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth was trying to wear a cloak of the party that has suddenly discovered in the opinion polls that the public are worried about crime. In trying to wear the cloak of being tough on crime, the hon. Gentleman urged tougher community sentences. The Government have delivered those. He urged that we look at cautioning-plus. I said last week in Committee that I was attracted to that concept and that I wanted to see wider use of it.

The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. M. O'Brien) made pleas about housing and jobs. I thought that I must be missing something and I turned to see what this powerful new clause, which was going to lead the fight back against crime, was going to do. The new clause would introduce a code of practice. The agencies concerned, the courts, the police and the local authorities, would be obliged to comply with a prescribed Labour party code of practice, lifted from its manifesto, in pursuing their joint considerations in the use of non-custodial sentences.

I accept that that is perhaps just the start of that fight back against crime. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has assured me that the code of practice is just the start, and that the Labour party wants there to be a statutory duty. If the Labour party wants to begin the fight back against crime, I suggest that the starting point should have been some time ago.

Perhaps it should have been when the Labour party voted against the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984—that is a funny fight back. Perhaps it should have been when the Labour party voted against the Public Order Act 1986—that is an odd way to fight back. Perhaps it should have been when the Labour party voted against the Criminal Justice Acts of 1988 and 1991. The fight back that the Labour party now wants to conduct against crime has been not a fight back against crime but a fight against every single measure that the Government have introduced to crack down harder on crime and criminals.

The Labour party also said that it wanted to involve the whole community. That makes sense, but I do not see how the whole community can be involved, participating in a partnership, by ordering them to comply with a code of practice. The Government recognise the need for good liaison between the courts, the police and local authorities. We have been active in promoting good practice and encouraging the setting up of many liaison structures.

Following the Woolf report, 24 area committees were set up, which bring together under the chairmanship of a resident judge senior representatives of the various agencies involved in the criminal justice system. Those committees firmly placed the emphasis on the promotion of better understanding, better co-operation and co-ordination within the system. They held their first meeting in the autumn and need time to develop further. The Government would not wish to see those arrangements disturbed at such an early stage in their development.

The Government also recognise the need to spread best practice on crime prevention to local practitioners. As part of the new phase in the Government's crime prevention strategy announced in January, we have commissioned Crime Concern, the independent crime prevention organisation, to produce a good practice guide. The guide will provide clear, practical advice on what works in crime prevention and how to make it work, as well as guidance on working in partnership. It will be distributed widely to local practitioners when it becomes available later this year. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) will accept that that might satisfy the Police Federation's requests.

**Mr. Shersby:** My hon. Friend's announcement that he is to commission Crime Concern will be welcomed by the Police Federation, and I hope that it will be most welcome to many hon. Members who have sympathy with some of the concepts that we have debated. I congratulate him on making that important statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** I am obliged to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. I hope that the House will accept that a practical, best practice guide produced by Crime Concern may be better than lifting something from the Labour party manifesto, as I was urged to do.

The Government regard it as important to ensure that there are more local discussions so that local mechanisms are designed and developed to meet local needs. Discussions on the implementation of community penalties continue to take place in local liaison groups, such as court user groups and probation liaison committees, as appropriate to meet their local needs.

A code of practice produced by the Secretary of State which would impose a single solution throughout the country would not, in my view, be desirable. The Government accept the need for good liaison between the police, local authorities and other local agencies on crime prevention so that co-ordinated efforts are made to make towns and cities safer for the people who live and work in them. The Government applaud the police and community consultative councils, mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge.

Following guidance issued by the Home Office in 1990, taking forward the partnership approach to crime prevention, an increasing number of local authorities are developing their own crime prevention and community safety strategies in consultation with the police and others. Local strategies provide a framework for concerted action and for carrying forward the multi-agency approach to tackling local crime problems. The Government wholeheartedly welcome those developments at local level.

**Mr. Shersby:** Has the London borough of Lambeth agreed to participate in those measures?

**Mr. Maclean:** The honest answer is that I do not know. However, I should be very surprised if it had. I am willing to let the Opposition inform me if Lambeth council is participating in those measures. I assume that that council has so many internal problems with law and order that such measures are not high up on its agenda.

The Opposition commented on resources. If people believed the Opposition, they would be led to believe that resources for all aspects of the criminal justice system were in decline. Between 1979 and 1992—the period of office of this Government—resources for the criminal justice

*[Mr. Maclean]*

system increased by 105 per cent. in real terms, above the level of inflation. That is a considerable amount of resources for all aspects of law and order.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge raised a query about the Crown Prosecution Service. There has been some public concern recently, expressed by some bodies, about the number of cases that were not followed through to prosecution. I can assure my hon. Friend that I will be considering the matter, with my colleagues, and we will want to discuss it with the Crown Prosecution Service in due course.

The Government are not convinced that the code of practice suggested by the Opposition for local government, the police and others in the area of crime prevention is necessary, desirable or would do any good. Local crime problems essentially require local solutions. A code of practice written by the Secretary of State would be prescriptive and would not allow for flexible, local responses. I urge the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth to withdraw the motion and I urge my hon. Friends to vote against it.

**Mr. Boateng:** The Opposition have no intention of withdrawing the motion; on the contrary, we intend to push it to its very limit. For the Minister to have the nerve to point to a Labour local authority as having internal problems on law and order, when his Government are rotten with problems on law and order, is a diabolical liberty. He ought to address the Government's problem of the way in which the general public perceive their competence on law and order. The Government's competence on law and order, as on so much else, stands at an all-time low. It is to the Labour party that the country looks for a lead on law and order.

**Mr. Maclean:** Try to keep a straight face.

**Mr. Boateng:** The Minister asked me to keep a straight face. It is disturbing that we have no problem in keeping a straight face on the issue of law and order because we recognise that outside, in the big wide world, there is a problem about safety and security in communities.

Out there, in the big wide world, the general public thirst for and desire Ministers to give a lead. The general public want the Home Secretary to be prepared to put his authority behind a code of practice and to give that code of practice the force of statute. The general public look to the Government to give a lead. The Conservative Government and the Conservative party have failed time and time again to give such a lead.

5.30 pm

This small new clause would be a modest start for this notoriously reluctant Government. The Government should embark on the proposals in it as a response to the public's perception of their incompetence and to the public's demand that they be seen to take a lead. That is all that we seek through the new clause. We ask that the Home Secretary take on board the need for a code of practice and recognise the appropriateness of liaison between the courts, the police and local authorities to make the most effective use of non-custodial sentences and other measures for the prevention of crime and offending.

The new clause emphasises effectiveness because there is a widely felt and increasingly loudly expressed concern out there. I hope that the Minister will listen to the word that is coming back to the House from the communities most affected by crime. There is a widely held belief that the non-custodial option is not always utilised as effectively as possible.

The public want the reassurance that there are no soft options for those convicted of criminal offences. They want the reassurance that, when we talk about a non-custodial sentence, we mean something that tackles the issue of recidivism. Non-custodial sentences should also address the legitimate public demand for punishment and retribution. There is absolutely no reason why it should not be possible to deal with all those elements of the public's concern by way of a non-custodial sentence.

The only way to achieve that aim is to begin to address the content of a non-custodial sentence. Our concern, which is shared by others, is that, if local resources are not co-ordinated, if local authorities, social services, the probation service and the courts do not work in tandem, the quality of the content of non-custodial sentences will be inferior, will not provide a rigorous and disciplined framework for sentences and will not bear down on the dangers of recidivism—of slipping back into the criminal culture that led to the offending in the first place.

Through the new clause, we ask for the force of statute to be given to a code of practice issued by the Home Secretary, which requires appropriate liaison between the courts, the police and the local authorities. The code of practice should say, "You must talk to each other. You must talk to the Government about how the will and the resources will be applied to give the non-custodial option teeth and relevance." We are determined that non-custodial sentences should not be regarded as a soft option. They should have teeth and relevance, and they should have an impact on offenders to ensure that the opportunities for and likelihood of recidivism are reduced.

The element of returning to society something that one has taken away from it by one's criminal action must be incorporated in the non-custodial option. I have nothing against Home Office projects. However, the important thing about projects is that they should be a pilot, a start and a model for something that is then to be extended. What we find so depressing is that, although good projects come out of Home Office initiatives and flower briefly, like a desert bloom, they are gone until the next thunderstorm.

That should not be the way in which we proceed. Thought should be given to the most effective manner in which to ensure that the non-custodial option has bite. The product of that thought, of experimentation and of the models tried in the course of projects should inform and direct the impact of a code of practice. That is a legitimate call for us to make through the new clause. It should not be sneered at or discounted, as the Minister has done this evening.

I welcome the good practice guide. If the new clause has led to the announcement of the good practice guide, that is all to the good. However, that is no substitute for a code of practice. Good practice needs to begin at home. I make no apology for giving hon. Members a little homily about where they can begin in terms of good practice. I notice the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) in an unaccustomed seat at an unusual time of the afternoon.

**The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames):** An unaccustomed suit?

**Mr. Boateng:** Not "suit"; I said "seat". The suit, I fear, is of a quality and nature to which we are only too well accustomed. It is good to see the hon. Gentleman in his seat. He will know that the problems of Crawley are not very different from the problems of similar towns throughout the land in terms of law and order and the safety and security of the inhabitants.

Will the Government begin to take on board some good practice? Would it not be good practice to implement locally based crime prevention policies? Would it not be good practice for there to be a statutory requirement for local authorities, backed up by proper resourcing, to have such policies implemented?

Would it not be good practice for the youth service to be put on a statutory footing? Would it not be good news if the Minister and his colleagues were prepared to announce their backing for the initiative of my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) in that regard? I declare an interest as a vice-president of the London Association of Youth Clubs. Would that not respond to the call from those concerned with youth provision throughout the country for just such a measure, which would provide a structure for local youth work? That in turn would provide security for the valuable work being done by youth clubs and organisations. We could do with some good practice from the Governmnent in that regard.

Would it not be a good idea if the Government buried their obsessive dislike of local authorities and recognised, in a code of practice of this sort, the valuable role that local authorities play in real partnership with others? Would it not be good practice if the Government sponsored important and valuable initiatives, instead of laying down strictures for local businesses? Would not it be good practice if the Government said to local businesses, "We value and appreciate the sponsorship that we are asking you to give, and that you are giving as best you can in these recession-ridden times, to local initiatives, but we will play our part, too. We will enter a partnership with you and local authorities in undertaking crime prevention on the ground"?

In terms of my local authority, I cannot be alone in having a chamber of commerce that takes crime prevention seriously, especially in the major shopping centres at Wembley and Harlesden. That can be replicated in the constituencies of hon. Members on both sides of the House. There is only a limited amount of money that local businesses are capable of generating in that regard. They are happy to take a leadership role, but they need to know that there is some hope that the Home Office will join them and the police in supplementing the resources that are available.

The work of voluntary organisations is valuable and much needed. The voluntary ethic has a vital role to play in the battle against crime and creating safe and secure communities. However, it also requires a framework, and new clause 1 provides just that. The

"other measures for the prevention of crime and reoffending"

in new clause 1 relate to the partnership that can be built between local authorities, the police, the courts and voluntary organisations when there is the will to ensure that there is a way to do so. A code of practice would bring that about.

Obviously, the role of the courts is important. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred to that role and the limitation that is inevitably placed on the courts in the implementation of the aims and objectives of the Bill and the proposed working of new clause 1. At present, they make disposals only with regard to offenders who are brought before them. That matter was touched on by the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), who expressed a concern that is widely held by the police, and by my hon. Friends the Members for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael).

Such lamentable circumstances exist up and down the country. Time and time again, the lists for the Crown court and the magistrates court have vacant spaces; at the same time, the perception of those who serve as magistrates and those who serve on juries up and down the country is that the level of crime in their communities is increasing. The court lists have never had more vacant spaces or been shorter than they are at present.

5.45 pm

We are entitled to ask why. We will continue to ask that question at the Dispatch Box and elsewhere until we get a satisfactory answer. Why does such a level of crime exist? Given the public perception and fear of crime that exist at present, vacant spaces in the lists of the magistrates court and the Crown court and disposals that are meeting the needs and concerns of society, why are so few cases being brought before the courts and so few criminals emerging at the end of the criminal justice system? Why do Ministers fail time and time again to provide any answer on that?

We hear vague mutterings about paperwork. Paperwork is a problem. However, it is important that the police are not burdened with unnecessary paperwork. That matter must be addressed. From time to time, cautioning is mentioned. Rightly and properly, the police are increasingly using the cautioning mechanism. However, that does not account for the lack of work that is currently in the magistrates court and the Crown court.

Ministers should be asking themselves and the Crown prosecutor why that is happening. What is the explanation for the lack of work currently before the courts? In Committee and on the Floor of the House, the answer that we received from Conservative Members was, "None." It may be that we will receive some response from the Government today. If and when we receive such a response, that may help the House to adopt policies that ensure that current levels of crime are borne down and the morale of the police is boosted. At present, morale is adversely affected because the police apprehend offenders and bring their force to bear on offending, only to find that the Crown Prosecution Service, for whatever reason, does not carry cases through.

The code of practice provided for in new clause 1 would bring all the elements of the criminal justice system—the courts, the police and the local authorities—together in an appropriate liaison, so that problems on the ground could be more readily identified and the necessary action taken to alleviate them.

This has been a useful debate. We have addressed in some detail the proposals of, admittedly, a modest new clause. The way in which the Government have approached the new clause—dismissing it out of hand and failing to recognise its wisdom or to move in any way towards it—is a cause of considerable disappointment. However, it is par for the course for a Government who have witnessed, since coming into office, a 120 per cent. increase in offences involving violence against the person; a 149 per cent. increase in burglaries; a 162 per cent.

increase in vehicle crime; a 182 per cent. increase in criminal damage offences; and a 324 per cent. increase in the incidence of robbery.

**Mr. Gordon McMaster** (Paisley, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that, while the crime rate has been increasing, the police have spent an increasing amount of time in court waiting rooms, waiting to give evidence which is often never heard? Surely that should be the subject of liaison between the courts and the police. The chief constable of Strathclyde has estimated that, on some day shifts, up to 30 per cent. of police officers are sitting in court waiting rooms.

**Mr. Boateng:** My hon. Friend has drawn on his experience in Glasgow to make a useful point, which identifies precisely the sort of issue that should be addressed by a code of practice.

The issue of liaison between the police and the courts should be addressed. No doubt my hon. Friend will be able to draw on his experience of the sessional court in Paisley to tell us how the local police service is informed about the state of the court lists.

I know of two recent cases that were listed for trial in the same court at 10.30 in the morning. When both cases were effective, the officers required to give evidence in the second case were obliged to hang around in the lobby of the court—while all sorts of mischief may have been going on in their local manor—until their case was called. That happens time and again.

**Mr. McMaster:** Does my hon. Friend agree that, if everyone were given the same appointment time of 10.30 in the morning under the health service charter, that would not be acceptable to the Government? Surely practical and sensible steps could be taken to establish regular liaison between the prosecution service and the police. Would not this code of practice ensure that the best practice was always followed?

**Mr. Boateng:** I wish that my hon. Friend's expertise had been available when we considered the contents of the code of practice. I hope that any code of practice promulgated under the new clause will contain a little more bite, and be a little more realistic, than the discredited citizens charter. It reached its nadir when it was——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not be tempted down that path. What he is now discussing is far removed from the clause under consideration.

**Mr. Boateng:** I did say "nadir" not "Nadir". I recognise only too well, as the clock approaches 6 o'clock, the dangers of being drawn down that path.

Any code of practice arising from the acceptance of the new clause would be subject to the courts charter, and I hope that that charter will be given more substance.

A number of Conservative Members, who represent the shires and small towns, are no doubt here because of their interest in this subject, and a desire to reassure their constituents of their concern for law and order. Such hon. Members will no doubt be interested to hear how the small towns and shire counties compare with other areas in respect of the increase in crime. The number of recorded burglaries in the shires since 1979 makes salutary reading. In Staffordshire, for example, the number of burglaries committed has increased by 302 per cent.——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman will recall that his hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) went down that road, and that I suggested that it was wide of the clause. What is applicable to Back Benchers is applicable to those on the Front Bench.

**Mr. Boateng:** Quite so, Madam Deputy Speaker. I regard myself as suitably chastened.

How will such crime be addressed under the new clause? our approach to crime prevention does not eschew the nuts and bolts of the issue. Local authorities have a role to play in ensuring that the police—and the expertise they have available through the nuts and bolts of crime prevention measures—have access to those areas most severely affected by burglaries.

Local authority premises can be used to disseminate information relating to crime prevention; local authority dust carts can be used to display information about the basic steps that can be taken by people to secure their own homes. It is very simple stuff, but it is important to get the message home and to use all the resources that are available to local authorities for that purpose.

6 pm

During this debate, we have covered fully the nuts and bolts of crime prevention. We have demonstrated only too clearly the importance of ensuring that there is in place a code of practice bringing together local authorities, the police and the courts in an effective partnership against crime. That is the way forward to counteract recidivism and ensure that the importance of bearing down effectively on crime always remains at the forefront of the minds of the courts and those concerned with the criminal justice system.

*Question put,* That the clause be read a Second time:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 231, Noes 278.

**Division No. 310]** **[6.00 pm**

**AYES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Abbott, Ms Diane | Burden, Richard |
| Adams, Mrs Irene | Byers, Stephen |
| Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)* | Caborn, Richard |
| Allen, Graham | Callaghan, Jim |
| Alton, David | Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)* |
| Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)* | Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)* |
| Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)* | Campbell-Savours, D. N. |
| Armstrong, Hilary | Cann, Jamie |
| Ashton, Joe | Chisholm, Malcolm |
| Austin-Walker, John | Clapham, Michael |
| Barron, Kevin | Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)* |
| Battle, John | Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)* |
| Bayley, Hugh | Clelland, David |
| Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret | Clwyd, Mrs Ann |
| Bell, Stuart | Coffey, Ann |
| Benn, Rt Hon Tony | Cohen, Harry |
| Bennett, Andrew F. | Corbett, Robin |
| Benton, Joe | Corbyn, Jeremy |
| Bermingham, Gerald | Corston, Ms Jean |
| Berry, Dr. Roger | Cousins, Jim |
| Betts, Clive | Cryer, Bob |
| Blair, Tony | Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)* |
| Blunkett, David | Dafis, Cynog |
| Boateng, Paul | Dalyell, Tam |
| Boyes, Roland | Darling, Alistair |
| Bradley, Keith | Davidson, Ian |
| Bray, Dr Jeremy | Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)* |
| Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)* | Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)* |
| Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)* | Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)* |
| Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)* | Denham, John |

Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Gordon McMaster and**
**Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.**

**NOES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Irvine Patnick and**
**Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

## New clause 2

### VICTIMS OF DRUG-RELATED CRIME

'.—(1) The Secretary of State may, with the consent of the Treasury, pay such grants, to such persons, as he considers appropriate in connection with measures intended to assist the victims of drug-trafficking, drug-related crime or the misuse of drugs.

(2) Any such grant may be made subject to such conditions as the Secretary of State may, with the agreement of the Treasury, see fit to impose.

(3) Payments under this section shall be made out of money provided by Parliament.'.—*[Mr. Michael.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Michael:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** With this it will be convenient also to discuss the following: New clause 7—*Alleged victims of relevant offences*—

'.—In considering any application to withdraw a charge in favour of a lesser charge the court shall seek to be satisfied, where it considers appropriate, that a reasonable effort has been made to consult any alleged victim or victims of the said offence.'.

New clause 8—*Alleged victims of relevant offences (No. 2)*—

'.—In considering any application to withdraw a charge of causing death by dangerous driving in favour of a lesser charge the court shall seek to be satisfied, where it considers appropriate, that a reasonable effort has been made to consult the relatives of the victim or victims of the said offence.'.

Amendment No. 12, in the title, line 21, after 'drugs', insert

'to make provision for consultations with victims of crime and the relatives of such victims where the prosecution proposes to withdraw a criminal charge in favour of a lesser charge.'.

6.15 pm

**Mr. Michael:** The effect of the new clauses is summed up in our proposed amendment to the title of the Bill because it amends the title to include victims.

Not enough has been done to consider the requirements and needs of victims of the mounting crime figures over which the Government have presided. The new clauses and the amendment seek to put that right. New clause 2 would establish a mechanism in parallel to the fund established by clause 72 to help the alleged victims of relevant offences. I shall refer to new clauses 7 and 8 and then return to new clause 2.

New clauses 7 and 8 relate to victims being consulted when a charge is reduced to a less serious one. The point must be obvious to anybody who has heard the complaints of their constituents about finding out that a charge has been dropped or reduced dramatically when, in the view of witnesses and those directly affected, it should not have been dropped. They relate to the criticism that seems rife at the moment of the Crown Prosecution Service which has been referred to earlier by hon. Members on both sides of the House, and particularly by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng).

The low priority given to victims in the criminal justice system and the lack of consideration with which they are treated is worrying. All too often victims learn that the offence has been dropped or reduced to a less serious one, not from the prosecution but from newspaper coverage of court proceedings or when they attend court as a witness. It can cause enormous distress, particularly when a rape charge is reduced to one of sexual assault.

It seems extraordinary that the victim is not consulted or kept informed of developments, yet, despite the victims charter, it happens all too often. Part of the problem appears to stem from the fact that the Crown Prosecution

Service believes that it should not contact victims directly as that would somehow ruin their impartiality. It seems a bizarre state of affairs. When the prosecution is considering withdrawing or reducing charges, it should consult both the police and the victim.

I can confirm from conversations that we have had with police representatives that the police are unhappy with the present situation. It is symptomatic of the way in which victims are treated by the criminal justice system, and such lack of consideration pervades the system.

Victims are all too often unaware of what is happening from the time an offence is committed. They should be regularly provided with information about whether or not a suspect has been arrested, bailed, cautioned, prosecuted, convicted or sentenced. They should also be aware when someone is paroled or released from prison. They should not have to sit in the same part of the court as the relations of the defendant. They should be provided with help in court. Yet, as we saw in Committee, the Government have failed to provide funding for the Crown court witness service to develop and it has now stalled.

In addition, the Government have failed to provide finances for victim support and for all the schemes in the country that are ready to provide help for the ever-increasing number of witnesses.

The new clauses provide a mechanism whereby courts must be satisfied that a reasonable effort has been made to consult a victim when a charge has been reduced. That will have a powerful effect on the prosecution, who will be obliged to ensure that they keep the victim informed. It will therefore help to ensure that the criminal justice system works fairly for all affected by it.

New clause 2 would enable the Home Secretary to assist the victims of drug trafficking, drug-related crime or the misuse of drugs. Sometimes it is suggested that drug trafficking is a victimless crime. In some ways, it has the greatest number of victims, although they are not always named in any indictment and are more anonymous than is the case in many direct offences.

Drug users are in one sense the victims of drug trafficking, because they and their families ultimately pay the price of the drugs trade in this country. It must be acknowledged, however, that many communities also pay a heavy price for drug-related activities within them. Drug usage, and therefore the need for new clause 2, is growing.

The Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence estimates that, currently, 100,000 people—mainly young men—are dependent on heroin and that most of them inject. There is growing concern about the use of cocaine and crack. Seizures of that drug by Customs have risen ninefold over four years. That may reflect to some extent greater success in detecting drugs entering the country, but it also indicates a growing cocaine problem.

Since the 1980s, there has been a major expansion in the use of drugs associated with the rave dance youth culture. The drugs involved are mostly ecstasy, amphetamines and LSD. A new youth and drugs culture seems to be emerging, and new clause 2 would give the Government an additional instrument to tackle it at source rather than too late, as all too often happens.

Increased drug usage by young people is of particular concern. Since 1988, there has been an increase of 267 per cent. in the number of young people under the age of 17 found guilty of or cautioned for drug offences. The most recent national Gallup survey, commissioned by Wrangler and published last December, found that the number of under-25s taking drugs doubled between 1989 and 1992, and that 30 per cent. of 15 to 24-year-olds admitted to taking drugs. Workers in a national youth agency reported an upsurge in drug usage by young people over the past two years.

Even more worrying—and giving more point and urgency to tackling the problem positively—is research by Manchester university among 800 young people in schools on Merseyside and in Greater Manchester. In 1991, when they were aged 14 to 15, 59 per cent. of those young people said that they had been offered drugs and 36 per cent. had used them. One year later, the figures had doubled—59 per cent. of the youngsters said that they had tried cannabis, 22 per cent. nitrates, 25 per cent. LSD, 16 per cent. amphetamines, and 12 per cent. magic mushrooms. Those figures are worryingly high. We do not know how representative they are of the whole population because the north-west is traditionally an area of high drug use. That research certainly suggests a disturbing trend.

We have consistently made the criticism, and repeated it in Committee, that there is a lack of in-depth research that can be used to effect policy and to tackle problems where they arise. Against the picture of increased drug use, the Government have been cutting provisions to combat drugs. New clause 2 would provide a partial mechanism for dealing with that problem.

The Government are, for example, axing drugs advisory posts. Until the end of March 1993, there were 100 health education co-ordinators advising on drugs and alcohol funded by the Department for Education. They were based in local education authorities, and workers went to schools and youth clubs. The Department ceased that funding this year. According to latest estimates, only one third of authorities that previously had co-ordinators are likely to have someone in that post this year. That is a short-sighted cut, and is one way that the Government have failed to make the connection between the effects of the actions of one Department on another and of the actions of all Departments on the crime problem.

Residential provision for drug users will be decimated by the Government's failure to ring-fence those facilities. Many projects already find it difficult to survive. By cutting pay or staff, some are hanging on—but that cannot continue indefinitely, and projects will fold. The risk to individuals in the community are huge. Individuals at risk will not receive help, and failure to make that provision —with all the implications for society as a whole of HIV among drug users who inject—could literally prove lethal.

Those cuts are short-sighted in the extreme at a time of increased drug use. The Government must ensure that those vital services continue and that funding will be forthcoming. They cannot duck their responsibilities.

New clause 2 also takes into consideration the victims of crime. Only last week the Labour party produced a report on the strain being imposed on Victim Support, which is the national charity that helps victims. That organisation has inadequate cash to meet rapidly rising need. Earlier I said that crime has risen 121 per cent. while a Conservative Government have been in power. Help for victims of crime, burglary and acts of violence is urgently needed, as the increases have been greatest in those categories.

In 1992-93, 903,000 cases were referred to Victim Support, an increase of 19 per cent. over the previous year. With Government encouragement, Victim Support is expanding its work to victims of the most serious crimes

*[Mr. Michael]*

who need specialised help—such as the victims of sexual offences and violence. That work is long-term and time-consuming.

The Government's failure to provide the money needed becomes even more incomprehensible when one considers the pitiful sums required. To cover all the outstanding applications for this year, Victim Support estimates that it needs just £500,000—a small sum compared with the Home Office budget of £5·9 million for that aspect of its work.

If the Government fail to provide that money, they will stand accused of total hypocrisy in pretending to espouse the cause of victims while denying those victims the help that they need. The Government must give urgent consideration to the needs of direct victims of drug offences and of those whose lives are wrecked by that vile trade.

The new clauses and the amendment concentrate on the needs of victims, who should be brought more centre stage in the criminal justice system. Local victim support schemes are being put under an unacceptable strain, with inadequate cash to meet rapidly rising need. If a lack of Home Office commitment allows those projects to fall, it would be short-sighted stupidity and could have tragic consequences for thousands of victims and witnesses. Such projects form a vital part of our criminal justice system, and against the background of a rise in recorded crime of 121 per cent. or more under a Conservative Government, it is a false economy not to provide the cash.

If the clauses are accepted and the long title of the Bill is amended to make reference to the victims of crime, that would restore the balance in the criminal justice system. Given the geography of the Bill, we are inevitably limited. The Opposition would like to do more. However, that change would be a modest step forward in treating victims of crime as they should be treated, and deserve to be treated, within our criminal justice system.

**Mr. Anthony Coombs** (Wyre Forest): I want to raise one or two points on new clause 7, which deals with the consultation that the Opposition say ought to take place with victims of crime when applications are made to withdraw a charge in favour of a lesser charge.

I want to raise that matter because I have had a particularly difficult constituency case recently. I shall not mention any names for obvious reasons, but the case may give an indication of the importance of the matter. A reform in the law may not be needed, and the Opposition proposals—although well intentioned—may be difficult to carry out in practice. Charges ought to be a matter for courts and the prosecution service, rather than for victims of crime. The matter points up an important lacuna which presently exists in the law.

The case I shall refer to illustrates the distress that can be caused to victims if they are not consulted properly on a lesser charge being accepted, rather than the original charge that was put before the court.

My constituent is a young lady who, sadly, has been grossly harassed by a former boyfriend. Over a period, the police have come up with a great deal of evidence that seems to lead to the conclusion that not only harassment but blackmail was occurring.

6.30 pm

The evidence was produced, and was passed between the police and the Crown Prosecution Service, which then lost an important part of the evidence. The CPS has apologised subsequently through Barbara Mills to me on behalf of my constituent. Partly as a result of that loss of evidence, the court case was adjourned no fewer than five times. During that period, my constituent had to endure the same harassment that she had endured before from her former boyfriend. The harassment caused her to worry for her life.

The police continued to produce evidence, but when the case came before the court, the CPS said that it felt that the case might be thrown out if it tried for a further adjournment, and therefore that it would proceed with the case. Because it had lost evidence, however, the CPS decided that it would proceed on a lesser charge—a charge of affray—on which the defendant was likely to be found guilty. As a result, the defendant did not face a custodial sentence. The CPS said specifically that it should be informed of any further evidence of harassment to my constituent. The clear implication was that the defendant would be brought back before the court. The harassment allegedly—I use that word advisedly—has continued. The police have given evidence to the CPS, but it has refused to bring the defendant back before the court.

Much of what has occurred would not have done so had my constituent been adequately consulted on the day the matter was finally considered by the court about the lesser charge being brought against the defendant. She argues that she certainly was not consulted. I have communicated with the CPS in a fair amount of detail, and I am certain that she was not consulted adequately. If she had been, I do not believe that the problems that she faces would exist. The Government must bear that in mind when responding to the amendment.

It may not be possible to change the law on the rights of victims, but a code of practice for either the CPS, the police or the courts could be laid down stating that it is generally considered good practice that victims are consulted when lesser charges are likely to be laid and agreed to, possibly on a guilty plea, rather than greater charges—possibly carrying a custodial sentence in the case to which I referred—on a non-guilty plea. The gist of the Opposition amendment is important, and the spirit behind it is right. I hope that the Minister will be able to give a constructive response.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence** (Burton): I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Minister intends to accept the amendments, but it is good that they are acceptable to both sides of the Chamber. I cannot allow the hon. Member for Cardiff South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) to get away with the implication that it is time that the Government started to do something for victims, however, as the time has long since passed when we have indeed done something for victims.

Britain now has one of the best schemes for the treatment and care of victims of any country in the western world. I do not see why we should not be proud of that, and of the achievements of the Government in ensuring that that is so. We have counselling schemes, voluntary sector support and a criminal injuries compensation scheme which paid out more than £109 million last year

—an increase of 50 per cent. on the previous year. A further £7·8 million will be spent this year on the nationwide network for victim support groups.

I was pleased to hear from my hon. Friend the Minister that the Government propose to increase the allocation to victim support groups again this year by an amount considerably in excess of the 1·5 per cent. rate of inflation. I am not saying that that is an adequate increase. Hon. Members espouse many causes which we think are sensible for which we would like an increase of much more than the rate of inflation in their allocations, but we know that the Government face problems with regard to their spending levels. Victim support grants have certainly not been ignored.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** Does the hon. and learned Gentleman share the concern of some of my constituents about the length of time that it can take for a case to be dealt with by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board? Is it not the case, particularly where victims have a long wait for compensation for an injury, that the delay compounds the feeling of lack of care? The lack of resources currently available to the system and the delays which are occurring mean that the credit that the hon. and learned Gentleman gave to the Government for helping victims was perhaps laid on too thickly. That matter is causing concern to some of my constituents. Are those problems shared by any of the hon. and learned Gentleman's constituents?

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** I do not seem to have had that problem in my constituency, although I recognise that it is a problem nationally. The case is exactly as the hon. Gentleman has outlined it, and that problem may have to be speedily addressed. I know that the chairman of the compensation board is worried about the matter.

The real problem is that the people who are making the assessments are busy practitioners and the length of time that they take to deal with such matters is becoming, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, a bit of a scandal. Something needs to be done and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will attend to the matter with speed.

Many of the points that were addressed by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth are taken care of in the victims charter. That charter spells out clearly the Government's commitment to providing better help than ever before to victims of crime. Victims now have rights and entitlements that they never had before. The police, the courts and the Crown Prosecution Service have to give a great deal of consideration to the interests of victims to make it possible for them to give evidence in court in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible.

Victims should be protected in a number of ways from the old-fashioned treatment that they received previously. The charter demands that the police should respond to the needs of victims and take account of their views in deciding whether a lesser offence should be accepted and whether the offender should be cautioned. The Government have also required that, in most criminal investigations, an officer should be given sole responsibility for dealing with the needs of victims. It is precisely because of the attention that is now given to victims, particularly those of sexual offences, that women now come forward as never before to bring complaints of sexual attacks against men.

Previously women were humiliated by the courts and the judicial system, so they were loth to complain about rape or sexual attacks. Now they are not. They do not feel humiliated. They come forward and are encouraged to do so by a much more consumer-friendly judicial system, court system and police system. That is paradoxically one of the reasons why we appear to have an increase in crime. I doubt whether more sexual offences are taking place. It is simply that many more are coming to light because of the approach to victims, which makes their complaints rather more welcome than they have ever been before. I certainly hope that that is so.

In conclusion, although it is a good thing that Conservative and Opposition Members agree about the importance of victims, it would be a bad thing if we left the Chamber thinking that the Government had done nothing about them. The Government have done an immense amount and have mostly covered the points raised by the Labour party in its new clauses and amendment.

**Mr. Maclean:** This is an important little debate. I am glad that we have had it and that the view has been expressed from both sides of the House that victims are terribly important. I am also glad that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) made the point so authoritatively that the Government have a good record in supporting the victims of crime—including drug-related crime, which is the subject of new clause 2.

The victims charter published in 1990 sets out the rights and expectations of people who have become victims of crime. Blameless victims of crimes of violence can receive compensation through the criminal injuries compensation scheme, the most generous compensation scheme for victims of crime anywhere in the world. I am sorry if I appear slightly nit-picking, but I must tell my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton that the scheme did not pay out to the victims of crime £109 million last year —it paid out £153 million.

**Mr. David Trimble** (Upper Bann): I note the Minister's reference to the criminal injuries compensation scheme as the most generous in the world. I put to him the comparison with the scheme in Northern Ireland, which is on a statutory basis and gives individuals a right of appeal to the courts. I wonder whether the Minister might not like to improve the English scheme and put it on the same basis. Will he take this opportunity to disavow the rumours floating around that the Government wish to reduce the amount of compensation that victims receive by establishing some sort of tariff system?

**Mr. Maclean:** Even with the new tariff scheme, we shall still have the most generous victim compensation scheme anywhere in the world. I should not like to comment on the Northern Ireland scheme. The hon. Gentleman might accept that we should not be averse, with an accent like mine and an accent like his, to incorporating some of the best aspects of other legal systems in whichever part of the United Kingdom. I shall pass on the hon. Gentleman's comments to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** In the light of his comments about the tariff and the criminal injuries compensation scheme, can the Minister assure the House that no victim of crime who is able to make an application will receive less in real terms under the new scheme than under the previous scheme?

6.45 pm

**Mr. Maclean:** We are consulting widely on the proposed new tariff scheme. I alluded to criminal injuries compensation in the debate tonight only because other hon. Members raised it in discussing how generous our scheme is. I do not propose to get into the details of the tariff scheme now. We shall publish the details of it in due course. The hon. Gentleman will then be able to make his points. I merely make the point that we have a generous scheme because I do not want the record to stand with the impression that we discovered victims only during today's debate.

Victim Support has been mentioned. The Home Office is providing £8·4 million to Victim Support in the current year to provide help for the victims of crime. I must confess that I do not understand why the organisation should say—if that is indeed what it says—that it has a financial crisis. Its allocation in 1990-91 was £4·7 million. We told it then what its allocation would be for the next three years. It would receive a huge increase the next year to £5·7 million, a 40 per cent. increase to £7·3 million the following year and a further 15 per cent. increase to £8·4 million this year.

I understand that my predecessor told Victim Support well in advance, in 1990-91, the level of grants for the next three years. That gave it ample time to budget and plan its affairs with greatly increased resources.

**Mr. Boateng:** It could not plan and budget for the explosion of crime that has taken place in the past three years. It could not budget and plan for the pressure on local authority spending that is the result of the grant dispensation of the Department of the Environment, which has borne directly on the capacity of local authorities to support, as they would wish to do, victim support schemes. The Minister ought to show a little more sympathy to those schemes, which are often supported without funding by volunteers who give their time free and gratis with precious little appreciation. He ought to show a little more sympathy than he has just displayed.

**Mr. Maclean:** It is because the Government have not only uttered words of sympathy but backed them up with hard taxpayers' cash that I felt it appropriate to put on the record the huge increase in funding that has been given to Victim Support. I believe that, in 1986-87, the figure was about £1 million and in the year before that it was about £200,000 to £300,000. The Government have been generous.

I do not want to argue the case for and against Victim Support in the Chamber. I intend to meet the organisation in the reasonably near future to hear what it has to say and discuss its problems, and so that it can make representations to me.

**Mr. Robert Maclennan** (Caithness and Sutherland): The Minister says that the money for victim support schemes comes from the taxpayer's pocket, but does not the criminal justice system also yield a substantial amount of money, through fines, which might be better deployed in helping victims?

**Mr. Maclean:** I would take that exhortation more seriously if the hon. Gentleman and his party did not have 200 or 300 other ideas as to how one could use the money raised from taxpayers.

Victim Support helps the victims of crime. It does a wonderful job in helping the victims both of violent crime and of non-violent crime such as burglary and fraud. It has helped more than 800,000 people, undoubtedly including many victims of drug-related crime, which I mention because it is the subject of the first amendment.

Measures to assist the victims of drug misuse include treatment and rehabilitation services. The Government are already making more than £24 million available to health authorities this year for specialist drug services. That provision is in addition to the hospital and general practitioner services available for the treatment of health problems other than addiction related to drug misuse.

**Mr. Boateng:** What about the victims of drug trafficking who have to inhabit the estates and tower blocks where lift wells, lifts and entrance halls are used by drug traffickers? What compensation will those victims of the offence of drug trafficking receive? One understands the work that is being done. *[Interruption.]* I hear the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) say from a sedentary position that that is a silly point. She ought to know better. It is not silly to the many people whose lives are ruined by the activities of drug traffickers who make their housing estates a living hell. There is nothing silly about that. The hon. Lady would do well to keep her opinions to herself or at least have the guts to stand up and make a speech.

**Mr. Maclean:** Mr. Deputy Speaker——

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman** (Lancaster): I should like to answer that weak point.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. That was an intervention. It is up to the Minister to decide whether he wants to give way.

**Mr. Maclean:** I give way.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Thank you, Minister. My point was that it is one thing to make awards, very rightly, to specific victims, but it is extremely difficult to compensate an entire housing block or all the people who use a lift. It is essential that aid is targeted. Opposition Members had no scheme when they were in office, but ours has been moving up steadily and I am in favour of it. However, it should not be dissipated in the way suggested by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng).

**Mr. Maclean:** The point is that, wherever our constituents may live, whether in housing estates or rural areas, if they know of neighbours, associates or people who inhabit the areas where they live who are indulging in drug trafficking, dealing or any other crimes, the first step must be maximum co-operation and liaison with the police. In such cases, we are all potential victims of crime, but I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) that this is not a matter for criminal injuries compensation or a special scheme targeted to help people who may be living in an area where drug traffickers are operating.

We have the powers in this Act, supported by the Opposition, to crack down heavily on drug traffickers and confiscate their ill-gotten gains. We must continue with that pincer movement. Also, local people must report every incident that they come across of drug trafficking or drug-related crime.

Directly or indirectly, considerable support has already been provided across a broad range of services for the victims of crime and drug misuse. We covered much of the ground on this when amendments to clause 45 and a related new clause were considered at an earlier stage. I thought that I had satisfied the Committee that the powers that the Secretary of State already has to make grants for all aspects of drug prevention and education were sufficiently wide that this amendment would not be necessary. I merely say again that the Secretary of State's powers are sufficiently wide, and I do not believe that this is necessary.

I understand and respect the motivation behind the proposed new clauses 7 and 8. My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) mentioned a sad and tragic case. I understand why he feels sympathy for the points that have been made in the debate. The interest of the victims is one area to which I want to pay particular attention in the coming months. I spent this morning sitting in the spectators' gallery of a London magistrates court. I then went to lunch with the magistrates and discussed their concerns about crime. Tomorrow I shall be meeting victims of crime and over the next few weeks I shall have a series of meetings with the victims of crime, the police and those at the sharp end. As I said in the House to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) in the first debate that I addressed as Minister responsible for law and order, I intend to meet the victims and those at the sharp end before I meet the professionals with the theories about how we should deal with crime.

The victims charter has already been mentioned. A total of 31 of the 51 standards in that have already been met and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and I plan to establish whether the interests of the victim can be better protected in certain circumstances by complementing a caution with some sort of reparation or compensation to the victim.

It is important that we keep victims informed of the progress of a case. That is the Government's objective and we intend to turn our attention to that, but that is quite different from making the Crown Prosecution Service consult victims on the appropriate level of charge that should be made. It is the task of the independent Crown Prosecution Service to make an objective judgment in the light of the evidence available. The need to alter charges arises, quite properly, when the police, in bringing the prosecution, have over-charged, perhaps because of an over-optimistic view of the evidence or when the value of the evidence changes—for instance, following scientific analysis.

The code for Crown prosecutors—that is a public document, approved by Parliament—makes it clear that, when a case is brought to court the charges brought should reflect the criminality of the behaviour being prosecuted, and in the absence of any other criteria should be the most serious charges and can be supported by the evidence. The code also directs that the interests of the victim should be taken into account. I fear that to extend this by effectively imposing on the CPS a duty to consult the victim would raise expectations for the victim that could not, in reality, be realised.

**Mr. Boateng:** The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) has clearly been mainlining on caffiene. I hope that I shall not engender her wrath by pointing out to the Minister the real concern that was expressed in Committee about the families of victims of road traffic offences—particularly death by reckless driving—who do not at the moment have any real place or status within the criminal justice system. The Minister was good enough to say that he would have a word with the Lord Chancellor's Department about that. I wonder if he will share with us the results of that word and whether he feels that those families should be informed before the CPS determines to drop or reduce any charges. Their suffering is all too often forgotten, and it is a cause of concern to many hon. Members on both sides of the House.

**Mr. Maclean:** I agree entirely. I have not yet had a chance to have a word with the Lord Chancellor or his Department, so I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman anything more than I told him last week in Committee, but I can reassure him that I shall have discussions on this and the other points that both he and my hon. Friends made in Committee about talking to the administrators of the courts about having separate facilities for those giving evidence on the side of the victim and those supporting the defendant.

The Crown Prosecution Service must determine the appropriate charge to put before the court. It will be aware of the victim's loss in all cases, but the determining factor will have to be the available evidence. For those reasons, I hope that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) will be prepared to withdraw the new clause.

**Mr. Michael:** I am glad that the Minister has accepted some of our arguments in this short debate. However, we want him to be more than a spectator, more than just a travelling voyeur, of the effect of crime on victims. We want action to help victims, just as in our first new clause we demanded a reduction of crime and, therefore, a reduction in the number of victims.

There does not seem to be any understanding among some Conservative members of the way in which good people in some areas, particularly in some of our cities, are affected by drug trafficking. In their homes and communities, they are the victims of drug-related crime. We must abandon no families or communities to that sort of misery. There must be no complacency in the House about the problem in so many of our inner cities.

My constituent, whose son was seriously damaged when a glass was pushed into his face in a pub, was horrified to find that the serious charge against the perpetrator of the action had been reduced, and that a very low penalty was imposed for the lesser crime heard by the court. I understand the anger, frustration and misery that she felt because she felt that she had not been given the opportunity to comment on the decision of the Crown Prosecution Service.

The intention is not to take away the objectivity of the Crown Prosecution Service. It must take the decision whether to prosecute and on what charge. However, the CPS should inform and consult and it should listen to those involved and understand the pain that is felt by the victim and the victim's family. How can the CPS listen and understand, as the Minister suggests, unless that opportunity is provided? That is why the consultation proposed in our amendment is so important.

The achievement of Victim Support has been tremendous over recent years, since I was involved in the

*[Mr. Michael]*

early days in the setting up of the first of the Cardiff schemes 10 years or more ago. It has developed enormously. However, it needs to develop further.

I welcome the agreement of the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) to some of our points, but he was a little complacent when he suggested that the Government have done enough for victims. The Government have encouraged Victim Support to expand further, but they have not provided the resources to match the amount required. The Government said to Victim Support, "Expand to meet needs in those areas." What are the areas? Where is the money to meet that need?

Grant applications are outstanding for new posts in Bradford, Harrogate, north-east Leeds, Erewash, High Peak, Leicester, Loughborough, Handsworth, Telford, mid-Warwickshire, Wolverhampton, Cheltenham, Falmouth, Newquay, north Devon, Somerset, Weston-super-Mare, Chiltern, Crawley, Greenford, Greenwich, the Medway towns, Newham, Redbridge, Swale, Waltham Forest, Manchester and Wigan.

Schemes are waiting for outstanding hours in Durham, Loughborough, Peterborough, Shrewsbury, Ely, Fenland, Forest Heath, south Norfolk, north Devon, Somerset, Stroud, Truro, Wiltshire, Bexley, Brentford, Chiswick, Crawley, Gosport, Greenwich, Hemel Hempstead, Newbury, Richmond and Sutton and Cynon Valley.

7 pm

Those applications were made because Victim Support was encouraged by the Minister's predecessor to develop schemes to help victims. However, the problem is that the money has not been provided to meet aspirations that the Home Office encouraged.

The Minister said that the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board operates the most generous scheme in the world. Many victims are now excluded because of the increase in the threshold from £550 to £1,000, which precludes from consideration one in three victims of violent crime. The Minister refused to say whether it is true that he intends to increase the threshold to £1,500. If he does, it will add to the damage that has been done already by increasing the threshold. No, we cannot accept that the Government are doing enough for victims. It is only right that we should press the new clause to a vote.

**Mr. Maclennan:** The Minister's speech revealed what little interest he has in the views of hon. Members. It was clear that he had not troubled to use the time between Committee and Report to consult the Lord Chancellor's Department about the effect of new clauses 7 and 8. He was derelict in his duty in coming before the House without having properly informed himself of the view of the responsible Cabinet Minister.

The difficulties that the House experiences in not being able to question the Lord Chancellor are of long standing, but it will not do to put up a Minister to answer a debate who has not taken the trouble to inform himself of the position, especially as he undertook to do so. No doubt that will be noted in another place when the Bill is reconsidered.

All hon. Members are concerned about the problems of victims. We all know that, under this Government, the number of victims has risen inexorably year after year, and that the Government's instant criminal justice legislation in almost every Session has done nothing to stem the rising tide of victims. No victims suffer more than the victims of drug trafficking, drug-related crime and the misuse of drugs.

The Government's objection to the importation into the Bill of what is, after all, only a proposed power, not a requirement, to make grants to such persons is hard to understand. The Minister should simply have accepted the proposal, for it certainly does not impose a duty on him to make any amounts available; it simply allows the Secretary of State to intervene as appropriate in particular cases. The spectacle of the victims of drug-related crime in our inner cities gives rise to the deepest concern in our society today.

I have no doubt that Labour Front-Bench spokesmen were right to draw attention to the sense of outrage that is felt by many people whose relatives have been victims of a serious offence when that serious offence is dropped and a lesser charge preferred. I imagine that many hon. Members will have had experience of complaints from constituents in just such circumstances, because they do not find it satisfactory that the Crown Prosecution Service has not consulted in the manner proposed.

In seeking to decide the appropriate charge to bring, it is surely important to consider the consequence of the offence, and if that is to be taken fully into account, consultation with the victim would seem an appropriate step to take. It does not, of course, mean that the victim would have any say over the appropriate charge; it would merely provide the Crown Prosecution Service with evidence on which to make an appropriate judgment.

For those reasons, we shall support the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) if he decides to push the matter to a Division.

*Question put:—*

*The House divided:* Ayes 232, Noes 270.

**Division No. 311]** **[7.05 pm**

**AYES**

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.

Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Vaz, Keith
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Dennis Turner and**
**Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.**

**NOES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger

Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Michael Brown and**
**Mr. Andrew MacKay.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

## New Clause 5

BAIL APPLICATIONS (CODE OF PRACTICE)

'. The Secretary of State shall lay before Parliament a Code of Practice for the courts in respect of the options available to them in deciding bail applications'.—*[Mr. Michael]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Michael:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause is intended to deal with the need for action to reduce offending while on bail. Offending while on bail is one of the issues which seem to produce more heat than light, certainly among members of the Government. There is outrage in the country about the way in which young offenders in particular appear to be offending on bail with impunity.

There are two ways of dealing with the problem. One is the punitive approach, or the refusal of bail, which is certainly necessary in some circumstances. However, we also need to tackle the problem from the opposite angle. Let me put it this way: if the bath is overflowing, it is sensible to turn off the tap and take out the plug. We believe that the Government should tackle the problem from both ends, which is the purpose of the new clause.

We know that young people in particular commit many offences while on bail. It is surprising that Ministers have not set in train much more detailed research and analysis of the phenomenon. I have commented many times on the unsatisfactory nature of much existing research. Those who examine the research that is available will find that offending on bail is a serious problem which needs to be tackled, but we need to be precise about the numbers involved. Is there a small number of offenders committing a large number of the offences while on bail or a larger number committing some offences? Is the problem endemic or is it confined to a few? Such questions have not been properly researched.

The Minister would help if he were to announce—and I call on him to do so—that he will commission some immediate research which will enable those who take decisions in court and in the House to have up-to-date and accurate information rather than information that comes to hand many months too late when the game—for that is what it seems to be to some people—has moved on. As in so many other spheres which impinge on the criminal justice system, there is a lack of information about offending on bail on which we can base our policies.

The one recent major piece of Home Office research on bail, published in 1992, suggested that between 10 per cent. and 17 per cent. of people on bail commit further offences. Younger people on remand for car crime or burglary are the most likely to reoffend while on bail, which is why, in the documents that it has published, Labour has concentrated on trying to analyse the two problems and has come up with solutions. It is also why we call on the Minister, as we called on his predecessors, to take targeted action to deal with those two types of crime.

There is no doubt that the offending behaviour of the young can escalate while they are waiting for a case to come to court. In my experience of working with young people, and with young offenders in particular, it was clear that the likelihood of something serious happening in court affected their behaviour. It is therefore important that the court should have a range of options available to it in deciding whether to allow bail. The court should also have the best possible information available to it.

A policy that relies solely on providing the court with more powers after someone has reoffended while on bail offers insufficient protection to the public. We need to reduce the extent of the problem as well as considering ways of tackling it when it arises. That is why the Government's proposals to allow the courts to sentence more severely for offending on bail are inadequate to deal with the whole problem. We need sensible means to ensure that crimes are not committed in the first place. We need

to be tough on offending while on bail and tough on preventing offending while on bail in order to get the balance right.

Among the options that should be available to all courts are bail hostels and bail support and enforcement schemes. A code of practice would help the courts to be aware of the range of facilities that should be available in each area and perhaps help them to be more pro-active in ensuring that those facilities become available in their localities if they are not already provided.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton** (Congleton): The hon. Gentleman mentioned bail hostels. Will he accept that the provision of such hostels does not prevent people from reoffending while on bail and that mature people who are put into bail hostels may also reoffend? Even those who have been accused of sex offences are also put in bail hostels, which may be located near schools and nursery schools. The hon. Gentleman makes much of how we should tackle the problem from both ends has nothing positive to say about how to stop people reoffending. We cannot incarcerate people in bail hostels for 24 hours a day; people are perfectly free to roam and reoffend at will.

**Mr. Michael:** The hon. Lady comes to the nub of one of my repeated criticisms of the Government. The Government have a range of options available, but they do not resource them adequately or think through properly the way in which they are used. Bail hostels are one of the available options but, all too often, they are not adequately supervised——

**Mrs. Winterton** *rose*——

**Mr. Michael:** May I ask the hon. Lady to contain herself for a moment? The problem that I am highlighting is the fact that we need a range of options to fit the appropriate one to the appropriate people. Sometimes people are put into bail hostels when such hostels are not appropriate for them.

**Mrs. Winterton** *rose*——

**Mr. Michael:** In a moment. That was the point that the hon. Lady was making, and it is a valid one. Unless we have a criminal justice system that offers a range of options for supporting and enforcing obedience to bail requirements, we shall not succeed in reducing the offending that occurs while on bail. If people are put into bail hostels for which they are not suited, they will reoffend. Part of the problem is that the Government have no coherent, rational approach and have not thought through their policy.

**Mrs. Winterton:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for being so patient. I refute everything that he has said about the funding of bail hostels. The Home Office has thrown thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money at the problem. There is a bail hostel in my constituency. It is splendidly appointed and very well run, but one cannot incarcerate people for more than a specific number of hours at night, or after curfew and before the morning. The courts decide who shall and who shall not be allowed bail. There are two options: we put young and middle-aged people in bail hostels where they may reoffend, or we put them where they are incarcerated. What is the alternative to those two options?

**Mr. Michael:** The hon. Lady is not entirely right in saying that bail hostels have money coming out of their ears. I was able to inspect regularly a bail hostel in an adjoining constituency when I was for several years a member of a probation committee. At that time, there was a complete lack of finance to cope properly with the appointment and conditions at the hostel and with staffing levels. I accept that there have been improvements since then, but another problem arose when the Home Office recently decided to accelerate the number of places being made available at bail hostels. One could say that it went too fast because in many communities it seemed that decisions about the location of hostels were taken too speedily, which whipped up many problems. Decisions had to be taken very quickly if the probation committees were not to lose the money. We need a considered and intregrated approach to the problem.

I must inform the hon. Lady that the options she outlined are not the only ones available. A range of options could be made available for dealing with young offenders if the resources were provided. As she says, one option is incarceration, whether in prison or in secure accommodation. One problem with that option is that, two and a half years after the Government's promise to deal with the scandal of young people being held in adult prison accommodation, secure places have not been made available.

The second option is the bail hostel, but there are other options. For example, there is the option of a young person staying at home or being reintroduced to the home. There are various fostering schemes and options of employment-related placement. Let us not lose sight of the fact that there is a whole range of options, and a whole range of requirements, available to the court. The trouble often is that the court is limited because the options are not available in practice in the locality.

For that reason, we have introduced the new clause, which is limited only by the geography of the Bill. We should like to go further and say that there should be a high standard of bail support and enforcement schemes in place in every area where the demand exists. But, for technical reasons, we are limited by the nature of the Bill, so we have tabled an amendment which, we hope, goes part of the way down the right road.

7.30 pm

It is for the Secretary of State to lay before Parliament a code of practice for the court in respect of the options available to it in deciding bail applications. If courts must consider the options available to them, there will inevitably be pressure for a greater range of such options.

A great deal of work, some of it commissioned by the Home Office, has already been done. It demonstrates the extent to which we can reduce and prevent crime, including among those who have started on an offending pattern. The failure to follow that work through—to develop it from a project to a strategic basis—is a criticism of the Government's failure to tackle and reduce crime.

**Mrs. Winterton:** Is the hon. Gentleman aware that none of the matters that he has put forward will stop people reoffending, no matter what wonderful schemes are introduced by the Government or proposed by the Opposition? Young and older offenders will not be stopped reoffending, and that concerns local people. They would prefer to see young offenders in institutions—

*[Mrs. Winterton]*

"incarcerated" is the word I used earlier—because at least they are then not being a problem to people going about their normal lives.

**Mr. Michael:** It might be wise for me to translate that and leave the Minister to answer the hon. Lady because what she said flies in the face of everything that any Minister or Home Office publication has stated. She says that, if people offend, it is inevitable that they will continue to offend. That is not the case. She says that we must accept as inevitable that, whatever we do, people will go on reoffending and all our efforts will have no effect on their patterns of offending. That is not true.

I worked on an estate in my city of Cardiff for a number of years. The inter-agency work that was done between probation, social services, youth workers and others was recognised by the police as having had great benefit. The local chief constable said in his annual report that it had led to a reduction in crime. Indeed, the probation service withdrew from the project because it reported that so few youngsters were coming to court, because they were not offending, that the service could not justify its continued involvement in the project.

There are two alternatives—that is the hon. Lady's view and she may wish to have it polarised in that way—in that one either allows crime to rise and simply seeks to punish, or one does what the Opposition say, which is to punish where one cannot prevent but prevent where one can because if one fails to prevent, one will have damaged the offender, who will continue to deteriorate in his or her lifestyle, one will have damaged the victim and one will have damaged the community in which both of them may live.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** The hon. Gentleman is waxing eloquent about the need to punish where one cannot prevent, and particularly about the need to take action over juvenile offenders. Will he support the Government's plan for secure training orders?

**Mr. Michael:** I shall look carefully at the Government's plan for secure training orders. It is a curious plan because it comes from the Home Office without an indication of the Department of Health's view, even though the latter is the Department responsible for its implementation for 15 and 16-year-olds.

I shall be interested to see the evidence that the Government have to support the need for that type of institution, which will be spread thinly across the country, some of them being a long way from offenders' homes and the places to which they will have to return after being in those institutions. Have we reason to think that those institutions will be more successful than the previous attempts, such as the short, sharp shock, from which the Government had to turn back?

I would look with more interest at a Home Secretary who introduced such a scheme—if he were not running with enthusiasm for higher office in his party at the time—and if he or his predecessor had delivered the secure places necessary to end the scandal, to which I referred, of 15 and 16-year-olds having to be held in adult prison accommodation because of there being nowhere else for them to be sent.

I suspect that, in private, the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) would be as critical as I am of the Government's failure, in relation to the promise made in February 1991, to deliver any of the places required. It is easy to point to areas where the Conservatives have failed abjectly to keep their promises and to deal with the enforcement and support of bail.

Bail, when granted by a court, should be treated seriously. Youngsters and adults alike should say, "I shall be in real trouble if I breach my bail conditions." The slowness of the criminal justice system has led to bail being treated with contempt. That cannot be good for young people, for the community, for the courts or for the respect in which people hold the criminal justice system.

That is why we need positive action. We must punish if the opportunity is not taken, when given, to come out of the pattern of offending—when the opportunity for support and enforcement is there—but we have every right to tell the Government that they should be making the conditions right to support and enforce bail conditions when they are granted by the courts. As we agree, reoffending damages everyone—the offender, the victim and the community—but above all it damages confidence in the criminal justice system and the police.

The police will be further undermined by yesterday's White Paper, which will do nothing to cut crime and help them in their task. Action of the sort proposed by the new clause would do somethng to reduce the amount of offending and reoffending with which the police must deal.

Bail support and enforcement schemes represent one of the best ways to reduce offending by young people, in particular, while they are on bail. The schemes must use a wide range of approaches to get people to comply with the requirements of bail, and I commend the reports that have been published on approaches that have been tried on an experimental basis. They have included regular reporting, placements with volunteers during evenings and weekends, the monitoring of school attendance, assistance with employment and work with offenders' families.

The Minister will recall the Opposition's suggestion that an order should be available to the court to encourage those types of activity post-sentence. We made that and other suggestions in Committee when we debated alternative sentences for young people. Such schemes can apply to people who are on bail, but they must be put into operation quickly, preferably while the person is waiting to come to court for sentence. If one's own child does something wrong, one punishes him or her today, not in a week, a month or three months—now. All too often, the problem with the criminal justice system is that it takes many months before a sentence is given by a court. The period of bail is far too long,and that assists in bringing the whole system into disrepute.

Some areas have remand fostering arrangements, such as I referred to in my response to the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) in which foster parents are able to take remanded people at short notice. Only a minority of areas possess a comprehensive range of bail support and remand fostering facilities. That might in part explain the wide variation of the use of custodial remands across the country. It is one of the reasons why the Association of Chief Officers of Probation and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders called last week for a statutory obligation on local authorities to set up bail support schemes That was a plea from those who, day to day, deal with trying to enforce the observance of bail.

We could not craft an amendment or a new clause which would have gone that far, but in new clause 5 we go some way, and it at least gives a starting point which would enable the Minister to take a great step forward if he would only see what an opportunity it offers. Sadly, until now —I acknowledge that the Minister is new to his post—the Government have been big on talk and quick to legislate, but small and slow when it comes to positive action which will increase success in supporting and enforcing bail. A code of practice for the courts in relation to bail options will help to ensure that those facilities are provided more uniformly across the country.

The Home Office's own research shows that there are links between offending and reoffending and the circumstances of the offender. If those matters are addressed during the period of bail, a contribution can be made to cutting reoffending and therefore cutting the increase in crime which we suffer at present and which the Government seem so ready to tolerate.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** The public are rightly alarmed at the large number of offences that are being committed by offenders while on bail, and they want something done about it. It would be encouraging if the Opposition said that they would positively support the Government's proposals to have secure training orders for the hard core of persistent juvenile offenders who most frequently in recent years have come to public notice for offending on bail. However, it is a matter not just of juvenile offenders but of adult offenders.

It was in 1948, I think, that Lord Chief Justice Goddard, in the Phillips case, said that bail should seldom be given to burglars because they would only burgle while they were on bail. In this modern age, we cannot say such a thing, but that shows that the problem of persistent offenders has been with us for many years.

I greatly welcome the Government's attitude to bail, which has been manifested by their action. Clause 29, which allows the courts to take into account the commission of a criminal offence while on bail as an aggravating factor when it comes to sentence, so that an increased sentence can be passed on anyone who commits an offence while on bail, is a constructive step forward and will meet considerable support from the British people.

**Mr. Michael:** To assist the hon. and learned Gentleman, clause 29 is actually about money laundering. I think that he is referring to the amendments as urged by the Opposition, although not as well crafted as those to clause 29 of the 1991 Bill.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I am referring to clause 65.

That is not all that the Government are doing. They are also supporting the Bill being promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall), which will give the prosecution the right to appeal against the grant of bail. That is a substantial step forward which, if passed by the House, will make a contribution and help to reassure people.

A further step should be taken. One of the reasons why so many offences are committed on bail is that magistrates have a totally wrong idea of the law and seem to think, perhaps on the guidance of some magistrates' clerks, that they are unable to remand certain people in custody. With the 20 new prisons that have been built, there should be some places available for rather more people than there were 10 years ago, in reasonable accommodation while they are remanded in custody. Magistrates should be retrained, or certainly better trained, in their responsibilities as magistrates to remand people in custody in appropriate cases. There are too many cases in which people are given bail by magistrates. Attention to training is necessary.

7.45 pm

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) has brought forward a code of practice. That is fine, but he then shot down his balloon by saying something with which I wholeheartedly agree: it is time that we had proper research and analysis and came up with a more systematic response to the problem of offending while on bail. The Government have plans in mind—I do not know how far they have gone; perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will tell us. However, as long as that matter remains incomplete, it would be rather feeble of us to introduce a code of practice.

We do not need a code of practice; we need a code of action. If the Government are involving themselves in a code of action which, apart from the proposed changes that they are making, will improve the training of magistrates and judges and make sure that we examine the subject to the necessary extent, that will be a much more constructive response to the problem than a code of practice.

**Mr. Michael:** I endorse the hon. and learned Gentleman's point about the need for a code of action. I hope that I made it clear that the geography of the Bill limited us in bringing forward an amendment or a new clause that would have gone further than that. We are limited to the idea of a code of practice because of the way in which the Government established and crafted their own Bill. The hon. and learned Gentleman and I are at one on that point.

**Mr. Maclean:** Let me make it clear that the Government's approach to crime is twofold—prevent offending in the first place and then crack down on those who abuse the right to bail. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) says, "Resources, resources, resources," as though more resources in this and every other matter would prevent youngsters from forming the wrong ideas of what is right and what is wrong in society in the first place. I would pay attention to his plea for more resources if he would acknowledge that, under the Government, resources in the criminal justice system have increased by 105 per cent. in real terms. In case the hon. Gentleman does not know what that means, it is above the level of inflation, and that is a considerable amount of resources.

My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) might be horrified to hear that we are spending not hundreds of pounds but millions of pounds on bail hostels. In 1992, an extra £8 million was allocated for bail hostels. That is supposed to be good news, but my hon. Friend might not take it in that way. That is just another example of the huge resources that we have been making available to the criminal justice system. The greatest part of resources is on the crime prevention side—16,000 full-time policemen in England and Wales. That is not to be sneezed at.

I accept that the new clause seems to be an honest attempt to assist the courts in their awareness of the

*[Mr. Maclean]*

options available in deciding bail applications. To my knowledge, there are only three possible decisions in any bail application: remand in custody, unconditional bail or bail with conditions. The Home Office has already established a substantial body of research into identifying practical ways of improving the information available for bail decision makers, thereby improving the quality of those decisions. The result will be available early next year.

I do not believe, therefore, that we need a code of practice covering the courts' options when deciding bail. The Bail Act 1976 sets out the need to consider carefully all the factors in a particular case before the judges or magistrates arrive at a decision. It sets out the conditions that can be attached to a grant of bail. As I explained in Committee, both judges and magistrates are fully aware of the terms and requirements of the Bail Act—at least, they ought to be; they have training on it. I take on board the point made by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) about the adequacy of training. I believe that it is adequate, but this is a point to which I shall certainly turn my attention.

Judges and magistrates know those terms and requirements and, if they are minded to grant bail with, for example, conditions of residence, they will inquire as a matter of course into local circumstances and local bail support provisions, hostels, accommodation, and so on.

My main concern about the proposed code of practice is that we must beware of inhibiting a court's discretion. The court has all the relevant facts about the alleged offender. If it does not, it has the power to ask for them. The court is best placed to decide what conditions to impose on a defendant. The probation service and the courts are already in close contact to ensure that the latter understand what is available to them and the effect that any such scheme will have on defendants.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth shocked me by saying that bail was being treated with contempt—those were his words. If that is the case, bail ought not to be granted in the first place. It would alarm me if magistrates granted bail who had before them accused persons who had a history of treating bail with contempt; there would be a prime case for not granting bail. So I do not see how a code of practice would improve the situation if people were offending on bail.

I have no objection in principle to any sensible innovation whose effect might be to make the courts better informed of the options available. After all, what my hon. Friends and I and the Opposition are aiming for is to will the courts to come to the right decision, so that people who are granted bail do not offend again, but treat it properly, and those who ought not to be granted bail are not granted bail. That is what we all want. We want every decision, magically, to be right.

I believe that the courts have all the information that they need at the present time to help them come to those decisions. We cannot invent a code of practice, either voluntary or statutory, to deal with the hundreds of thousands of different people coming before different courts, in different parts of the country, and being charged with different offences. In my view, we cannot give any guidance that would better help in those individual, very local, personal decisions. We must leave magistrates with that essential discretion.

If magistrates were coming to me in droves, or even individually, begging me to give them a code of practice to help them reach better decisions, I would take it very seriously. Indeed, I might have a team of people already working on such a code. But they have not come to me with that request. For that reason and others, I cannot support the new clause.

**Mr. Michael:** I regret the Minister's response, and a couple of points need to be made to him quite directly.

I should be more impressed on hearing that resources for the criminal justice system are up 105 per cent. if the Minister would acknowledge with greater seriousness that the increase in crime over the period of office of this Government is up 121 per cent. If we look at those crimes for which the issue of bail is of most importance, we see that violence against the person is up 120 per cent. and robbery is up 324 per cent. Those figures are for recorded crimes, as the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) says. The actual increase, as far as we can tell, is commensurate with that, but certainly recorded crime shows those massive increases. The evidence of the Government's own reports is such that we should certainly be worried about the way in which these serious crimes are increasing.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** The point is that, if more people are reporting crime, because the courts are more user-friendly towards women, and there are more telephones, more cars and more insurance claims that have to be reported to the police, that obviously exaggerates the proportion of reported crimes compared with those that used not to be reported.

**Mr. Michael:** If the hon. and learned Gentleman thinks that the courts are user-friendly and that people are reporting with such enthusiasm, he is more complacent than I thought. Many people in communities throughout the country say that they are not reporting things because there is no point in reporting to the police, since nothing happens. Surely the hon. and learned Gentleman will acknowledge, therefore, that the likelihood is that, far from exaggerating the increase in crime, the figures for reported crime probably understate the situation.

That makes the point on which we are both agreed, however, about the dearth of adequate research on some of these issues. If we look at the British crime survey and the figures for reported crime, we have some reason for confidence that the figures that I am quoting, which are Government figures, are not exaggerated.

A moment ago, I quoted the figure for robbery, up 324 per cent. The Minister's figure of a 105 per cent. increase in resources for the criminal justice system does not look too bright against that. Burglary is up 148 per cent.; vehicle crime, up 162 per cent.; and criminal damage, up 182 per cent. Those are the figures in which the Minister should be taking a real interest, rather than mentioning 105 per cent. for resources—a far lower figure —with such complacency.

**Mr. Maclean:** Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the British crime survey shows that the increase in recorded crime is about double the rise in actual crime?

**Mr. Michael:** I believe that there is great suspicion about those figures, and I gave the reason for that. There

is a great feeling throughout the country, illustrated in all sorts of ways, that there has been a diminution in recording.

If the hon. and learned Member for Burton thinks that people are reporting crime in increased numbers and with increased confidence, he should speak to some of the communities, young people and senior police officers to whom I have spoken recently. He will find that the view that he has just expressed is not one that any of them endorse.

The need for courts to have all the necessary information in front of them is dealt with in another amendment, but some of the Government's decisions are not helping in that regard. The Government must set the pattern of facilities that is necessary for those options to be available to the courts. It is not much use a court having information about a very limited range of options if that means that its hands are tied.

Resources are involved—I am glad that the Minister noticed that point. Modest investment is needed to deal with and diminish this problem of offending while on bail, instead of tolerating it, and therefore tolerating the massive increase in money that will be needed to lock away anybody who offends or reoffends, as seems to be the desire of the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton).

If the Minister—I thought that this was one of the most remarkable pieces of complacency from a Home Office Minister for some time, and there is quite a bit of competition for that accolade—thinks that bail is not being treated with contempt by some youngsters and groups of youngsters, in particular, and by some adults, he certainly needs to listen more to police, young people and communities in my constituency and in other constituencies throughout the country. He should listen to the views of other hon. Members. His complacency on that issue will not be reflected by comments from Labour Members or, I suspect by comments from Conservative Members, either.

**Mr. Maclean:** Does the hon. Gentleman accept that I was making the point that if bail was treated with contempt by some people, which I accept, his code of practice was not the solution to the problem?

8 pm

**Mr. Michael:** The code of practice would contribute to solving that problem, but it would not solve the problem in itself. There is a need for sentencing, punishment, disposals while on bail and disposals in the community to take into account the need to diminish reoffending.

I said earlier that the current system was showing signs of strain and that there were many occasions on which police, magistrates and others felt that it was being treated with contempt. I should have thought that the Minister would act in two ways: first, he should accept the proposed code of conduct as a constructive, small step in the right direction; and, secondly, in his capacity as Minister, he should set about providing resources to enable the establishment of a full pattern of bail support and enforcement and the whole range of constructive options that I mentioned.

I advise the Minister to consider the remarks of his predecessors in office. He will find that they praised projects of the sort that I mentioned and said how effective they have been. I urge the Minister to take a bit of time to consider my options and to work them more and more into the implementation of Government policy, and not just to do as his predecessors have tended to do and pay lip service to them.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton acknowledged the important need for research. Perhaps the Select Committee on Home Affairs, of which he is Chairman, may take a view on that. The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that the former Chairman of that Select Committee, the right hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), has led an investigation by the all-party group on penal affairs—of which he is chairman—which I hope will make a useful contribution. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman and the Minister will consider the outcome of those considerations.

This is the first time for a number of years that the right hon. Member for Westminster, North has not been involved in the debate on the Criminal Justice Bill. He has always made a significant contribution and it is a little sad that he is precluded from participating, having taken up ministerial office. Bearing in mind his contributions to such debates over recent years, it is only appropriate to congratulate him on his appointment.

Reference was made to aspects other than those in the new clause. Of course the new clause is not the whole answer. The Bail (Amendment) Bill, promoted by the hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall), made its way because of the help that I gave it in Committee, because some of the Opposition amendments were accepted and becasuse we smoothed its way through the rather difficult procedures that normally make it impossible for any continued support—as a result of which, I hope, we shall hear soon that that Bill, with the right of appeal for courts against the granting of bail in appropriate circumstances, will be back before the House at the end of the week.

With all honesty, my hon. Friends and I have shown that we are not concerned with just one aspect of the fight against crime and the fight against reoffending while on bail. We are concerned that there should be a proper and balanced range of ways in which to deal with such problems, which will include punitive and preventive measures, as well as constructive measures such as those that we urge in the new clause.

The Minister's response was most disappointing. However, in our debates in Committee, the Minister showed an interest in constructive ideas from the Opposition. I hope that this is an idea that he will steal, expand and bring back to the House, claiming ingenuously that it is his own. I look forward to that opportunity before too long.

*Question put and negatived.*

**New clause 10**

REPORTS PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 3(1) OR 7(1) OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT 1991

'.—(1) Pursuant to sections 3(1) or 7(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 the Crown Court shall seek guidance from the Probation Service as to the minimum amount of time necessary in order to ensure that the report meets the standards set down in the National Standards for the preparation of pre-sentence reports published by the Secretary of State for the Home Department in accordance with section 3(5)(b) of that Act.

(2) The Crown Court may, with the agreement of prosecution, defence and the Probation Service rule that the

circumstances of a particular offender and a particular offence or group of offences are such that no report is required in order to fulfill the interests of justice.'.—*[Mr. Michael.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Michael:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

We now come to a point that is a development of an issue that we discussed only a few minutes ago. The Minister referred to courts having all the information that they needed before them to take a decision. I have always believed strongly in the need to take fast decisions and in the need, wherever possible, for the same court to take the decision. If the court has listened to the circumstances, there is a better chance that it will take the right decision, because it knows the circumstances of the offence and has received reports. That is not the point at issue.

There is a difference between the magistrates courts and the higher courts. In the Crown court, it is far more likely that, if there is an adjournment, the same judge will be able to preside. He will therefore have his own notes and memory of the case. That is frequently not the case in the magistrates courts. The problem is that there now seems to be a pressure for same-day reports in the Crown court where problems can arise and where serious issues have to be gone into. We are concerned about the fastest possible service for the courts consistent with the fullest possible information for the courts. I hope that I can take it for granted that the Minister and I agree on those being the two objectives for which we have to strive.

I now come to the background to our approach in the new clause. The Criminal Justice Act 1991 requires courts to obtain pre-sentence reports in all cases serious enough for a community penalty or imprisonment, except indictment-only cases in which the Crown court deems it unnecessary to obtain a report. To facilitate that requirement, the probation service undertook pilot trials in the preparation of a faster report-writing service to the Crown court. A statement of preferred practice was drawn up between the Home Office and the probation service with the approval of the Crown court judiciary.

The statement establishes that the probation service will assess in every case how quickly it will be possible to prepare a pre-sentence report in accordance with national standards for the preparation of pre-sentence reports, and that it

"will seek to write each report as expeditiously as possible".

The point of speed is there again. The statement also establishes that the time required for preparation will

"vary considerably from case to case."

and that

"in appropriate cases only this may be later the same day".

I encourage the idea that, wherever possible, the report is written the same day, but it must be acknowledged that that is not always possible.

In June this year, the Home Office probation inspectorate produced the first HMIP inspection of implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. The report records that the use of the provision for expedited reports has been slow to date. It also records that there has been no expression of dissatisfaction with the arrangements by Crown court judges. Nevertheless, on 17 June, apparently in response to the report, the Home Office issued CPO letter 33 of 1993 in the name of the Home Secretary, requiring the probation service to ensure the provision of a same-day report in every case that the judge remands into custody.

The Minister will recognise that there is an immediate apparent contradiction. There is the recognition in the Department's own guidance that only in some cases can reports properly be prepared in the day, and the requirement that they shall always be prepared in the day in the Crown court.

It appears that the letter to the chief probation officers is a response to different pressure from that which is being expressed—that is, pressure from the judiciary to repeal that part of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 which requires automatic pre-sentence reports. Judges would prefer to return to their former discretion in deciding when to invite the preparation of pre-sentence reports. The trouble is that that is a dangerous outcome. It appears that the pressure on the probation service resulted in the offer of the same-day report service which, frankly, cannot be made to work if it is to be consistent with the idea of national standards which the Minister will want to pursue as vigorously as in the past year.

There is a danger, therefore, that we shall be drawn into a conflict of requirements, which might have a disadvantageous effect on practice in the probation service and the standard of reports on which the courts have to take a decision. What is required are arrangements which will ensure that the statement of preferred practice to meet the national standards which the Home Office is pursuing can be pursued and that those arrangements are correctly in place.

That is one aspect of the new clause before us. I ask the Minister to acknowledge that it is a serious point, and I make it in the belief that it conflicts in no way with Government policy or the principles that he seeks to adopt. However, there is a danger of requirements being placed which will in practice undermine one or more of the requirements that the Minister is pursuing.

The proposal in the new clause that the probation service will be consulted about the minimum time required to prepare a report in accordance with national standards would consolidate the arrangements in the statement of preferred practice in legislation. That is necessary because of the fear that the Home Office will ignore the statement in its new instruction to prepare same-day reports in all cases. We need to protect the flexibility that is necessary to ensure that the national standards are achieved.

The need for flexibility in time arises form the great variation in the nature and complexity of the cases before the courts. Some cases cannot be dealt with quickly. I have mentioned a number of examples with which the Minister will have sympathy—cases in which there is child abuse, physical, emotional or sexual; drug or alcohol abuse; homelessness; mental illness; and many offences involving young people. In such cases, the issues involving longer time may need referrals to specialist agencies or hospitals, or liaison with social services departments may be necessary for confidential information to be read which could not be released prior to a conviction. Those serious issues would be overridden by a same-day system becoming necessary and universal.

I hope, therefore, that the Minister accepts that it would be impossible to sustain such a system 100 per cent. because of meeting demands, staff shortages, illness and annual leave, even if the problems that I have outlined are not present. Clearly, such problems are present, and it would be bad, dangerous and in contradiction of the Minister's stated principle that the courts should have the

fullest and most accurate information available to them when taking decisions if that were the case. I hope that the Minister accepts our view in support of the new clause.

The second aspect is simple and straightforward—that is, to permit judges, with the agreement of defence counsel, prosecution counsel and the probation service, to sentence without a pre-sentence report. This matter generally arises not in the magistrates court but in the Crown court. The new clause seeks to return some discretion to the judiciary in determining when it is necessary to have reports in triable either-way cases.

The step forward to the automatic preparation of reports in the 1991 Act was important, with its assumption that a community sentence might be appropriate in all those cases. It is important to retain that presumption. However, when there is no doubt about the imposition of a sentence other than a community disposal, it seems only helpful and sensible for all concerned, as well as cost-effective, to return discretion to the sentencer. If the sentencer believes that there is no need for a report, and if defence counsel, prosecution counsel and the probation service, which would prepare the report, all agree, it would seem a mere bureaucratic quibble to say that a report must nevertheless be prepared.

I hope that the Minister will agree that what we have proposed in the new clause pursues his aim, but in a way which will ensure that there is not a clash of interest in the court and that there is not preparation of a report when in the minds of everyone involved a report is not necessary.

8.15 pm

**Mr. Maclean:** The new clause will make important changes to the circumstances in which pre-sentence reports are obtained. It may assist the House if I briefly summarise where we are now and why we got here.

The range of circumstances in which a pre-sentence report must be considered before sentence is passed was extended and rationalised by the 1991 Act. Parliament approved those changes on the basis that they would ensure that, in the case of more serious offences, there would always be an objective and independent report available to the court, irrespective of factors such as the timing of the plea or whether the trial had been contested. It was felt that that would be in the interests of consistent justice.

It was recognised that the requirements in the Act would give the probation service additional work, but the Government concluded that the additional resources would be more than justified by the improvement to the sentencing process brought about by a consistent supply of reports in accordance with defined national standards. It was also recognised that the requirements in the Act had the potential to inject a new element of delay into the sentencing process. For that reason, arrangements were made throughout the country for probation services, in discussion with the courts, to provide facilities for reports to be written quickly and on the same day in appropriate circumstances.

The recent report by Her Majesty's chief inspector of probation on the operation of the Act, which was published earlier this month, found that on the whole the quality of reports was good but that not enough use was being made of the facilities for fast reports that are now in place.

Bearing in mind the costs and problems of unnecessary delays—I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on this point—we have now asked the probation service to guarantee a pre-sentence report on the day of conviction in all Crown court cases where the alternative would be a custodial remand. That request was made to avoid unnecessary delays at the Crown court, which are costly and undesirable for many reasons, including their effects on the trial process as a whole and on individual defendants.

**Mr. Michael:** For the sake of clarity, I make it clear that I agree with the Minister up to this point. The danger of the undertaking of every case being same day causes the problem. Up to that point, there is no dispute between us. The problem is whether the requirement that all cases shall be same day, especially the list of cases that I gave, might bring about a danger of the court not having full and adequate information available. That is the crux of the problem.

**Mr. Maclean:** I shall come to that point. The evidence of Her Majesty's chief inspector of probation is that there is no necessary trade-off between speed and quality. Although the same-day target is stretching for the probation service, our judgment is that such a target is proper in those cases where a remand in custody would otherwise be necessary. Probation services will need to adjust their priorities as necessary to meet the target. In other cases where time is not of the same essence, the courts may well wish to look to the probation service for guidance about how long is needed for a report, but I do not see that statutory provision of the sort envisaged in the new clause needs to be made for that.

**Mr. Michael:** I should like to ask the Minister about the use of the word "target". Surely the difference between a target and a requirement is crucial to the debate. I agree with the Minister about establishing a target and exerting pressure to ensure that a report is produced on the same day as appearance in court. He would also be right to say that delay does not necessarily improve the quality of reports. There are cases, however, involving complex evidence where it would be extremely dangerous to set not just a target but a requirement for a same-day PSR.

**Mr. Maclean:** I do not want to have a discussion on semantics. Let me make it clear, however, that the target is same-day PSRs. We have requested the probation service to meet that target. We would like to require it to do that, but I am not suggesting that that requirement should be set in statute.

The chief inspector of probation believes that that target is a reasonable one and, over the next few months, I will monitor progress carefully to judge whether that is true. Probation officers will be given a chance to see whether they can meet that target. I, too, will consider carefully whether they can. I shall also listen to what the judiciary has to say about the operation of that target.

I assure the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth that it is not our intention to place speed at a premium over quality. The evidence from the inspection report suggests that the two can go together. If it emerges on the day, however, that further inquiries are needed, perhaps as the result of an offender's medical condition or because more detail is necessary, it will be open to the

*[Mr. Maclean]*

court to ask for further inquiries to be made. We expect the probation officer to report, on the day, to say how that assessment should be completed.

It may be helpful if I tell the House that we are reviewing the national standards that cover all the main aspects of the work of the probation services, including PSRs. It will obviously be necessary to monitor carefully how the new guidance works in practice.

I shall bear in mind what the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has said when I consider the PSR provisions of the 1991 Act, but I am not persuaded that the new clause strikes the right balance. I am willing to reflect, however, on the points raised about its second subsection. I will also reflect on what practitioners, including the judiciary, think about it.

Although the provisions requiring a written PSR—without exception and across a defined range of cases—are reasoned, I do not rule out changes if we conclude that they are justified. A judgment must be made, as ever, on the balance between consistency and discretion. The new clause raises difficulties by making a decision on whether a report is needed turn on the consent of the defence or the probation officer.

One of the strengths of the PSR in comparison with the old social inquiry report is that the PSR is clearly perceived and valued by sentencers as an objective, independent report. I foresee a bit of difficulty in a provision that gives discretion with the one hand and takes it away with the other.

Given that we are monitoring the national standards and that I am happy to return to the matter in future legislation should we discover in the next few months that the PSRs are not working as hon. Members would want, I hope that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth will withdraw his new clause.

**Mr. Michael:** The Minister's reply has been helpful. It is important to decide whether the objective of same-day reporting should be considered as a target, a request, a strong request or a requirement. To consider that objective as a target at which to aim would be welcome, but it would be a mistake if it was insisted upon to the detriment of the quality of the report. That the Minister has undertaken to monitor the PSRs, however, goes a long way towards meeting my concerns.

Will the hon. Gentleman agree to ensure that that monitoring will be careful? Does he accept that the criteria for and parameters and method of recording that monitoring should be agreed in advance? That would ensure that everyone understood the way in which the information was interpreted.

Will the Minister consult with those involved, including, obviously, the judiciary and those in the probation service, on the criteria to be used so that we are all clear, in advance, about the judgments that will be made? If the methodology of the monitoring is understood by all concerned, I cannot but be satisfied with the Minister's undertaking.

**Mr. Maclean:** We would want to ensure that those whom we are monitoring understand exactly what is being monitored. In case I did not make it absolutely clear, I confirm that the requirement in table 93 is not that every report should be prepared on the same day, but that same-day reports should be guaranteed in all cases that would otherwise involve custodial remand.

**Mr. Michael:** I welcome that clarification from the Minister, which is helpful. In view of that reassurance, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

*Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.*

## New clause 12

### AMENDMENT OF SECTION 57 OF NORTHERN IRELAND (EMERGENCY PROVISIONS) ACT 1991

'.—(1) Section 57 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 shall be amended as follows—

(a) The following subsection shall be substituted for subsection (4)—

"(4) This section applies for the purpose of terrorist investigations, that is to say investigations into—

(a) the activities of an organisation concerned in the commission of acts of terrorism, or

(b) without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (a) the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism to which section 14 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 applies, or

(c) any other act which appears to have been done in furtherance of or in connection with such acts of terrorism, including any act which appears to constitute an offence under sections, 2, 9, 10 or 11 or Part III of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991; or

(d) without prejudice to paragraph (c) above, the resources of a proscribed organisation, or

(e) funds which may be applied or used for the commission of, or in furtherance of or in connection with, acts of terrorism connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland, or

(f) the proceeds of the commission of such acts of terrorism or of activities engaged in in furtherance of or in connection with such acts.

(b) In subsection (5) for the references to paragraphs (a) and (c) there shall be substituted references to paragraphs (d) and (f) respectively.".

(c) The following subsection shall be added—

"(6) Persons authorised under this section in respect of investigations that fall within subsection (4)(a) to (c) shall be persons who hold or have held judicial office in any part of the United Kingdom or who are—

(a) a person who has a ten year general qualification within the meaning of section 71 of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990; or

(b) an advocate or solicitor in Scotland of at least ten years standing; or

(c) a member of the Bar of Northern Ireland or a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Northern Ireland of at least ten years standing.".

(2) In paragraph 5 of Schedule 5 to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 all the words after "paragraph 2" shall be deleted and there shall be inserted "shall be admissible in evidence and such admissibility shall not in itself be a reasonable excuse within the meaning of paragraph 4(1)".'.—*[Mr. Trimble.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Trimble:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Perhaps I should explain why I have adopted a slightly different position in the Chamber. That reflects not a change in political allegiance but my need for some lumbar support.

The new clause stems from a speech made by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary on 27 May when he introduced his fifth annual report. In that speech, he

mentioned changes in the law that he considered to be desirable for the police to be effective in dealing with the terrorist problem that we face not just in Northern Ireland but elsewhere in the United Kingdom. He listed seven changes to the law that he considered to be desirable. My right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) put them on record in a debate in the House a couple of weeks ago.

In Committee, I tabled two new clauses to give effect to two of the provisions mentioned by the Chief Constable. At the end of a brief debate, I expressed the hope that we would have an opportunity for a further, wider debate on the issue in the House.

I have not pursued the more radical of the two new clauses because I acknowledge that it is a radical proposal that needs to be subject to more debate and further refinement. The draft that I produced in Committee represented a stab at the matter. I have, however, retabled an amended version of the second, more modest proposal. That amended version is the result of advice that I have received from the RUC. I particularly commend the new clause, as currently drafted, because it has benefited from advice and refinement.

The new clause would amend section 57 of and schedule 5 to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. It is appropriate to take the opportunity offered by the Bill to do just that. I was surprised when the Minister said in Committee that the Bill was not the appropriate vehicle for such a change. The Bill makes massive changes to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act and in effect rewrites the whole of part VII, so I do not understand the Minister's argument that it is not a suitable or effective vehicle for change. The Bill makes substantial changes to anti-terrorist law as it applies not just to Northern Ireland but beyond. It is therefore appropriate that we consider this further change.

Section 57 and schedule 5 of the emergency provisions legislation empower the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to appoint "authorised investigators", who can require people to attend particular places, answer questions and produce documents. The provision offers a measure of protection, in that information covered by professional legal privilege or a duty of confidentiality arising from banking business does not have to be produced. However, other documents must be produced and other questions answered.

Failure to answer by a person being questioned under that section and schedule is an offence. Making an inaccurate or misleading answer, or destroying documents, are further offences. The latter offence carries a penalty of up to seven years imprisonment, whereas the former carries a penalty of only five years imprisonment.

8.30 pm

I have gone through the existing provision to point out that it is substantial and makes significant inroads into what is known as the right to silence. The Government put that provision on the statute book in 1991. The new clause simply extends the range of circumstances to which the existing power under the 1991 Act apply, but it does so in a curious way. The significant inroad into the right to silence applies to offences relating to financing terrorism. I am proposing an extension of that to more serious offences.

I could understand an objection to the new clause if it extended an existing inroad into the right to silence from serious to less serious offences, as people might then be concerned about eroding a defendant's perceived right. But that is not what the new clause does; rather, it applies the section to more serious offences.

In Committee, I suggested to the Minister that, in some respects, it was an anomaly that we have a power to appoint investigators to require people to answer questions and produce documents with regard to minor terrorist offences but have no such power with regard to serious terrorist offences. I was sorry that he did not respond to that point in Committee.

I have slightly modified the drafting of the new clause and provided an additional safeguard. An existing safeguard with regard to the operation of authorised investigators is that their code of practice provides for the tape recording of interviews in the presence of solicitors. Because the provision would be operated in a wider range of circumstances, it is appropriate to offer further safeguards restricting those eligible for appointment as authorised investigators to persons who hold or have held judicial office, or to lawyers of at least 10 years standing. That would help to make the provision safe against any challenge under the European convention on human rights.

A further change, although not by way of a safeguard, is to amend paragraph 5 of schedule 5, under which answers given to an authorised investigator are not normally permissible in evidence. Cases have already arisen in which that restriction has prevented the institution of proceedings. It seems strange that the legislation impels people to answer questions but that their answers are not admissible in evidence. The whole point of requiring people to answer questions is to provide information relating to breaches in the law and that information should therefore be admissible in evidence. That is provided for in the new clause.

I hope that the Minister can give a different slant on the matter this evening because in Committee his remarks related mainly to the more radical of my proposals, which I am not pursuing at present. He referred to maintaining the character and reputation of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland and the support of sensible and decent people. He also spoke about sustaining the judicial function and ensuring that a perception would not diminish it.

Does the Minister consider that section 57 and schedule 5 to the 1991 Act undermine the judicial function of the legal system in Northern Ireland? Do they undermine the character and reputation of the criminal justice system in the hearts and minds of ordinary, sensible, decent people? I do not think that they do and I do not see how the Minister could argue that the 1991 Act does that. The new clause simply extends the existing provision to deal with more serious offences. It removes an anomaly, which is an appropriate thing to do.

Last week, in the debate on the renewal of direct rule, and a couple of weeks earlier in the debate on the renewal of the emergency provisions and prevention of terrorism legislation, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland quoted the same passage from the Chief Constable's speech of 27 May when he presented his annual report. In that passage, the Chief Constable purported to refute the widespread belief that the police are in some way shackled. The Secretary of State quoted that denial with evident satisfaction and went on to assert that the Royal Ulster Constabulary is given every resource that it needs and has asked for in order to fight terrorism.

In the light of what the Chief Constable said then and what has happened since, the remarks of the Secretary of State are not accurate, because the Chief Constable asked for specific changes to be made and went to the extent of saying to the public, a month ago, that he had been denied those changes. He asked for changes that have not yet been granted. That is remarkable, as he said that the matter had been delayed and blocked within the Northern Ireland Office.

In Committee, the Minister linked that delay to the expected report of the royal commission, which we understand is coming soon. Although the royal commission report may be relevant to the more radical of my proposals, it is no reason for dealing with a provision that takes existing legislation, to which the Minister cannot reasonably object, and applies it to other circumstances. On that basis, I hope that the Minister can give me a better, more reasoned reply than he gave me last week.

**Mr. Maclean:** I listened with great care to the remarks of the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) and I am grateful for the customary courteous manner in which he presented his arguement, although I must confess that I was slightly alarmed to see him on the Bolsover Bench.

The hon. Gentleman has again taken the opportunity of our consideration of the Bill to propose changes. Although, as he says, he has not proposed his more radical solutions, they are still of great significance to the criminal law in Northern Ireland.

The new clause, like those that the hon. Gentleman proposed in Committee, would have a significant impact on the right to silence of a person suspected of committing a terrorist offence in Northern Ireland. The new clause achieves that effect by extending to all terrorist crime the authorised investigator powers currently available under section 57 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 in respect of investigations into terrorist finances, and by allowing a statement made by a person in response to a requirement imposed by an authorised investigator to be then used in evidence against that person in any prosecution, which I understand is not the case at the moment.

The hon. Gentleman asked me whether or not the measure would undermine the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland. That requires more consideration than we have been able to give it in the weeks since the Bill left Committee or in the few days that we have had to consider the hon. Gentleman's proposals. As I said then, and as I say now to the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends who are present tonight, the Government and the RUC keep the effectiveness of the law in combating terrorism continually under review, and the suggestions made reasonably by the Chief Constable are currently receiving not just full but urgent consideration.

I checked the *Hansard* report of our debate in Committee and the hon. Gentleman asked me whether those suggestions were receiving urgent consideration. Yes, they are. The Government are determined to ensure that all reasonable measures are in place to assist the prevention and investigation of terrorist crime, but we have to balance that against the need to maintain the character and the reputation of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland and the support of the people of Northern Ireland for it. Therefore, the Government do not believe that it would be sensible to use the Bill to legislate on such issues.

I can assure the House that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is giving the proposals the closest attention, but, given the nature of the threat posed by terrorist crime, I honestly believe that changes in the criminal law in Northern Ireland can be made only with great care and after full consideration. Even if I thought that the hon. Gentleman's proposals were excellent, I would not wish to take them on board after just a few days' consideration of them here, but would wait until it was possible to give them full and proper consideration with all the appropriate authorities in Northern Ireland.

It is true that the royal commission is about to report. I must say to the hon. Gentleman in all honesty that that is not an excuse that I plucked from mid-air for not wishing to take further action on the right to silence. I understand that the royal commission will be making recommendations on that matter. Again, the Government will wish to consider them seriously, and if we wish to make any changes to the right to silence, either here or as it further affects the law in Northern Ireland, it is best to wait for what the royal commission has to say.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the constructive contribution that he made to the debate tonight, as he did in Committee. I assure him that the Government are prepared to make changes to the legislation against terrorism when such changes are shown to be necessary and desirable. Part IV, which strengthens the law against terrorist finances, is clear evidence of that. However, hasty action in the area covered by the new clause would not be wise.

The principles behind the clause must be carefully examined and, as I hope I have managed to explain, the Bill is not a suitable vehicle for that, especially when we are expecting the royal commission's report and when my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is having full and urgent discussions on the Chief Constable's proposals. In view of those assurances, I would ask the hon. Gentleman if he would care to withdraw his motion.

8.45 pm

**Mr. Trimble:** The Minister has in effect repeated what he said in Committee, only with more emphasis. He has used basically the same argument and the same phrases.

Let me briefly comment on just a few points. The changes are necessary. I am sorry if I did not put the argument to show their necessity. I refer hon. Members who happen to read or listen to my speech tonight to the *Hansard* report of the Committee proceedings, where I gave some examples of why they are necessary. They are made necessary by the existing situation and the way in which terrorists are trained to withstand interrogation and normal questioning. Their necessity is shown by the fact that the Chief Constable of the RUC decided to go public on this issue, and that is quite unusual.

I should correct one point: the proposed measures are not simply changes to the law in Northern Ireland. Although section 57 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act has to start in Northern Ireland by an appointment by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, it extends throughout the United Kingdom. It is

one of the few provisions of which we approve in that respect because there is a need for a common legal basis to operate thoughout the United Kingdom and it is one of the grounds on which my right hon. and hon. Friends and I support the recent comments by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) when he called for the need to tackle the present problem on a United Kingdom basis. We were glad that such an integrationist argument was put by the architect of direct rule. The provisions extend throughout the United Kingdom, and it is necessary that they be reinforced.

The Minister said that it has been only a week since the Bill concluded its Committee stage and that we had had only a few days to consider the proposals in Committee. However, a month ago, the Chief Constable went public and the matter had been on the go before that; it is not as if the Minister had been given only nine or 10 days to consider the new clause.

The proposals have been under consideration for months and the impression that we have received in Northern Ireland is that the Northern Ireland Office has been sitting on them. Perhaps the Minister has become aware of them only in the past fortnight, but that is a reflection on the way in which the Government have been operating and the lack of co-ordination between the Home Office and the Northern Ireland Office, and that reinforces the arguments made by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup.

Having said that, the Minister said in Committee that the proposals were a bit premature, to which I added the gloss they might be a little premature, but not much. Perhaps after consideration of the royal commission's report and after consultation with other bodies, it will be necessary for the Minister to put forward proposals that may not be exactly the same but are on similar lines. He will have to do that soon. I will ease the U-turn he will then make by not compelling him to vote tonight against something that he will have to support before long. On that basis, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

*Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.*

## Clause 2

JURISDICTION IN RESPECT OF GROUP A OFFENCES

*Amendments made:* No. 13, in page 3, line 6, leave out from '(1)' to 'For', in line 8.

No. 14, in page 3, line 12, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

'(2) For the purpose of determining whether or not a particular event is a relevant event in relation to a Group A offence, any question as to where it occurred is to be disregarded.

(3) A person may be guilty of a Group A offence if any of the events which are relevant events in relation to the offence occurred in England and Wales.'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

## Clause 19

OFFENCES IN CONNECTION WITH LAUNDERING MONEY FROM DRUG TRAFFICKING: SCOTLAND

*Amendments made:* No. 28, in page 29, line 26, leave out from 'not' to end of line 30 and insert

'make it an offence for a professional legal adviser to fail to disclose any information or other matter which has come to him in privileged circumstances.'.

No. 29, in page 30, line 17, at end insert—

'(8A) For the purposes of this section, any information or other matter comes to a professional legal adviser in privileged circumstances if it is communicated, or given, to him—

(a) by, or by a representative of, a client of his in connection with the giving by the adviser of legal advice to the client;

(b) by, or by a representative of, a person seeking legal advice from the adviser; or

(c) by any person—

(i) in contemplation of, or in connection with, legal proceedings; and

(ii) for the purpose of those proceedings.

(8B) No information or other matter shall be treated as coming to a professional legal adviser in privileged circumstances if it is communicated or given with a view to furthering any criminal purpose.'.

No. 30, in page 31, line 9, leave out subsection (4) and insert—

'(4) Nothing in subsections (1) to (3) above makes it an offence for a professional legal adviser to disclose any information or other matter—

(a) to, or to a representative of, a client of his in connection with the giving by the adviser of legal advice to the client; or

(b) to any person—

(i) in contemplation of, or in connection with, legal proceedings; and

(ii) for the purpose of those proceedings.

(4A) Subsection (4) above does not apply in relation to any information or other matter which is disclosed with a view to furthering any criminal purpose.'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

## Clause 22

ENFORCEMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND ORDERS: DRUG TRAFFICKING

*Amendment made:* No. 15, in page 34, line 33, after 'orders),' insert

'in subsection (1), for "19" there shall be substituted "18" and'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

## Clause 25

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION ETC. RECEIVED IN PRIVILEGED CIRCUMSTANCES

*Amendment made:* No. 31, in page 37, line 7, at end insert—

'(2) The same subsections as are inserted in section 31 of the Act of 1986 by subsection (1) shall be inserted in section 42 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987 (corresponding Scottish provision).'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

## Clause 33

ENFORCEMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND ORDERS: PROCEEDS OF CRIMINAL CONDUCT

*Amendment made:* No. 16, in page 45, line 15 after 'orders),' insert

'in subsection (1), for "89" there shall be substituted "88" and'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

## Clause 49

INVESTIGATION OF TERRORIST ACTIVITIES

*Amendment made:* No. 17, in page 64, line 46, after 'conceals' insert 'or destroys'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

**Clause 64**

FIXING OF FINES

**Mr. Michael:** I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 73, line 11, at end insert—

'(1A) In fixing the amount of any fine, a magistrates' court shall consider the weekly amount which it appears to the court the offender can reasonably afford to pay as a fine, and the amount of any fine imposed by a magistrates' court shall be the product of this amount and the number of weeks' payment which in the opinion of the court is commensurate with the seriousness of the offence, or the combination of the offence and other offences associated with it.'.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 2, in page 73, line 12, after 'court', insert 'other than a magistrates' court'.

No. 3, in page 73, line 15, after 'court', insert 'other than a magistrates' court'.

No. 9, in page 73, leave out line 46.

No. 10, in page 74, line 1, leave out 'and that Schedule'.

No. 4, in clause 65, page 74, leave out lines 30 to 33 and insert—

'"29.—(1) Nothing in this Part shall prevent a court from passing a more severe sentence on an offender by reason of his loss of mitigation due to previous convictions or to any failure of his to respond to previous sentences, or by reason of any aggravating factors of the offence disclosed by previous offences, provided that the sentence (other than a sentence passed under section 1(2)(b) or section 2(2)(b) above) is not disproportionate to the seriousness of the offence or, where applicable, to the seriousness of the combination of the offence and other offences associated with it."'.

No. 5, in schedule 3, page 87, leave out from beginning of line 23 to end of line 42 on page 89.

**Mr. Michael:** The way in which we dealt with the previous group of Government amendments demonstrates the co-operative way in which we have approached the Bill. However, the number of Government amendments shows that the legislation has often changed rapidly and dramatically as it has progressed. That led me to table amendment No. 1 and those grouped with it.

They relate to a part of the Bill that did not exist on Second Reading, and which was therefore not considered in Committee or on Report in another place. The changes heralded by this group of amendments concern fines and the ways in which previous offences are dealt with.

We take some pride in having provoked the Government into making one of numerous U-turns seen in recent months. This one is welcome, because there is a need to address the problem of unit fines and section 29 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends frequently raised that issue on the Floor of the House and in correspondence, so the hon. Gentleman cannot claim all the credit. It is a perfectly common-sense move, and as ours are a common-sense Government, they normally adopt such improvements.

**Mr. Michael:** I am delighted to share a piece of common sense with the hon. Lady. Previous Ministers were reluctant to exhibit that common sense, but I clear the present Minister of blame for that, as I have done at every stage. We can claim more credit, because there would have been no action had it not been for my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien), who introduced a ten-minute Bill, which could have passed through the House—in the way that the Bail (Amendment) Bill did, with our support—had the Government been more forthcoming. We can claim some credit for being proactive in seeking amendments to parts of the legislation that were causing difficulty in the courts.

Grouped with amendment No. 1 are amendments Nos. 9, 10 and 5, in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), on which he will comment.

Unit fines have been dogged with problems. When they were implemented last October, we warned that, if the Government did not take care, problems would arise. The over-excitable way in which the former Home Secretary performed his U-turn gave rise to the danger that not only the problems created by the Government's implementation of the unit fines system but principles that have not been contested by anyone might be removed. In other words, the baby might be thrown out with the bath water.

Had some means of dealing with the unit fines system and section 29 of the 1991 Act formed part of the original Bill, we would have had an opportunity to move amendments and to improve the legislation as it progressed through the House. In Committee, we moved with commendable speed to test the Government's principles.

The amendments seek to guide magistrates to impose fines that relate to the means of the offender and to be more precise than the formulation currently in the Bill. Magistrates will be required to observe a two-stage process —to assess the weekly amount that the offender can reasonably afford to pay, and to impose a fine reflecting the number of weeks of payment that the court considers to be commensurate with the seriousness of the offence.

For the same offence, a well-off offender would receive a higher fine than a poor offender, in line with their different weekly incomes and an amount that each could reasonably afford to pay as a fine.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman** *indicated assent.*

**Mr. Michael:** I believe that principle is agreed in all parts of the House—I am glad that the hon. Lady agrees —and by those who were dissatisfied with the system that was implemented by the Government and those who supported them.

The basic argument for such an approach is that, if operated properly, it would ensure that the fines imposed a more equal degree of punishment on offenders having different income levels. A fine of £150 may be derisory to someone who is wealthy, but it could be crippling for someone on income support or who is caught in the poverty trap just above income support level. The degree of punishment felt by the two offenders is very different.

That was the widely supported principle on which the House agreed in the past, but the statutory unit fine system operated in a way that led courts to impose unreasonably high fines on offenders having modest, middle incomes. The amendments will produce the benefits of means-related fines without the unintended ill effects that resulted from the statutory unit fine system. The House can see how generous I am, in assuming that incompetence rather than intention led to that system being implemented in the way that it was.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Much of the problem was due to offenders flatly refusing to fill in the forms. That

being so, the courts took an adverse view of their income. It was due to pig-headedness on the part of some defendants.

**Mr. Michael:** I entirely agree. In the famous crisp packet case in Gwent, aggravating factors were considered by the court. The newspapers continually refer to the fine in that case being reduced on appeal, but it was not. It was reduced automatically when the defendant filled in the forms. The defendant had the grace to admit that that was the case, even though some newspapers did not.

I am rather worried by this degree of agreement, but I hope that the Minister will join this party and will agree that we should pursue that principle. Things went wrong for a variety of reasons, but we must make sure that the changes that the Minister sought in Committee do not bring about another cause of difficulties and damage the Minister's reputation—in the way that implementing the unit fine system irretrievably damaged the former Minister of State, Home Office, who is now Secretary of State for Education.

In this atmosphere of agreement, I return to what we are trying to achieve in the amendment. It is particularly important that we should not go back to the system that existed before 1991. Unrealistically high fines should not be imposed on offenders with modest or reasonable means, and certainly should not be imposed on those of low means.

Before the 1991 Act, a quarter of the people who were sentenced to imprisonment each year in England and Wales were imprisoned for non-payment of fines. In 1991, a total of 18,973 people were imprisoned for fine default. The fines of the imprisoned defaulters were originally imposed for a wide range of offences. The largest categories were motoring offences, with 5,180 offenders, and theft and fraud, with 3,631. Some 26 per cent. of all sentenced prisoners entering prison in 1991 and 46 per cent. of those given sentences of six months or less where imprisoned for fine default.

9 pm

Those figures are not irrelevant. They are highly relevant, and not only to the behaviour of the courts in the new legislation. Has the Minister made any allowance in the acceleration and increase of the prison building programme for the increase of people imprisoned for default which may arise as a result of the change in the Bill? Most sentences fit fine defaulters short—defaulters represented just 1·2 per cent. of the average daily population of sentenced prisoners and 11·2 per cent. of those serving six months or less.

However, even a small proportion of fine defaulters can cause serious problems for a hard-pressed prison system, especially as the strain is felt most in the local prisons where overcrowding is greatest. The Minister must pay particular attention to the fact that the work caused by almost 19,000 annual receptions—the processing of each offender and the reception, discharge, paperwork and so on—is substantial, regardless of the prisoner's length of stay.

In Committee, the Minister said on 17 June 1993:

"In the past, the courts have had a duty to reflect in the fine the offender's means, but only since the 1991 Act have they had a duty to inquire into the financial circumstances of the offender. That duty remains, so the courts should be armed with much better financial information about the offender's means and be better able to set an appropriate sentence."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*. 17 June 1993; c. 259.]

However, the change is more apparent than real. In practice, before the 1991 Act, courts always asked offenders how much their income was before fining them. The consequence was an increase in the number of people being imprisoned for default despite that practice being observed.

The Opposition amendments, therefore, are directed to helping the Minister. They will ensure that, after the unit fine system is abolished, the principle of means-related fines will continue to govern courts' decisions. That will ensure that financial penalties bear evenly on the wealthy and less well-off, avoid the imposition of unrealistic fines on the poor, and prevent a sharp rise in the number of offenders unnecessarily imprisoned for fine default.

I turn to the amendments that deal with the way in which the Government have approached section 29 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. Clause 65 repeals section 29 of that Act and replaces it with a formulation allowing courts to take into account any previous convictions of the offender or any failure of his to respond to previous sentences when considering the seriousness of an offence for sentencing purposes. Our amendment seeks to make sure that this is done in a sensible way and says:

"Nothing in this Part shall prevent a court from passing a more severe sentence on an offender by reason of his loss of mitigation due to previous convictions or to any failure of his to respond to previous sentences, or by reason of any aggravating factors of the offence disclosed by previous offences, provided that the sentence (other than a sentence passed under section 1(2)(b) or section 2(2)(b) above) is not disproportionate to the seriousness of the offence or, where applicable, to the seriousness of the combination of the offence and other offences associated with it."

There are two elements there. One is the question of mitigation, which the Minister will note was discussed across the parties. The Minister will note that Conservative Back-Benchers asked how loss of mitigation would be brought into the system. There was agreement across the Committee on whether the approach to the loss of mitigation was the right one.

Lip service was paid to the second element, which is that the offence should not be treated as more serious than it really was. Obviously, if there is a record, it must be taken into account and the sentence needs to be set accordingly. Loss of mitigation will occur accordingly. But the offence should not be treated as if the theoretical theft of a Mars bar became a serious offence akin to assault, burglary or other serious offences. No matter how often the offence is repeated, it remains only as serious as it is.

It is that which we seek to maintain in the formulation that we put forward. We first make it clear that the courts may pass more severe sentences on offenders with previous convictions, but we also make it clear that that is subject to the limitation that the courts must not increase sentences to levels out of all proportion to the seriousness of the current offence. Therefore, in effect, courts will be able to increase sentences because of previous convictions or reduce them because of the offender's previous clean record, but it must be within the band of possible sentences broadly in proportion to the seriousness of the offence before the court.

That observes principles that already exist. The guidance for the court is already there through Court of Appeal decisions and sentencing practices that have been established over a period of years. The danger is that, if we do not write into the law a limiting principle of proportionality, we could return, not to the position

*[Mr. Michael]*

before the 1991 Act, which is what the Minister intends, but to a more punitive sentencing framework, under which some offenders could be given sentences out of all proportion to what they deserve as a result of their offence.

It is necessary to look at examples that might develop and at the position before the 1991 Act. The Court of Appeal has repeatedly emphasised that an offender should not be sentenced for the offences that he has committed in the past and for which he has already been punished. That principle is already within the law, and was established by R. *v.* Queen in 1980. The offender faced a punishment commensurate with the seriousness of the new offence. To top up that punishment because of past wrongdoing for which the offender has already paid the penalty, would be to punish him twice for the same offence.

That did not mean that the courts were required to treat a repeat offender in the same way as an offender with no or few previous convictions. The latter could be given a more lenient sentence because of the mitigation of having a clean record.

I remind the Minister again of the fact that that principle was referred to in Committee by two of his hon. Friends. Therefore, it is a matter on which there is agreement among those who have experience of dealing with these issues in the courts. It could mean that a repeat burglar would eventually be sentenced more severely than a rapist. Surely that would not be right. It would offend against common sense. An offence does not become more serious than another simply because it has been repeated.

I hope that the Minister will see that there is common sense and balance in what we are saying, and that he will recognise that, as a result of recent decisions by the House of Lords, what is said as the Bill passes through this place is important. This part of the Bill only emerged in Committee, and has had proper consideration only in Committee and here on Report. Therefore, it is particularly important to ensure that the right principles are enshrined in the statute.

Will the Minister look with care at the two elements within the amendments that we have tabled? It is important to ensure that offences do not lead to custodial sentences where they would not otherwise have done so. I point the Minister to a reference in a 1988 Home Office research study of Crown court sentencing. It found that, in cases of theft valued at under £200, 39 per cent. of offenders received immediate prison sentences. In such cases, imprisonment is, in practice, often a response to persistent minor offending in the past, and cannot be justified by the gravity of the offence for which the court is purporting to sentence.

The 1990 White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public" said:

"Injustice is more likely if courts do not focus on the seriousness of the offence before them when they sentence."

I am again playing the Government's own music back to them, and asking that the point be borne in mind.

I am sure that the Minister accepts that, where a punishment must be severe, because of the nature of the offence and because of its repetition, the courts must be able to act swiftly. It is equally important, however, to ensure that the system does not rack up offences, so that a severe punishment is not passed where the offences are not serious enough to justify it.

The departure from the principle of proportionality would mean imprisoning small-time offenders whose offences did not deserve it, passing disproportionately long prison sentences on those whose offences merited shorter sentences and using the most intensive community services for those who committed the most minor offences, for which lower penalties would suffice.

The result would be a general increase in the severity of sentencing to levels more punitive than before the 1991 Act. That would do nothing to reduce crime but a great deal to create injustice in sentencing. The amendments aim to persuade the Government that, in rightly abolishing the unit fine system and the constraints on courts that prevented them from taking into account previous offences, we must ensure that we avoid nonsensical judgments in the future.

I am sure that that will be the Minister's aspiration. I hope very much that he will take our constructive amendments on board in seeking to achieve those ends.

**Mr. Maclennan:** Three amendments appear in my name, of which amendment No. 5 relates to schedule No. 3. On reflection, I am inclined to the view that it would have been better to strike not so much at the schedule, which depends on clause 64, as at clause 64 itself, since that really is the heart of the matter. Recognising the constraints on order, I believe that I would be wise to focus my remarks principally on amendment No. 1 and leave it to another place to address the demerits of clause 64 frontally.

The last time I commented on the then Home Secretary's decision to abolish unit fines, he gave me the advice that I should retreat to a darkened room, take a pill and reflect on whether there was anything in the Government's proposals with which I was in agreement.

A period of tranquillity has elapsed—perhaps it has even extended into the debate, in which about 10 hon. Members are participating. Having followed the advice of the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), although I did not require any artificial tranquillisers, I have come to the view that there is little to be said for the Government's proposals, which the amendments seek to modify.

Throughout this sorry discussion, we have witnessed the rather dangerous element of instant government which has been responsible for some of the worst aspects of criminal law reform in recent years.

Amendment No. 1, to which the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) spoke tonight, is an attempt—albeit a last-minute attempt—to attract some sense back into the business of fining. It does not go nearly far enough, but it will probably improve the Bill. I hope that the whole issue of fining—unit fining in particular—will be considered by their Lordships with the dispassionate objectivity which did not characterise the Government's introduction of new clause 64. That introduction was in sharp contrast with the manner in which the original proposal for unit fines was introduced by the Government in the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990.

9.15 pm

There had been a long-standing debate on the issue. The principle of unit fines had been tried and tested in many jurisdictions. It had been introduced in Finland as long ago as 1921, in Sweden in 1931, and in Denmark in

1939. In five other European countries, including France and West Germany, it was introduced in the 1970s, and Spain and Switzerland are now planning to introduce unit or day fine systems.

Thus, it cannot be said that, in proposing this means of tackling a long-standing series of related problems, we were without the benefit of international experience. I have gone through the history of the introduction of unit fines and have found that at no point did I criticise the principle. Indeed, I strongly welcomed the system as it was part of my party's policy. We saw it as a means of tackling three principal problems arising out of fining as it had developed in this country, particularly in the magistrates courts.

The first problem arose from the inconsistency of fining practice as between courts. I fear that the Government's action will do little to eliminate that difficulty. We shall hear complaints—complaints at least as strong as those that have been made since the unit fine system was so ineptly introduced—about the extraordinary discrepancies between fines imposed up and down the land for the same offence. The Government will have to be held directly responsible for this, for they had a means of their own devising to prevent it.

The second major defect that the Government sought deliberately to remove was the inequity of the fining system, which resulted in unequal pain being suffered by people fined fo similar offences without proper regard for their ability to pay. That is a real fear. The Home Office's own research shows that, in 1990, 90 per cent. of fine defaulters were unemployed.

The third probem with which unit fines were designed to deal—and I believe that, had they been given a proper chance, they would have dealt with it—was that of fine defaulters. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth gave the figures. In 1991, about 19,000 people went to prison for defaulting. It cannot be a purpose of Home Office policy—I have no reason to believe that the Home Office has departed from its policy because the then Home Secretary, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe, decided to stand on his head—that a person deemed by a court to be suitable for fining should end up in gaol at public expense. That is an extremely expensive remedy, and one with which a Government prudent with public finance ought not to be satisfied. We shall watch with great interest what happens to the figures as a result of this ill-conceived change.

The Government do not know what has happened to sentencing and how the fines have worked in practice since the introduction of the unit fines system. As recently as 21 May, I asked the Home Secretary whether he would place in the Library the information collected by his Department on the operation of the system. The answer, from a Minister of State, was:

"Statistical information about fines imposed since 1 October 1992 is still being collected. It will be published in due course in the usual way."—[*Official Report*, 21 May 1993; Vol. 225, c. *343*.]

In other words, without the relevant information the Government moved to abolish what they had introduced scarcely two years earlier. It is almost inconceivably irresponsible, but it is entirely typical of the Government.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** The hon. Gentleman says that it was irresponsible, but the then Lord Chief Justice pressed for it.

**Mr. Maclennan:** If the hon. Lady cares to read the Lord Chief Justice's remarks in full, as I have, she will realise that he was dealing with a range of issues that were causing dissatisfaction on the bench in relation to the curbing of magistrates' discretion. He was certainly not advocating anything like that which the Government have incorporated in the clause that we are seeking to amend.

The Minister of State, the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) gave the game away in Committee. In seeking to explain what was then new clause 39, and talking about the abolition of unit fines, he said:

"We are concerned about the anomalous results that have been produced in several cases."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 17 June 1993; c. 240.]

Is it appropriate to alter the entire system of fining, which had been the result of careful consideration by the Home Office over a period of months, if not years, on the basis of several bad cases?

I suggest to the Minister that such a move was ill considered and unjustified. The outcry to which he referred stemmed from one or two well-publicised cases which were plainly nonsensical and at least one of which was quickly put right when the facts about the defendant's income were brought to light, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said. That is not sufficient cause for abandoning a carefully thought out system.

The Home Office is not usually so frivolous in its approach. Had it given the issue serious consideration, we might have been prepared to accept that the carefully wrought structure had been misconceived and that something else should properly be put in its place. In May, the then Home Secretary said that he accepted the unit fines system in principle, but only a week later he threw it out in its totality.

I suggested at the time—this clearly got under his skin—that he had on his mind thoughts other than the reform of the criminal justice system, that his head was high and that he had aspirations that some of us have noticed he rather quickly achieved, although I should hesitate to indulge in the post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy and suggest that he owes his current eminence as Chancellor of the Exchequer to a packet of potato crisps flung out of a car window. For the sake of 24 hours of cheap popularity, the then Home Secretary was prepared to abandon a system of fining that was much more apt to produce just fines and to ensure that the penalties were related to means than had been the case in the past.

This hour and this place, with its rather exiguous audience, is perhaps not the right time to deploy all the arguments that might be adduced about possible alternative ways in which the system might have been modified, and I doubt whether it would be in order to argue that matter because we are dealing with a particular modification of the scheme. So far as it goes, however, the amendment represents an improvement on what the Government have introduced, though it will not really do as a substitute for the Government's first thoughts on the subject.

The pilot scheme which the Government introduced in four locations had much merit. It showed a distinct decline in the number of fine defaulters in all the areas affected and showed that it was possible for the courts to operate a system with some discretion against the background of the grids that had been established.

*[Mr. Maclennan]*

The difficulties that were thrown up in operating the new statutory scheme, which in some significant respects departed from the pilot scheme, were not insurmountable. They were surmountable in a number of ways which, I have no doubt, will be considered in the future by penal reformers and, I hope, by another place.

The criminal law does not benefit from instant judgments of this kind. It is a piecemeal approach which has disfigured our statute book and led to a number of monstrous injustices being enshrined in the law, almost in response to the headline of the day.

I do not wholly agree with the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth that unit fines should have been abolished, if that was what he was saying—*[Interruption.]* I understood that Labour Members were also in favour of the principle of unit fines.

**Mr. Boateng:** I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) argued well for the principle of proportionality. I did not hear him in any other tone or to any other end.

**Mr. Maclennan:** He was ambiguous on the point. He seemed also to accept that unit fines were unpopular in practice. He was not quite prepared to say that he accepted the principle and felt that they could be modified. The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) is right to say that he spoke of proportionality later in his remarks, but earlier he appeared to accept that it was appropriate to abandon unit fines entirely.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** In Committee and on the Floor of the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) has always argued that the unit fine system needed to be reformed, not abolished.

**Mr. Maclennan:** That is a clear statement, and I am glad to have it. I had hoped that those who are anxious to ensure that fines are proportionate and who are concerned about the problem of fine defaulters landing up in prison might agree that the Govrnment have not properly tested unit fines before abandoning them. It would be a tragic outcome of this debate if the Government were able to perpetuate the myth that they have seriously tested the system of unit fines which has worked so well in many countries and avoided the monstrous nonsense of imprisoning the unemployed in particular because they default.

If it can be accepted that, for short-term political reasons, the then Home Secretary decided that it was appropriate to stand on his head and his successor felt duty bound to put something in place which required some attention to be paid to means, and if amendment No. 1 is accepted, it might do as an interim measure while the matter is considered at greater length and with greater concern for the consequences than could have been the case when the then Home Secretary decided to throw out the baby with the bath water.

9.30 pm

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** I intend to address the question of unit fines and sentencing, but I should like to clarify a confusion that might have arisen from some of the comments by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), who suggested that my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) would reply on behalf of the Liberal Democrats. In fact, he will reply in relation to later amendments dealing with Scotland.

On unit fines, the phrase that was used a moment ago about throwing out the baby with the bath water is precisely the phrase that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth used. Labour Members oppose the current system and the way in which it has been working. There is a need for change and for reform rather than, as my hon. Friend said, throwing out the baby with the bath water.

Before the 1991 Act, the wealthy were fined derisory sums and the poor were heavily fined, thereby ignoring the wealth and the poverty in each case. The result was that, too often, the poor were imprisoned for default, and the rich laughed at the courts because there was no penalty to deter them from committing further offences. For that reason, when the 1991 Bill was considered in Committee, it was broadly accepted that there was a need for change and a need to reform the way in which fines were imposed. It was necessary to be fair not only to the poor and to the rich but to those on middle incomes.

The problem which arose with the new legislation was that it imposed too strict a straitjacket upon the courts. Warwickshire magistrates have pointed out the problems with unit fines. In a letter to me, they set out clearly their concern about unit fines. It is a letter from the chief executive and justices' clerk to Warwickshire Magistrates' Courts Service and it is signed at the direction of and on behalf of the chairmen of the Atherstone-Coleshill, Mid-Warwickshire, Nuneaton, Rugby and South Warwickshire petty sessional divisions. They say:

"We rely on the fine as a punishment in the majority of cases. The concerns of magistrates tend to be about the operation of the new system"—

meaning the 1991 Act—

"not the underlying principle. The results being thrown up are too disparate.

Unit fines were piloted in four Courts around the Country and worked well. Those Courts restricted themselves to a maximum disposable weekly income of £25-£40. In the case mentioned above"—

they quote some examples—

"the higher income man would have been fined in the range of . . . £1,200. Magistrates would find this more acceptable."

They were suggesting a reform of the system. They said that they would like to see different criteria, and that

"the maximum disposable weekly income figure should be at least halved, and preferably reduced by more than that;"

and

"the subordinate legislation should be altered to allow for a sliding scale of allowances to take account of the fact that the commitments of defendants tend to rise with their income."

So, essentially, the magistrates were calling for reform.

The Government appear to have decided that they are going to return to the very difficulties that existed before those reforms were undertaken. The result will be—this warning must be given—that we will get again exactly the same problems as we had before the reforms were undertaken. We will have the rich laughing again at fines, and the poor being too highly fined.

I see the same problem arising with the proposals to reform sections 29 and 1 of the 1991 Act. There is, rightly, great public concern about these provisions, because they do not fulfil the requirements of good criminal law. They do not properly protect the public, reduce reoffending, or provide a deterrent.

Labour's view is that our clause would enable the courts to put in prison those who ought to go into prison, but would also ensure that the courts did not unjustly imprison those who should not go to prison. That balance must be struck. It is struck in the Labour party's amendment, but not in the Government's clause.

The Government are proposing these changes only because of the substantial pressure that has been put upon them. Their response has been so slow that they have been rushed into providing these clauses at a late stage in the process of the Bill so that proper debate on and consideration of them has been very difficult.

As late as October last year, the then Home Secretary, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), said before the Home Affairs Select Committee that he did not propose to make any changes in the 1991 Act for a year. He displayed the most appalling complacency about the criticisms that had been made of the sentencing provisions in that Act by magistrates—over 30 have resigned—by judges, and by the police. He felt that he could wait a year before doing anything. It was only under substantial pressure from this side of the House, from Government Back-Bench Members and from outside the House that the Government were finally forced to accept that changes needed to be made urgently.

The Labour party takes the view that sections 29 and 1 are a straitjacket on the courts. But we accept some of the analysis by Ministers who introduced the 1991 Bill. We accept that the situation before that Bill was causing problems and creating unfairness in sentencing. In our view, the case for change was overwhelming. That is why Labour and Conservative Members supported the ideas put forward in the 1991 Act.

The proposals now put forward by the Government will return us to a situation that everyone agreed did not work. We are going back to a situation that is similar to, or worse than, that before the 1991 Act. We should have been acknowledging that there was a problem before the 1991 Act, that we attempted to solve it in the wrong way by imposing a straitjacket, and that we now need to try another method of resolving the problem. The Minister is simply saying that they will scrap the attempt to remove the difficulties that existed before 1991 and go back to the situation that existed then and that was causing problems. It appears to me, however, that the clause being put forward by the Government is weaker than the situation that existed before 1991, gives less guidance, and could lead to far more difficulties than we had before 1991.

The problem is that previous convictions, in particular, should be part, as the Court of Appeal has said, of the matrix of sentencing. It said that in the case of Bailey. But as the Court of Appeal also said in that case, an offender should not be

"sentenced primarily for the offences which he has committed in the past and for which he has already been punished."

For example, in the case of Crown *v.* Bailey, the Court of Appeal reduced to three months' imprisonment the sentence of a persistent offender for stealing cod fillets worth £12. Lord Justice Stocker said:

"There is no doubt the appellant is a recidivist and no doubt he is a thorough pest. But as the Court of Appeal has often said, the sentence imposed must relate to the gravity of the offence in respect of which it is imposed. As the Government said, injustice is more likely if the courts do not focus on the offence which is before them when they sentence."

I quoted in Committee cases that illustrate the sort of problems that existed before 1991 to which the Minister seeks to return. In Crown *v.* Galloway in 1979, a shoplifter who stole three small items received consecutive sentences of 12 months, 12 months and six months, making a total of two and a half years. The sentence was disproportionate to the offences that were before the Court. In the case of Crown *v.* Skidmore, three offences of obtaining £20 by deception resulted in two years' imprisonment. Clearly, none of those offences would have merited a custodial sentence without previous convictions.

The Government, in seeking to deal with that issue, went too far in the 1991 Act. Now they do not seem to accept that they went too far and instead want to return to the previous situation. I must warn the Government that clause 64 will re-create injustices in sentencing like those that existed before 1991. The wording of the clause is too vague and makes no reference to the key issue of proportionality, which is what the Labour party says should be the basis of on which the context of sentencing and previous convictions is set. The risks of no guidance to courts are as bad as the risks of too much guidance.

In their provisions to amend section 29, the Government are lurching from one mistake to another. The public want the courts to impose sentences that deter and punish and the public want justice to be fair. The punishment should fit the crime; it should not exceed the crime. The clause will not achieve that key element of fairness and proportionality that the Labour party and the public want in the judicial system. If the Government are not careful, they will end up creating more problems than they solve.

**Mr. Maclean:** Far be it from me to begin by making the odd political point that may provoke a wide-ranging debate, to incure the wrath of the members of staff at the Patronage Secretary's Office, or even to provoke the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) to intervene.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said that he did not know whether to attribute the motive of the Government to incompetence or intention. What motive would he attribute to his own party and to those spokesmen who said that the unit fine system was so good that they would have liked it to be extended to Crown court offences?

I accept that Opposition Members, including those who did not at that time have their present responsibility, have now seen the light. I accept that they have seen the light, but I am slightly mystified as to why they have suggested a new proposal in the amendment that maintains some of the old rigidities of the unit fine system which we are scrapping. It is as if, rather than acquiring the characteristics of Christianity, Paul has acquired the characteristics of Herod. However, I congratulate the Opposition on coming back with an amendment that seeks to overcome some of the problems of the unit fine scheme which we discussed in Committee.

9.45 pm

I can see what the Opposition are trying to achieve, but I am sorry to tell them that the amendment will not work. Its design of a scheme that, again, applies a fixed system, but tries to allow a bit of discretion as well, is flawed. I shall not go into detail about our reasons for deciding to abolish the unit fine scheme as it stands. We went into that

at great length and in good humour in Committee. However, for the benefit of those who were not there and who have not read the *Official Report*, I shall say that we believed that the scheme was over-mechanistic and over-complicated and that it interfered unnecessarily with magistrates' discretion to impose appropriate fines in individual cases. The amendment goes some way towards reducing those evils, but it fails to do so entirely because to do that it would have had to abolish the scheme altogether, as we have done.

Under the system proposed in the amendment, the courts would be obliged to decide the weekly amount that an offender could afford to pay and would then multiply that by the number of weeks that related to the seriousness of the offence. That would produce some strange results. Because there are no parameters on the weekly amount that the offender might reasonably be judged to be able to pay, the courts could find themselves imposing fines that many people would regard as totally out of line with the seriousness of the offence.

Let us consider one extreme first. A millionaire might readily be judged to be able to afford a weekly amount of £10,000 to pay a fine. For the famous trivial litter offence, he would therefore receive the maximum fine for that offence of £2,500. That would mean that the potential difference between fines, already considered too great by many under the unit fine scheme, would be even greater. If the same millionaire were arrested in a minor scuffle with someone who was unemployed and the court decided that they were equally guilty, for the same offence their fines could range beween £5 or less and £5,000.

There may be some who would not be especially unsympathetic towards a hefty fine, however unjust, being imposed on a millionaire, but I point out that the results would be equally unjust for offenders of more modest means. For a 10-week litter offence, a middle-income offender whom the courts judged to be able to pay £200 a week would be fined £2,000. For the same offence, an unemployed offender might be fined £40 or less. I cannot see how such wide discrepancies could be justified.

It is extremely difficult to combine discretion and such a rigid scheme. "Discretion" is defined by the "Oxford English Dictionary" as:

"the liberty of deciding as one thinks fit".

Operating a system requires one to proceed in certain prescribed ways. I suspect that the way in which the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth really expects his amendment to work would be as follows: once magistrates had decided on the amount that an offender could reasonably pay and had then determined the number of weeks of payment that would be commensurate with the seriousness of the offence, if they did not like the result —it seems very likely that, as with the unit fine scheme, there would be occasions when they did not—they would go back and change one of those parameters to arrive at the penalty at which they would like to have arrived if penalties were not prescribed by the unit scheme.

I have no objection to magistrates adopting an informal unit model if they find it helpful in setting a fine—for example, in reaching a starting point from which they can use their discretion to depart to reach a just result. However, I am not prepared to accept a statutory scheme whereby magistrates are then, in effect, expected to fudge to achieve justice in all cases.

The clear advantage of our new arrangements over this scheme is that they give primacy to seriousness and then allow financial circumstances to be taken into account within the parameters set by seriousness. The amendment does not provide for any relationship between the two elements. The same fine could be produced by a serious offence that was rated at 100 weeks in seriousness terms at a weekly sum of £10 as could be produced by a minor one that was rated at one week's seriousness at a weekly sum of £1,000.

The amendment, allowing for discretion, mixes uneasily with the remains of a rigid system. I accept that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has made an honest attempt to try to come up with some form of unit fine system. However, our new arrangements provide for discretion and the guiding principles on which it should be exercised. I hope that he will agree that ours is the better combination.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland pontificated grandly, as is his wont, on the dangers of instant government. He decided that his amendments were not the appropriate ones to which to speak and that he should speak to the Labour amendments instead. He criticised the Labour amendments and what Labour Members had said as not being appropriate, but he still decided to speak to their amendments. He showed us an example of instant decision making that does not render him a suitable spokesman to condemn any other hon. Member for coming to a right decision.

The hon. Gentleman quoted from one part of *Hansard*, but he did not read the proceedings of the Committee as fully as he perhaps should have done. It was remiss of him to condemn me for being ill prepared and not carrying out a promise that I had apparently made, when he was totally wrong in that assertion. If he had bothered to read *Hansard* properly, he would have found that the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) said that victims "deserve and should be entitled to special consideration and we must ensure that they get it."

In Committee, I said:

"The hon. Gentleman is right to say that it is not a Home Office matter and does not require legislation. I can give the Committee an assurance that I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of the Lord Chancellor's Department and I shall add my view that I am entirely in sympathy with what he says."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 17 June 1993; c. 290-91.]

If the hon. Gentleman had read *Hansard*, he would have found that I made no promise to rush back to the House today, having undertaken to consult the Lord Chancellor in the meantime. It was wrong of him to pontificate so grandly that we are ill prepared, when he was so ill prepared that he tabled amendments which, if we had accepted them, would have made total nonsense of the Act. He decided that he did not know whether to support the Labour amendments, simply condemn the Government or dither, as is the usual wont of the Liberal Democrats.

**Mr. Maclennan:** With the leave of the House, it would be too much to expect the Minister to reply to the arguments deployed in the debate. It was not entirely uncharacteristic of him to devote himself to an earlier debate in which there had been a passage about the view of the Lord Chancellor. In responding simply to that point, it seems that if the Lord Chancellor was consulted, the Minister had a duty to tell the House what the Government's senior Law Officer thought about the matter.

I make it clear that I did not dissent from the view of the Labour party on the merits of its amendment—I thought that it was a good try. It is one of a number of possible approaches that one might take. The Labour party, like the Liberal Democrat party, would not believe that it made sense to propose a system of unit fines and suggest that it was the last word on the matter. Apart from anything else, neither the Liberal Democrat party nor the Labour party has Government resources at its disposal to enable it to produce schemes that will necessarily stand up to the test.

The Government have engaged in instant government. On 4 May, the Home Secretary said absolutely clearly that he agreed with the principle of unit fines but the system needed to be amended. On 13 May, he abandoned the principle of unit fines. I cannot recall a more clear example of instant government. If the Minister can cite a better example, I will happily give way to him. It is of a piece with the way in which the Government have legislated to deal with headline concerns—the introduction of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1989 and other criminal justice legislation.

It is scarcely surprising that they do not stick and that the Government must come forward with amending legislation. No doubt they will have to do the same with the Bill, once enacted, when the prisons are filled, as, predictably, they will be, with those who have defaulted because fines of unsuitable severity in comparison with their income were imposed and could not be paid.

The Minister is relatively new to his job and he would do better to address the substance of the argument than engage in the small change of petty party political abuse, which has been the characteristic behaviour of a number of Home Office Ministers of the past three years. That is not, by any means, in the best traditions of Conservative Home Secretaries. One recalls, for instance, the late Rab Butler. The Minister might choose to follow that model rather than that of some of the more recent occupants of that high office.

**Mr. Michael:** The Minister has recognised that we are trying to undertake the serious job of getting the legislation right. At the beginning of his speech, he sought to make the very cheap political points that he said he did not intend to make.

The Minister should be reminded that, from an early stage, reservations were sounded about section 29 of the 1991 Act and about the fine system. The method by which the fine system was implemented brought it into disrepute, as we have come to recognise. We must ensure that the new system does not replicate past problems—problems that led to many fine defaulters ending up in prison. The Minister has not, however, paid sufficient attention to that need. He should consider it carefully, because events will show whether our fear is justified or whether the legislation has been successful in getting the courts to approach the principles that we want to see observed sensibly.

The Minister was wrong when he said that our amendment did not give appropriate weight to the seriousness of the offence, because it states that the fine and the number of payment weeks will be such

"which in the opinion of the court is commensurate with the seriousness of the offence, or the combination of the offence and other offences associated with it."

That is the first principle that a court must consider when it comes to punish.

The burden of penalty is different according to whether it is placed on a well-off person or on a person of average or below average means. We did not have the opportunity to consider the fine system properly when the 1991 Act went through its Second Reading and Committee stage. That system was a late and important addition to the Act, which was debated on Report and, briefly, in Committee.

Confusion and difficulty arose about unit fines because the Government decided to raise the maximum fine to £100 instead of the £20 that was set during the pilot scheme. It is clear that the system fell into disrepute. The Minister has enunciated the two principles that must be balanced. We seek to do that in the amendment.

Section 29 of the 1991 Act enables consideration to be given to previous offences. The Minister has sought to say that no warnings were given about how that system would operate in practice. The records shows, however, that section 29 was subject to much debate. The former Labour Solicitor-General, Peter Archer, now Lord Archer, said in Committee on the 1991 Act that that issue should be subject to careful thought. The then Minister, the right hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), shook his head at that request and Peter Archer responded:

"He does not want to give the matter careful thought. So it will be on the record for the future when we raise the problem."

It is on the record that we have raised that problem. Similarly, we have properly initiated amendments to section 29 to deal with the inadequacies of the unit fine system. Our amendment led to the amendment in the long title.

I warn the Minister that he needs to continue to give careful thought to the matter. If he will not accept our amendment, I shall seek leave to withdraw it, but I warn him that he must ensure that implementation is effective and does not contravene either of those important principles.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

## Clause 65

POWERS OF COURTS TO DEAL WITH OFFENDERS

*Amendment made:* No. 18, in page 74, line 37 after 'factor.' insert—

'(3) A probation order or conditional discharge order made before 1st October 1992 (which, by virtue of section 2 or 7 of the Powers of Criminal Courts Act 1973, would otherwise not be a sentence for the purposes of this section) is to be treated as a sentence for those purposes.

(4) A conviction in respect of which a probation order or conditional discharge order was made before that date (which, by virtue of section 13 of that Act, would otherwise not be a conviction for those purposes) is to be treated as a conviction for those purposes.'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

**Madam Speaker:** We now come to amendment No. 32, with which we will discuss amendments Nos. 33 to 37.

**Mr. Maclennan:** Not moved.

*It being Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),*

That, at this day's sitting, the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

*Question agreed to.*

*As amended (in the Standing Committee) again considered.*

## Clause 71

### BACKING OF WARRANTS: SAFEGUARDS

**Mr. Trimble:** I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 79, line 45, at end insert

'or any other offence which could lawfully be substituted for that offence.'.

**Madam Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to discuss also amendment No. 7, in page 80, leave out lines 45 and 46 and insert—

'(2) No such Order shall be made unless a draft of it has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.'.

**Mr. Trimble:** It is a pleasure to be able to move the amendment. I am sure that the Minister will be glad that I have not been tempted by offers of coffee and tea but have forgone that pleasure to be here.

The two amendments are in my name. Amendment No. 7 is a procedural amendment to clause 71, which inserts new sections into the Backing of Warrants (Republic of Ireland) Act 1965. Those new sections refer to orders to bring the new sections into operation, and a subsection provides that those orders be laid before the House subject to negative resolution. Amendment No. 7 would simply make them subject to affirmative resolution.

However, there is a strong case for the adoption of the affirmative resolution procedure with regard to those orders. Extradition—or, to be more precise, the delivery of prisoners—to and from the Republic of Ireland has often been a matter of controversy. In dealing with matters which have proved to be controversial and which undoubtedly have the potential for future controversy, and where we are making significant changes to those procedures, the orders changing those procedures should come before the House and, because of their importance, should be subject to affirmative resolution.

The clause makes significant changes and amendment No. 6 would modify those changes. Is it open to the Minister to contemplate changes? Is there an agreement or treaty between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Republic of Ireland requiring Her Majesty's Government to bring those provisions into operation? Does a deal lie behind those provisions? If so, the Government would have difficulty in even considering modifying those matters.

I raised the issue on Second Reading, and was assured that there was no deal. That assurance now looks threadbare, however, because since then the Government of the Republic of Ireland have introduced legislation into the Dail to deal with anomalies under their 1987 extradition legislation. That legislation was based on the European convention on the suppression of terrorism and contained anomalies based on article 1 of the European convention. It removed the defence of a political offence from certain offences, and there were anomalies in how it operated.

One of the clearest anomalies was that article 1 of the European convention referred to the use of automatic weapons but did not relate to the use of weapons that were not automatic. If a murder was committed with an ordinary revolver, the political defence would be available, but if an automatic pistol was used, the political defence would not be available. There are other anomalies; that is just one example.

It is good that the Irish Government are removing those anomalies, but it is remarkably suspicious that they are introducing such a provision after a measure has been introduced into the House limiting the scope and operation of the British legal system on persons who have been delivered from the Republic of Ireland.

On Second Reading I asked whether there had been a deal, why we were making a fresh concession to the Irish and whether we were getting something in return. I was told that there was no deal, but the circumstances suggest that there was a deal and that the Irish Government agreed to extend their law only if we agreed to limit ours. If there is an agreement, it has not been published, because it is likely to have been made in that secret body which represents the real government of Northern Ireland—sometimes called the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference—with its secretariat behind it.

I wish to ask the Minister whether that is the case. He may deny it, but is he sure that he has been told the truth? We are fairly sure that we are hardly ever told the truth about the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

The clause stems from the case of Mr. Desmond Ellis, who was delivered from the Republic of Ireland to the United Kingdom in 1990 on warrants presented by the proper authorities in Great Britain alleging offences contrary to the Explosive Substances Act 1883 and the Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1975.

After his delivery to the United Kingdom:

"The Crown applied to the Thames Stipendary Magistrate that Mr. Ellis be committed for trial on those two charges . . . The magistrate declined to commit on those charges,"

on perfectly understandable grounds and instead

"committed Mr. Ellis to stand trial on two quite separate and distinct charges, namely, conspiracy contrary to section 1(1) of the Criminal Law Act 1977."

I quote from the subsequent judgment of Mr. Justice Swinton Thomas in the Ellis case.

Mr. Justice Thomas went on to say:

"It is common ground that that committal offends the rule of speciality whereby a person who is extradited from a foreign country can be tried in this country only for crimes in respect of which he was extradited. Accordingly, the crime reinstated the original offences contained in the warrants in the present indictment".

He went on to consider the charges, although the outcome of the consideration is not relevant to this discussion.

I quoted that extract from the judgment of Mr. Justice Swinton Thomas because it contains several mistakes. It states that it was common ground that committal offends the rule of speciality which is common where persons are extradited. Where there is an extradition treaty, there is a rule of speciality, but there is no extradition treaty or arrangement between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

We loosely use the term "extradition", but the procedure that operates between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland is the backing of warrants. There are no speciality, rules with regard to the backing of warrants procedure, and it was quite wrong for the judge to refer to what happened and the actions of the Thames stipendiary magistrate as breaking the rule of speciality, because the rule of speciality did not and does not apply to the backing of warrants procedure and would be foreign to the nature of that procedure.

There is a clear distinction between the backing of warrants procedure and proper extradition. The legislation is confusing the two by introducing into the backing of warrants procedure a rule of speciality that is appropriate strictly for extradition. If they were dealing strictly with extraditions, so called, the Government's proposals would be reasonable—but they are not necessary for a backing of warrants procedure, and one must query why those proceedings are being introduced.

When the Thames stipendiary magistrate made that decision, there was immediate reaction in the Irish Republic. The *Irish News* of 25 April 1991 reported:

"The Irish government responded to the magistrate's decision by insisting the British legal authorities challenge the ruling in a higher court."

Mr. Burke, the Irish Minister of Justice, was reported as telling the Dail on 19 February 1991 that the action of the Thames stipendiary magistrate broke a "gentleman's agreement" whereby the rule of speciality was to be operated by the British and Irish sides that were party to it.

The Irish Government insisted that the British Government do something about the Thames stipendiary magistrate's decision, and the Government did precisely that. Mr. Burke also told the Dail on 19 February:

"It would be preferable if we had speciality within the United Kingdom legislation".

Now we have legislation coming forward in which the speciality rule is being introduced.

On 21 November 1991, my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Welsh) asked the Prime Minister whether, as a result of what had been said and done with regard to the Ellis case, there would be any further bargaining between the British and Irish Governments, and whether any further concessions would be made by the British Government to the Irish Government, to get them to do what they ought to do in any event. The Prime Minister replied:

"we do not bargain and . . .we do not do deals".—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. 419.]

On 28 November, my hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) asked whether any agreement had been reached at the Anglo-Irish Conference on 19 November. The hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) replied:

"The detail of discussions in the Anglo-Irish Conference is confidential, but my right hon. Friend has indicated that the question of setting the existing agreement on speciality in statutory form is primarily a matter for the Home Secretary and would be considered if and when a suitable legislative vehicle arose."—[*Official Report*, 28 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. *607*.]

That was one week after the Prime Minister had said that there would be no deals, but now we have a deal coming through.

My simple amendment relates to persons who have been delivered from the Republic of Ireland to the United Kingdom. It states that such persons can be proceeded with only for the offences listed in the indictment or some other offence that could lawfully be substituted for it. That is part of the normal operation of our legal system.

By not accepting that amendment, the Government will limit the range of offences for which people could quite properly be proceeded against in the event of their being delivered. British authorities applying for the delivery of a person would therefore have to make sure that they got the offence exactly right before sending the papers to the Irish Republic. That would continue to produce cases—and there are too many of them—in which persons who appear to be guilty go free because the charge was not correctly briefed and some procedural requirement was not properly observed.

These are important matters—some of the most serious terrorist offences that could be considered. It is not right that we should limit the scope of the legal system to be effective in respect of such cases. The Government are doing that because a deal was done with the Irish—concessions were made to them. Many concessions were made to them in the past, and we have seen precious little return in terms of the number of persons delivered up to justice. We see far too many persons whom we believe to be guilty of serious offences at full liberty in the Irish Republic. Right hon. and hon. Members may remember press coverage of persons who have gone fishing when they were supposed to be delivered here to stand trial.

It is not right that the Government should make such concessions. I hope that they will look favourably on my amendment, which seeks only to preserve the normal operation of our own legal system with regard to persons delivered for trial here.

10.15 pm

**Mr. Maclean:** I have listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) has said. Amendment No. 6 would serve to defeat one of the objectives of clause 71—that the United Kingdom and Irish legislation on speciality should be identical in respect of extradition between the two countries. The hon. Gentleman said that we have backing of warrants rather than an extradition system, but it is a simplified form of extradition, so let us use the word "extradition", because we all understand it.

It is only by making our law on specialty identical that we can minimise the scope for misunderstandings and any gaps in our arrangements. I understand that the hon. Gentleman's amendment is well intentioned, and I appreciate what he seeks to do, but I am afraid that it would mean that our legislation would not satisfy Irish legislative requirements for extradition. Therefore, offenders could argue in the Irish courts that the courts had no power to order their return to the United Kingdom.

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): The Minister said that we all understood. Some of us are a little confused. Will he answer the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) asked? Has there been agreement between the two Governments? Has an understanding been reached? Or will we continue to exercise the farce that allegedly friendly Governments do not co-operate in handing over terrorist suspects? I ask that question because, 10 years ago this year, my young colleague, one of the outstanding lawyers of the United Kingdom, an academic lawyer, Edgar Graham, pressed for proper extradition arrangements between the two countries, and was murdered because he was getting too close to the mark.

**Mr. Maclean:** The hon. Member for Upper Bann asked me whether there was a treaty and whether there was a deal. There is no treaty. I am not privy to what goes on in the Anglo-Irish forum. I am not privy to those discussions. All I know is that there has been a mutual understanding of long standing that the rule of speciality should apply to

*[Mr. Maclean]*

extradition. There has been such an understanding between the Law Officers of the two Governments for some considerable time.

**Mr. Trimble:** The Minister said that there had been a mutual understanding of long standing between the Law Officers in the two jurisdictions that speciality would apply. Can he date that understanding? Since when?

**Mr. Maclean:** The short answer is no, I cannot. But the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends will agree that it is sensible to reproduce that understanding in both our laws, and to ensure that, in our discussions with the Irish Government, our extradition laws are as evenly matched as possible, so that there can be no possible misunderstanding which a potential offender could exploit in any court to avoid extradition.

As the range of charges which could lawfully be substituted is, depending on the circumstances, considerable and not confined to offences related to that for which the return was ordered, the amendment would in practice render the concept of speciality meaningless.

A substitution of charges would be possible in certain circumstances pursuant to the new section 6A(3)(d). That enables the description of the offence to be changed if certain prescribed conditions are fulfilled, but, in the circumstances, I do not believe that we should go any further. Following my explanation, I hope that the hon. Member for Upper Bann does not wish to pursue his amendment further.

I perfectly understand the reasons behind amendment No. 7, but I am afraid that I must resist it, too. The negative resolution procedure is clearly preferable, because it is possible that events could require an order to be made or amended urgently, when, for example, Parliament was in recess.

Negative resolution enables us to start the legislative process, but not to finish it during the recess. I am sure that, even under a negative resolution procedure, the hon. Gentleman would ensure that the orders were debated.

We have no wish to deprive the hon. Gentleman or his hon. Friends of that opportunity nor to resist proper scrutiny by hon. Members in this House or another place. However, we wish to maintain the negative resolution procedure, because of its advantages of speed and flexibility. Therefore, I hope that, in his usual courteous way, the hon. Gentleman will withdraw his amendment.

**Mr. Trimble:** We have heard some remarkable comments from the Minister. He cannot bring himself to face the facts, which speak for themselves. There has been some dirty work at a crossroads before we came to this legislation. The Minister may avert his eyes from it and say that he will not inquire too deeply into its origins, but I urge him to do so. If he looks into the background of this legislation, he will find that there are some things of which the Government cannot be very proud.

I do not have any pleasure in seeing this legislation go through, but, because of the lateness of the hour, we have no desire to prolong the sitting further by dividing the House. On that ground, and that ground alone, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

**Clause 77**

SHORT TITLE, EXTENT ETC.

*Amendments made:* No. 19, in page 84, line 4, after '23,' insert

'*(Appeal against order forfeiting drug trafficking cash)*,'.

No. 20, in page 84, line 4, after '71,' insert

'*(Power to extend certain offences to Crown servants and to exempt regulators etc.)*,'.

No. 21, in page 84, line 5, at end insert—

'paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of Schedule *(Extensions and exemptions)*.'.

No. 22, in page 84, line 6, leave out from beginning to end of line 12 and insert—

'(3) The following provisions of this Act extend only to Great Britain—

sections 13(9) to (11), 21(3)(e), 24(2), (3) and (7) to (10), 28 to 31, 33(1), 34, 66(1) and 72; and

paragraph 3 of Schedule *(Extensions and exemptions)*.

(4) The following provisions of this Act extend only to Scotland—

sections 17, 19, 20(2), 21(3)(c) and (d), 22(2), 24(12) to (15), 25(2), 32, 67, 68, 74 and 75; and

paragraph 2 of Schedule *(Extensions and exemptions)*.'.

No. 23, in page 84, line 15, leave out from '43' to 'extend'.

No. 24, in page 84, line 17, at end insert—

'( ) The provisions of Schedules 4 and 5 have the same extent as the provisions on which they operate.'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

**Mr. Trimble:** I beg to move amendment No. 8, in page 84, line 30, leave out from 'period' to end of line 36 and insert

'containing provisions corresponding to part I and sections 16, 18, and 28 to 31, shall be laid before each House of Parliament within a period of three months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.'.

This is a simple amendment, and it would be a simple job. This is a funny Bill. It contains a range of provisions, some of which apply directly to Northern Ireland. I am delighted to see pass through the House primary legislation which applies to Northern Ireland, as it gives Northern Ireland Members an opportunity on Second Reading, in Committee and on Report to participate in the debate.

Although that aspect of the Bill is commendable, there is also a hangover from the bad system of legislating for Northern Ireland, because there are provisions for Orders in Council. Worse than that: we have provisions for an Order in Council under what my right and hon. Friends call the theft clause. We call it that because it was first used in a theft Bill. It is appropriate to call it a theft clause, because it steals from us even that little fragment of parliamentary procedure that the direct rule regime allows to us.

When Orders in Council are proposed and debated in the normal way, we have an opportunity to contribute in a discussion that is sometimes limited to 90 minutes, without the opportunity to amend. However, at least there is a little discussion. Clause 77(11) is what we call the theft clause. It provides that equivalent legislation to part of the Bill can be made for Northern Ireland by Order in Council, subject to negative resolution. Therefore, it deprives us of the opportunity of any debate on the issue.

I know that, with the negative resolution procedure, there is the theoretical possibility of gaining sufficient support to have a debate. That is only a theoretical possibility and for Northern Ireland Members there is no substance in it. Therefore, authorising the negative

resolution procedure is saying that Northern Ireland Members will not be allowed an opportunity to discuss legislation for Northern Ireland.

Why is it in the Bill? It already makes substantial provision for Northern Ireland and additional provisions for Northern Ireland were included in Committee. The theft clause applies to merely half a dozen clauses. It does not make sense.

The amendment would require an affirmative resolution procedure in the normal way. That would at least be an improvement on the situation, but it would still be open to all the objections that we have to the Order in Council procedure. The amendment does two further things. The clause mentions provisions that correspond to drug trafficking legislation. Amendment No. 8 deals with the definition of conspiracy.

In Committee, I asked the then Minister of State why we were not making equivalent legislation for Northern Ireland, which in all respects is the same as that of England and Wales, because the Bill changes the definition of conspiracy in the law of England and Wales and in the law of Scotland. The then Minister replied:

"In the way that these matters are conducted, I transmitted his worries"——

those are my worries, which I had expressed to the Minister several days before the sitting——

"to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who is considering these matters. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that at this stage I cannot go beyond that statement."—[*Official Report*, Standing Committee B, 27 May 1993; c. 57.]

I had assumed that I would subsequently hear the result of the consideration from the Minister or the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. A month has passed, but I have heard nothing. I repeat the question that I asked on 27 May: why are no provisions being made for changes in the law in Northern Ireland equivalent to part I?

I suspect that the answer is that the Northern Ireland Office is having great difficulty in doing anything.

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** My hon. Friend's concern is shared by many Northern Ireland Members. The Order in Council procedure and the tardy response of the Northern Ireland Office are exasperating. The children's order should have been published no later than today, but despite a delay of 10 years, it is still coming.

**Mr. Trimble:** I thank my hon. Friend for that comment, which is apposite to the present situation. Children legislation for England and Wales was enacted four years ago, and the Black report was published 10 years ago. I know that, throughout his time in the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) has pressed the Northern Ireland Office to do something about the Black report, but more than 10 years later, and four years after the enactment of equivalent legislation for England and Wales, nothing has been done.

That ties in with my second point about amendment No. 8, which would oblige the Northern Ireland Office to lay before the House an Order in Council identical to provisions in the Bill, which consequently would not require any detailed work and preparation, within three months.

There is no reason why that cannot be done. The Bill's passage through the House has taken some time. The draftsman has had plenty of time to consider its provisions. No great drafting is necessary to work out the equivalent Northern Ireland legislation. I am sure that it should be ready, yet it is not.

Similar problems have arisen before. Hon. Members may remember that I raised this matter on the Adjournment some time ago and cited a number of examples of where the Northern Ireland Office had not been able to get things done within a reasonable time. There had been delays of up to a year, when it had merely to copy the equivalent legislation for England and Wales.

The amendment has three purposes—to ensure, first, that we have a proper debate on Northern Ireland legislation; secondly, that we have equivalent legislation to part I on conspiracy to keep our law in step with that, in England and Wales; and, thirdly, that the Order in Council be laid within three months. Those are reasonable proposals. As the Minister has acknowledged a couple of times this evening, I have been reasonable, and I hope that he will now reciprocate.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** (Eltham): I support the spirit of what the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) has said: where there is no difference between Northern Ireland law and the law in England and Wales, it makes sense to keep in step. In the case of some areas of law in which Northern Ireland had different legislation, one could understand a delay. I hope that Ministers will adopt the hon. Gentleman's practical and sensible proposals.

10.30 pm

**Mr. Maclean:** To fulfil the United Kingdom's obligation to implement the terms of the European Communities directive on money laundering, it is essential that provisions corresponding to clauses 16 and 18 be enacted for Northern Ireland as quickly as possible after the Bill becomes law. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland intends to bring forward an Order in Council under the negative resolution procedure to achieve that end and to enact provisions in respect of other serious crime, similar to those dealt with in clauses 28 to 31.

With regard to part I and the rest of the Bill, my right hon. and learned Friend will be considering the extent to which other provisions ought to be reflected in Northern Ireland legislation and will bring forward proposals in due course. I can do no better than communicate to my right hon. and learned Friend the hon. Gentleman's exhortation that the legislation be introduced as soon as possible.

However, I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's condition that there should be placed on other Ministers and myself a duty to lay legislation within a certain time. I ask him to accept the assurance of our good intention. We wish to take this step as soon as possible. I hope that the good spirit in which the hon. Gentleman spoke in Standing Committee and in which he has spoken in the House today will be continued by his withdrawal of the amendment.

**Mr. Trimble:** I must first correct a very serious mistake on the part of the Minister, who, I appreciate, is a comparative newcomer to the awful shambles created by the way in which the House of Commons deals with Northern Ireland business. We are not talking here about secondary legislation. Orders in Council made under this procedure will be primary legislation.

*[Mr. Trimble]*

In addition, the Minister's case is contradictory. He said that legislation complying with the European directive must be enacted as soon as possible, yet he cannot accept a requirement that this be done within three months.

But there is another point. As the European directive requires us to keep in step, the obvious step to take is to make provision in the Bill, and thereby avoid any worry about time limits. The Bill contains provisions relating to Scotland, which has a separate statute book. There would be no difficulty in including, after clauses relating to England and Wales and to Scotland, a provision relating to Northern Ireland. All that is required is a little effort on the part of the draftsmen and a little imagination on the part of Ministers, as well as a little willingness to exercise legislative powers responsibly.

I should like to direct the Minister's attention to a very valuable report published a couple of weeks ago by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. I refer in particular to the appendix, in which the author, setting out the case in great detail, says that, in effect, the squalid procedure adopted by the Government amounts to their saying that they are not required to exercise the legislative function in respect of Northern Ireland either fairly or willingly and responsibly.

The Minister may not be fully aware of it, but the implication of what he is saying is that he will not make the effort to handle Northern Ireland business fairly, willingly or responsibly. As for what he said about part I, he is repeating what his predecessor said more than a month ago, which was that he would be writing to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who would presumably communicate with me and my right hon. and hon. Friends. I wonder when the Secretary of State will make the effort to read the communications and reply to us.

Nevertheless, as I said in relation to an earlier amendment—*[Interruption.]* I hear the blandishments and suggestions of Conservative Members that we press the amendment to a vote. If they can assure me that they will support us, we shall willingly give them the opportunity to do so. Will they rise and confirm that? I see, however, that it is nothing but words. I have no desire to keep the House longer than necessary, so I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

*Amendment made:* No. 38, new schedule—

'SCHEDULE

EXTENSIONS AND EXEMPTIONS

*The Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 (c.32)*

1. The following section shall be inserted in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, after section 36A—

"*Extension of certain offences to Crown servants and exemptions for regulators etc.*

36B.—(1) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that, in such circumstances as may be prescribed, sections 23A, 24, 26B, 26C and 31 of this Act shall apply to such persons in the public service of the Crown, or such categories of person in that service, as may be prescribed.

(2) Section 26B of this Act shall not apply to—

(a) any person designated by regulations made by the Secretary of State for the purpose of this paragraph; or

(b) in such circumstances as may be prescribed, any person who falls within such category of person as may be prescribed for the purpose of this paragraph.

(3) The Secretary of State may designate, for the purpose of paragraph (a) of subsection (2) above, any person appearing to him to be performing regulatory, supervisory, investigative or registration functions.

(4) The categories of person prescribed by the Secretary of State, for the purpose of paragraph (b) of subsection (2) above, shall be such categories of person connected with the performance by any designated person of regulatory, supervisory, investigative or registration functions as he considers it appropriate to prescribe.

(5) In this section—

"the Crown" includes the Crown in right of Her Majesty's Government in Northern Ireland; and

"prescribed" means prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State.

(6) The power to make regulations under this section shall be exercisable by statutory instrument.

(7) Any such instrument shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.".

*The Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987 (c.41)*

2. The same section as is inserted in the Act of 1986 by paragraph 1 shall be inserted in the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987, after section 46, as section 46A, but with the substitution—

(a) in subsection (1), of "sections 42 to 43B of this Act" for "sections 23A, 24, 26B, 26C and 31 of this Act"; and

(b) in subsection (2), of "43A" for "26B".

*The Criminal Justice Act 1988 (c.33)*

3. The same section as is inserted in the Act of 1986 by paragraph 1 shall be inserted in the Criminal Justice Act 1988, after section 93F, as section 93G, but with—

(a) the substitution in subsection (1), of "sections 93A, 93B, 93C(2) and 93D above" for "sections 23A, 24, 26B, 26C and 31 of this Act"; and

(b) the omission of subsections (2) to (4).

*The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (c.4)*

4. The same section as is inserted in the Act of 1986 by paragraph 1 shall be inserted in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, immediately after section 19, as section 19A, but with the substitution—

(a) in subsection (1), of "sections 9 to 11, 17 and 18A above" for "sections 23A, 24, 26B, 26C and 31 of this Act"; and

(b) in subsection (2), of "18A" for "26B".

*The Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 (c.5)*

5. The same section as is inserted in the Act of 1986 by paragraph 1 shall be inserted in the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990, after section 23, as section 23A, but with—

(a) the substitution in subsection (1), of "section 14(2) above" for "sections 23A, 24, 26B, 26C and 31 of this Act"; and

(b) the omission of subsections (2) to (4).

*The Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 (c.24)*

6. The same section as is inserted in the Act of 1986 by paragraph 1 shall be inserted in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991, after section 55, as section 55A, but with the substitution—

(a) in subsection (1), of "sections 53, 54(2) to (6) and 54A above" for "sections 23A, 24, 26B, 26C and 31 of this Act"; and

(b) in subsection (2), of "54A" for "26B".'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

**Schedule 3**

FINANCIAL PENALTIES

*Amendment made:* No. 25, in page 88, line 47, leave out from '1989)' to the end of line 48 and insert '—

(a) section 18(1) above, and section 35(4)(a) of the 1973 Act, shall not apply; and

(b) section 18(3) above shall apply as if the words from "including" to the end were omitted.'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

**Schedule 4**

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

*Amendments made:* No. 26, in page 93, line 45, leave out 'section 93F' and insert 'sections 93F and 93G'.

No. 27, in page 94, line 24, after '54A' insert ', 55A'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

*Bill read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.*

## Shares (Disclosure of Interest)

10.36 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton):** I beg to move,

That the draft Disclosure of Interests in Shares (Amendment) Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 27th May, be approved.

The motion stands in the name of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, whom I am sure we all wish a speedy return to the House.

The regulations will, if Parliament approves them, be made under section 210A of the Companies Act 1985. They will amend part VI of the 1985 Act, which contains the law on the disclosure of interests in the shares of public companies.

The basic rule in part VI is that anyone who acquires or disposes of an interest of 3 per cent. or more in the vote-bearing share capital of a public company must disclose that fact to the company. In addition, the stock exchange rules—the so-called yellow book—require listed companies to inform the exchange of disclosures made to it under Part VI; the information is then made public.

The regulations are needed to take account of the EC Directive on the information to be published when a major holding in a listed company is acquired or disposed of—known as the major shareholdings directive. Our domestic legislation and the directive share a common purpose—greater transparency concerning concentrations of interests in companies. The directive will introduce transparency in other member states comparable to that which exists already in the United Kingdom. We supported it for that reason, and the directive has already been implemented in nine member states.

In most respects, our own legislation is stricter than the directive; the threshold for disclosure is lower—3 per cent. against 10 per cent.; the time limit for disclosure is shorter—two days against seven; our criterion for disclosure is that someone has an interest of any kind in the shares, whereas the directive requires disclosure only where there is control of voting rights; and our domestic legislation applies to all public companies whereas the directive applies only to listed companies. Since the directive is a "minimum standards" measure, not a harmonisation measure, it is open to us to keep our stricter legislation, and we intend to do so.

There are certain respects in which the directive goes further than our domestic legislation. In particular, it contains fewer exemptions from the obligation to disclose. We must bring those aspects of our law into line with the directive, and that is the purpose of the regulations. But we have taken the opportunity to make some other improvements not related to the directive. The regulations take the form of amendments to the present legislation, and in two cases, entire sections of the 1985 Act have been replaced.

The organisations most affected by the regulations are likely to be the banks and the major institutional investors. Those bodies often hold interests in the shares of individual companies in various parts of their organisations. They maintain procedures for aggregating those interests, so as to be able to disclose them under the legislation when required to do so. The removal of some current exemptions from disclosure will inevitably increase the regulatory burden on them to some extent, but we have

*[Mr. Neil Hamilton]*

minimised the increase through close consultation with those affected and have been able to reduce the burden of compliance in other ways.

I shall explain the contents of the regulations in more detail. They are somewhat complicated, mainly because we have gone to some length to preserve, so far as permitted under the directive, the substance of the exemptions provided for under our present law. I hope that the House will bear with me.

First, it has been possible, consistently with the directive, to preserve—with modifications—the current exemptions for interests held by market makers and for interests held by banks and others by way of security. But whereas the current exemptions cover only British firms in those categories, the regulations extend the exemptions to their counterparts in other member states and the market-maker exemption has been extended to market makers in derivatives.

The relevant provisions are to be found in regulation 8, which substitutes a new section 209 for the present version. The new exemption for a security interest is in the new section 209, subsections (1)(c) and (2) and that for a market maker is in the new section 209, subsections (8) and (9).

Secondly, there are a number of categories of interest which are now exempt from disclosure for which the directive provides no specific exemption, but which will not normally be caught by the directive because they do not as a rule exercise voting rights. Those include interests of trustees, including unit trust trustees; custodians; a personal representative of an estate; unit holders in unit trusts; beneficiaries under a retirement benefits scheme; and the interests of a takeover bidder whose offer has not yet succeeded or failed.

All those categories remain exempt from disclosure so long as they do not exercise or control voting rights. This "voting rights proviso" is in subsections (5) to (7) of section 209. In addition, we have widened the exemptions for trustees and custodians so that they benefit all persons in the relevant categories. The existing exemptions are limited by reference to United Kingdom law or to establishment in the EC. That change will benefit international groups active in the London market without compromising the purpose of the legislation.

Thirdly, there are the categories of interest which now enjoy exemptions but for which no equivalent exemption is provided in the directive and which do normally exercise voting rights. Those include two major groups of interest—those of investment managers and unit trust managers, and a miscellaneous class of more specialised interests listed in the new section 209(10). For those categories, we cannot maintain a complete exemption, but we can minimise the burden by requiring disclosure only from the directive threshold of 10 per cent. instead of from the domestic threshold of 3 per cent., and that is what we propose.

The relevant provision is to be found in regulation 4, which replaces the present section 199(2) of the Act with a new and inevitably more complex set of provisions. I draw particular attention to the new section 199(2A)(d). This will ensure, among other things, that parent companies can take advantage of the 10 per cent. threshold in respect of interests held through their subsidiaries, in the same way as they may do so in respect of interests held directly.

The interests to which I referred as miscellaneous will retain a complete exemption as regards unlisted companies and are most unlikely ever to reach the 10 per cent. threshold in listed companies. So, for practical purposes, they are unlikely ever to be subject to disclosure.

Unit trust managers have considered themselves to be exempt under the present legislation, although that is, I am advised, not altogether free from doubt. There is no corresponding exemption under the directive, and the regulations will, therefore, require them to disclose from the 10 per cent. threshold. That requirement will apply to interests in both listed and unlisted companies. Disclosure of interests in unlisted companies is not a directive requirement, but unit trust managers are active and important investors and there is no good reason for a complete exemption for their interests in unlisted companies.

Investment managers now enjoy exemption from disclosure, but only where their sole right is to dispose of the shares they control as managers. I understand that very few investment managers fall into that category and that the present exemption may therefore be something of a dead letter. The regulations will put investment managers in exactly the same position as unit trust managers, which, I am sure, is logical.

The main provisions of the regulations are, as I have explained, to be found in regulations 4 and 8. Regulation 1 provides for a 60-day delay between the making of the regulations and their entry into force. That is to allow those affected a reasonable time to adapt their internal reporting systems so as to comply with the new requirements.

Regulations 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 contain technical and consequential provisions; regulation 9 contains a complete new set of definitions for the interpretation of part VI of the Companies Act; regulation 10 revokes two statutory instruments now superseded by provisions to be inserted by the regulations into the body of the Act; and regulation 11 makes transitional provisions so that once the regulations enter into force, any interests which become disclosable because of changes in the law will have to be disclosed within two days.

I commend the regulations to the House.

10.45 pm

**Mr. Stuart Bell** (Middlesbrough): I am grateful to the Minister for taking us through the regulations in the way that he did. He mentioned the President of the Board of Trade. Opposition Members extended to the right hon. Gentleman our best wishes when he took ill. We welcome him back to our country and wish him a speedy recovery.

Ten years ago, we heard the former Minister, Alan Clark, present his first affirmative order. He was criticised at that time by the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) for going too slowly, he was criticised by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) for going too quickly, and he was then criticised further by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), who could not understand what he was saying. Tonight, the Minister took us through the intricacies of the regulations in such a way that their

purpose and the amendments are clear and, of course, we note that he is referring to amendments of the Companies Act 1985.

I have with me a copy of the Act and of the handbook on the 1985 and 1989 legislation. It is not surprising that the Minister has set himself the task of cutting through the red tape that those tomes have engendered and we wish him well in that task. He gave himself a deadline of July, which is approaching fast, and we look forward to hearing how he is progressing with cutting that red tape. Before he fell ill, the President of the Board of Trade said at a pharmaceutical dinner that the Department had carved through 3,500 regulations, but he had to admit that they were duplicate regulations, the same as 3,500 others on the statute book, so the Government still had a long way to go.

The regulations touch on a variety of amendments, some coming from European legislation and some being tidying-up measures. Although we want to cut through red tape and get rid of the regulations on small and medium-sized companies, we want an appropriate framework of corporate governance and regulation to cover the very shareholders to whom the regulations apply and also other shareholders.

Opposition Members embrace the principle of the share-owning democracy. We want to protect the small shareholder as well as the large company, subject to the terms of the regulations. With the Companies Acts that we are amending, a climate was created which set loose an orgy of profligacy in the City—an orgy of creative accountancy and of laxness which has culminated in a series of awesome corporate failures, the likes of which we hope never to see again.

The hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), for whom I have high regard, mentioned last week that he was one of 61,000 small shareholders who lost their money, if not their shirts, on Asil Nadir's Polly Peck. Those small shareholders were seduced—if that is the right word—to part with their money in a dubious enterprise when the true owner, Asil Nadir, who had 24 per cent. of the shares, transferred £300 million from Polly Peck International to companies such as Unipac, operating not out of Northern Cyprus but, believe it or not, out of Jersey.

It is a fact, of course, that many of the small investors would not have been covered by these regulations tonight, for many of the investments were made by fund managers and they would be exempted from declaring their interest, as I understand it, by the amendment to section 199(2)(a).

Asil Nadir used the money to purchase his own shares, which kept the share price high, so that he could borrow more money—the share price stood at 418p in August 1990—but he also used it to finance his life style and, as we know, for donations to Conservative central office.

It is not my intention to broaden the debate, but to stay within the guidelines of the regulations. As we know, the declaration of political contributions is listed with charitable gifts under paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 of schedule 7 of the Companies Act 1985, which we are amending today. No political contributions ever appeared in the balance sheets of Polly Peck, however, not surprisingly they have not surfaced, so far as anyone can tell, in the financial statements of Unipac.

We are, of course, dealing with the changes that the regulations make in relation to the disclosure of interests in shares, and we have to ask ourselves where, in accordance with these regulations and this Companies Act, we are going in relation to the share-owning democracy. The proper route to a share-owning democracy is not the route which led the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West to invest in Polly Peck and lose his money, but that of enlarging share schemes through which the work force who invest their lives in gainful employment can also invest in their companies.

I am glad to see the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) in his place, as he has done sterling work in this area and is one of the hon. Members who has understood what is an appropriate route to a share-owning democracy. The hon. Gentleman has properly understood that we on this side of the House have always sought to extend protection and participation for workers in their place of work. Clearly, protection and participation would not come through this order, but it was thought that they would come through nationalisation, perceived to be the simplest route to common ownership and the fulfilment of clause 4.

The principle had its attractions for us on the Labour side. One took over an industry and once it belonged to the state the workers got both the protection and the participation that they had sought for years, but that simplistic approach has not worked in practice. As the hon. Member for Esher has pointed out, one could not possibly take over every company, even under a Companies Act as wide and munificent as the one that we are modifying tonight, so we could not, by nationalisation alone, extend worker protection and participation to every employee.

Common ownership is not a principle that we on this side of the House propose to abandon. As we discuss these regulations and the Companies Act, we accept that we already have common ownership, because the major companies are owned by the institutions referred to by the Minister earlier, who use our money—and yours, too, Madam Deputy Speaker—through pension funds and insurance. The trick for a future Labour Government will be to decide how to bring such common ownership under control. We hope and believe that it can be done without a major Act of the size of the Companies Act 1985, which we are amending tonight.

We believe that employee share-ownership schemes should be expanded. We believe that we should examine the question of allowing investors in employee share-owning schemes to elect one of their own to company boards. We believe that share option schemes should be expanded to cover employees of subsidiary as well as parent companies.

I am seeking to show, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I am sure that you will follow me in this, that there is a link between the Companies Act 1985, the regulations that we are debating tonight, and what goes on in the outside world.

These Acts that we are modifying tonight—in particular, the Companies Act—have not prevented the perpetration of huge frauds in the City of London, thereby reducing the respectability and the reputation of the City. These Acts have never been fully followed by companies in our own country, and there have never been proper investigations into known abuses, such as the failure to declare political donations. When I asked the President of the Board of Trade——

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. Before th hon. Gentleman continues, I remind him that

*[Madam Deputy Speaker Dame Janet Fookes]*

what is under consideration tonight is fairly narrow. The hon. Gentleman is now broadening out the debate in a way that is not acceptable.

**Mr. Bell:** I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I had one eye on you in the hope that I should stray only within the narrow bounds of the regulations. Having strayed outside them, I seek to return——

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): Good lad.

**Mr Bell:** I point out to the hon. Gentleman that the instrument is a draft, and that my speech is only a draft too. Nevertheless, I respect your kind advice, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We hope that the regulations are a forerunner of others which will bring stricter and tighter regulation to the City of London. That is called for by City practitioners and would give stronger powers, if they are needed, to the investigation branches within the Department of Trade and Industry. Such regulations would also inaugurate a more vigorous approach to company law, which is so badly needed to enhance the reputation of the City so that it is not diminished still further.

Through the regulations, we are redefining the disclosure requirements of shareholders. However, the regulations do not cover corporate governance, nor the aspects of the shareholder's role in the enterprise. Those questions may be dealt with in future orders, and in future directives and regulations coming from the Department of Trade and Industry. The House could then fully debate the questions of corporate governance, the direction that the City should take and how we might get back a sense of respect for the City of London.

The regulations define derivatives. The Minister referred to derivatives and to market makers, which shows how the statute book is catching up with City practice. According to David Walker, deputy chairman of Lloyds bank and former chairman of the Securities and Investments Board, derivative trading has become the most significant growth area in financial services. Estimates of amounts outstanding in important exchange traded and over-the-counter contracts show growth from $1,000 million five years ago to $8,000 million at the end of 1991.

As the Minister has defined derivatives in the regulations and places the term in our Companies Act, as well as in the Financial Services Act 1986—I relieve him of giving me an immediate response to these questions and he does not need to answer them tonight—I ask him how he sees an appropriate regulation of the derivatives market. He might tell the House eventually whether he believes that such regulation should be collaborative and international, and whether it should be based on a shared understanding of problems.

I am sure that the exchanges that make up the derivatives market, which have been recognised by the SIB, will be gratified that the statute book is catching up with their practice. However, at present we have self-regulation of those markets, where the exchanges are required to have sufficient resources to provide adequately for the protection of investors and to have procedures for the monitoring of business, the enforcement of rules and the investigation of complaints.

Depositary receipts are also defined in the regulations. That is another example of the statute book catching up with the global market place, as depositary receipts are used in the United States for the purchase of non-American quoted shares. They are a legal way round the United States Securities and Exchange Commission, whereby receipts are offered in place of non-American shares bought on behalf of customers. They have added suppleness to our financial markets.

I am sure that you will be happy, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I am staying within the remit of the regulations when I refer to the Banking Coordination (Second Council Directive) Regulations 1992 (d). Every time I mention them to my parliamentary colleagues, their eyes glaze, predictably and perceptibly. I note, however, that the paragraph dealing with the European institutions carrying on home-regulated investment business in the United Kingdom is now revoked, presumably because that paragraph is now subsumed in the text of the regulations. In section 202 of the Companies Act 1985 and the modifications proposed in paragraph 9 of the order, we see how the intricacies of the European Community and its laws entwine in our legislation.

I began my short speech by congratulating the Minister on the presentation of the facts and his marshalling of the arguments. I referred to the former Member, Alan Clark. Before he took his first order on the Floor of the House 10 years ago, he went to see Lord Tebbit and was told to stick to his script and avoid any jokes. Tonight, we have avoided the jokes and stuck to our scripts. I hope that we have provided an enlightened debate, which is narrow but nevertheless broad enough to allow us to make some points in the interests of the City of London. The House can do no better than that.

11 pm

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): I do not wish unduly to detain the House, but I want to clear up one or two points. As the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) said, this is a technical area in which I do not claim expertise. I doubt whether many other hon. Members who are not directly involved in it can claim to have such expertise.

The draft order derives from the EC directive passed in 1988. I want clarification that I have understood the thrust of the order, which is that the 3 per cent. rule will remain, other than for special exemptions, and that the exemptions will remain or be subject to the 10 per cent. rule. I want to know at which point the 10 per cent. rule will come into effect as opposed to the 3 per cent. rule.

As I understand the Department's release, the member states can continue to operate a threshold lower than 10 per cent., while ours is 3 per cent. It is the intention of the United Kingdom that that will continue, although the directive allows our threshold to be raised to 10 per cent. I should be grateful if the Minister could tell me whether there is any forward thinking on extending that. I appreciate that he is trying to simplify the procedure for shareholdings and groups that have no specific reason to disclose because their intentions are not likely to lead to any degree of hostility to the management of the company. The House needs to be assured that we will not inadvertently create any new loopholes and that the categories embraced are only those that cannot and will not be presumed to have any hostile intent. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough referred to Asil Nadir.

We would like an assurance about pension funds. Such funds might be able to get through the net by acting as trustees and securing in some way a position in which they have hostile intent which they would not be required to disclose until such time as it became apparent. If the Minister tells me that I have wholly misunderstood the thrust of the regulations, I am happy to be rebuked. However, I would simply like some clarification and development of that point.

I am concerned that the climate relating to takeovers in the United Kingdom is fundamentally different from that in the other member states. Generally speaking, hostile takeovers in the other 11 member states are rare events, but they are normal or frequent events in the United Kingdom. In that different climate, the EC directive may be only the lowest common denominator, but it would not be especially appropriate to the United Kingdom. I simply seek an assurance that our basic rules are not being fundamentally altered. We are talking about the details of certain categories that are currently exempted. I hope that the regulations do not provide for any inadvertent modifications that could lead to any future problems with people getting through the net.

I appreciate that the intention of the regulations is constructive and non-controversial. I hope that they will help to simplify the procedure and not create any untoward problems. While it may be a positive start to the simplification process, the Government must address the matter of how we lower the threshold cost of dealing with small groups of shares. That is relevant to the regulations.

There is no doubt that many shareholders currently hold only those shares that they bought in a privatisation portfolio. They have not gone on to transact in shares, partly as a result of ignorance about how to do that and concern that the fixed charges are disproportionate to the value of the shares. Any measures that the Minister can introduce to simplify that process will help to achieve the broader share ownership that the Conservative party wants. It would also enable people to deal in shares rather than just hold on to those that were bought in discounted sales.

I hope that the Minister will be able to set my mind at rest.

11.4 pm

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** With permission, I will reply to the debate.

I thank the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) for his support for the deregulation initiative. I assure him that my scissors for cutting red tape will be as sharp as his intellect. I am also grateful to him for the welcome that he gave to the regulations.

If I may say so, most of the hon. Gentleman's remarks dealt with the more cosmic surroundings of the regulations than the regulations themselves. I will not, therefore, spend too much time for addressing those larger issues. I should be happy to return in due course to the question whether we should extend more regulation to the derivatives market. I do not believe, however, that it would be proper for me to consider that now.

I can give the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) the assurance that he sought. We are not seeking to change the fundamental rules of our disclosure system. We are enabled to keep the stricter regime that we have had in the United Kingdom and we intend to do so. Regulation 4 is the relevant regulation that answers the hon. Gentleman's question. It provides for different thresholds at which an interest in shares is to become notifiable, according to the type of interest that is involved.

Most types of disclosable interest will continue to be disclosable at the existing 3 per cent., as set out in section 199 of the Companies Act 1985. A person who has interest falling within paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of section 199(2A), as proposed, would be obliged to disclose it only when his total interest reached 10 per cent. That will cover investment managers, unit trust operators and a variety of recondite miscellaneous provisions in subsection (10). I believe that that gives the hon. Gentleman the assurance he requested.

The hon. Gentleman also asked whether pension funds would become vehicles for getting around the obligation of disclosure. Pension fund trustees will not benefit from the 10 per cent. threshold, as originally proposed by the Department of Trade and Industry in its consultation document. We decided that it would be inappropriate to include provisions relating to such trustees in the regulations before the Goode committee's review of pension law and its recommendations are published. No doubt we will return to the matter at a later date.

The hon. Gentleman raised a number of other matters that were only distantly related to the regulations, in particular takeover activity in the United Kingdom and dealing costs for small groups of shares. I do not think that it would be appropriate for me to reply to those matters now.

I commend the regulations to the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the draft Disclosure of Interests in Shares (Amendment) Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 27th May, be approved.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

*Ordered,*

That Mr. Paul Channon be discharged from the National Heritage Committee and Mr. Michael Fabricant be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

## PETITION

## VAT and Prescriptions

11.8 pm

**Mr. David Hanson** (Delyn): I take great pleasure in presenting a petition on behalf of Mrs. Molly Hoffman, who is a pensioner from Mynydd Isa in my constituency, and 1,000 other constituents in Clwyd.

The petition calls on the Government not to put value added tax on fuel bills and to stop the extension of prescription charges to children and pensioners. The petition ends with the prayer

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House do not implement the Value Added Tax on fuel bills and do not extend charges on Prescriptions for children and Pensioners.

I support the petition and pay tribute to Mrs. Hoffman, who attended my surgery and collected the signatures.

*To lie upon the Table.*

## Outdoor Education Centres

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

11.8 pm

**Mr. Michael Jopling** (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I am especially grateful for the opportunity to raise the issue of the future of outdoor education centres and to thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Schools for his kindness in coming here to reply to the debate.

This debate arises from a meeting that I had on 11 June with the Association of Heads of Outdoor Educational Centres in the Lake district centre, which included a number of the centres in the north of England. I met 17 heads of outdoor education centres, 15 of whom were from centres supported by local education authorities and 12 of whom were from Cumbria, which is where my constituency is. Eight of them—almost half—were from centres in my constituency.

May I begin by saying how important those centres are to the economy of Cumbria and my constituency. The 12 local education authority supported centres in Cumbria employ 150 full-time staff—plus, I imagine, a good many part-time staff. They provide no fewer than 160,000 bed nights for young people and others who come to enjoy their facilities. Most importantly, they inject £3·25 million a year into the local economy of Cumbria.

The centres exist in areas far beyond the Lake district. There are more than 100 centres throughout the country, of which some two thirds are run by local education authorities. I am grateful for a note that I have received from the Sports Council, which says:

"2-3 million young people per annum take part in a vast range of outdoor education programmes arranged by statutory, voluntary and private sector providers".

The national curriculum quite rightly now recognises the importance of adventurous activities with an inherent element of risk, such as rock climbing, white water canoeing, and expeditions on land and sea. Although the whole House will commend those activities, the recent tragic incidents in Lyme bay are not far from our minds. Outdoor education centres must be run safely. I do not wish to discuss what happened in Lyme bay. The lesson thatat safety must be paramount has been well learnt by OECs throughout the country.

A key word in the work of the centres is "success". Many young people fail in formal education as they may not be good at exams or the analytical thinking required by many school subjects. They also sometimes fail at home or among their own social circle. The OECs often provide an opportunity for those young people to succeed, develop self-esteem and grow in self-confidence. Learning involves the whole person. It is relevant to other aspects of life; it encourages personal response and responsibility.

The centres encourage good citizenship. They unlock talents that remain hidden in formal teaching. Young people experience challenging situations which invllve problem solving, group co-operation, negotiation, creative thinking and decision making. It is common for teachers and leaders to comment on the improved levels of motivation and achievement which are often taken back into the classroom or the workplace. For those and a good many other reasons, the centres provide help for all sorts of young people.

A centre in my constituency, Bendrigg lodge, provides help for disabled young people and those from disturbed and difficult backgrounds. Many of the centres play a significant part in the fight against rising youth crime. it is clear to me and to many peop:le that the centres do a fine job in offering good education and value for money, but they are most concerned and anxious about certain aspects of the development of education policy. That is particularly true of those financed by local education authorities, although I knowe there are anxieties at many others, including those in my constituency.

Many centres are run by local education authorities in the north-east of England, Yorkshire and industrial Lancashire, but there are also a number of very distinguished privately run centres. For instance, the YMCA runs a fine centre which various Ministers have visited, at Lake Side on Lake Windermere. There is also the Outward Bound movement in Cumbria. We have an extremely distinguished centre at Brathay hall, again on Lake Windermere. I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson), the chairman of the organising committee at Brathay hall, in his place. My hon. Friend may have the chance to make a brief intervention when I sit down.

The problems being encountered are that the local education authority OEC provision is finding its funding eroded to the extent that there is serious risk of reduction, if not wholesale removal, of that valuable service. Although the Government have allocated more money to the national education budget, changes to the distribution network have meant that the amount of money delegated to outdoor centres has been greatly reduced.

I want to highlight the value of outdoor education and the threats to quality and safety and to suggest to the Minister some ways in which that high quality provision can be safeguarded as I believe it is worth safeguarding. I am told that 50 local education authority centres are facing imminent threat of closure or major reductions in funding. Seven centres face closure this year, and 70 centres face imminent staff reductions and in some cases are down to skeleton staffing levels. Most centres are reviewing charges to pupils, in many cases up to the full break-even level.

The amount in the overall education purse has not been reduced, and it might be expected that grant-maintained schools would buy back the services previously subsidised by local education authorities. Likewise, schools that, under the local management of schools scheme, enjoy budgets almost wholly delegated should buy in the service. In practice, head teachers, faced with increasing demands on available resources, are showing a tendency to direct any additional funding at maintaining the service provided by the school rather than support an outdoor centre.

If centres are compelled to increase fees and pupils are required to pay the full economic rate, that will be educationally and socially divisive, and will certainly discriminate against the very pupils who might benefit most from the unique personal and social education experience that only a residential centre can offer.

All centres have made significant expenditure cuts in recent years. Most are now full to capacity throughout the year, providing courses for their local community and all other groups, to maximise the use of their facilities. It is now felt that all reasonable cost-cutting has been effected without compromising safety—which must be paramount. It is apparent that, to provide a safe and effective quality course for the full range of pupils, a base level of subsidy is still required.

Subsidies range from £50,000 for small centres to £200,000 for larger ones, and should ideally be channelled through local authorities. Ways should be investigated of allowing the Government to provide centres with a base level of subsidy. I am told that there may be two ways of doing that. First, local education authorities or local funding councils could be allowed to provide properly accredited and monitored centres with a low level of funding calculated on throughput. Secondly, local councils could be given an incentive to provide that low level of funding. Agreement would have to be reached between local and national Government on ways of giving priority support to that vital service.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to give those matters further thought, and to consider whether there are ways in which those centres can continue their wonderful work. Britain has the most extensive network of outdoor and environmental centres in the world. Centres based on the British model are being established throughout Europe. It would be tragic if our own centres of excellence were threatened and subjected to wholesale closures.

I am delighted to have this opportunity to publicise those problems, and to ask my hon. Friend the Minister to do his best to help these worthwhile ventures in the time that lies ahead.

11.23 pm

**Mr. Mark Wolfson** (Sevenoaks): I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and to my hon. Friend the Minister for this opportunity briefly to support the case that my right hon. Friend clearly and ably put on behalf of outdoor centres.

I speak from a lifetime's involvement with Brathay hall in the Lake district. It was one of the earliest independent centres, founded and funded by charitable trust. It has existed for almost 50 years and is well known for its reputation in education to staff at the Department for Education.

I know well the difficulties of funding such centres. They have been well explained by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale. The danger is that if funding does not continue to be available, at worst the centres will close and at best they will inevitably be driven to seeking adult trainees who can pay higher fees if they are supported by their companies. It will take the centres out of youth education, which is their fundamental purpose. That would be a great loss to the country.

I re-emphasise the importance of the type of education offered to young people by outdoor education centres. I have witnessed it over a long period of involvement in such activity at Brathay hall. The experience of success is hugely important, as is the experience of residential living. Learning through exciting activities—although not dangerous activities, because the safety net is there—enables young people to learn to be responsible and to be dependent on each other. That learning option is not always available in school; but in residential centres, doing challenging, difficult and exciting outdoor centres, it is.

Children learn leadership and responsiveness in the group. They learn many social skills of living and working together which are the very skills that we all need when we

*[Mr. Mark Wolfson]*

set out in the outside world. Some of the most disadvantaged youngsters need such education most of all. It is provided at such centres.

As my right hon. Friend said, Britain has more outdoor education centres than anywhere in the world. It certainly has more centres than anywhere in Europe per head of population. That is an aspect of our education system which we certainly should not put at risk of diminution. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will encourage us to be confident of the future and consider some of the issues in the longer term.

11.26 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth):** I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) on obtaining the debate and thank him for his comments. I recognise and pay tribute to his vigorous and persistent representations to the Government, to me and to my fellow Ministers in the Department on behalf of outdoor education centres, which are so well represented in his constituency and the surrounding area. I join my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) in paying tribute to the extremely valuable work that is done and has been done for some years by the outdoor centres in all the ways that my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend described.

Outdoor education centres make a valuable contribution to the requirements of the national curriculum and, beyond it, to helping young people to see a wider world and understand more possibilities within themselves and in the context of their education. Therefore, we can all readily agree on the important role that has been played by the centres and, I sincerely hope, will continue to be played by them.

My right hon. Friend made it clear that one of his anxieties is the future viability of such centres, with particular reference to local management of schools. I understand that anxiety. It arises from the rapid move from total control of education funding by local education authorities towards local management of schools.

I emphasise that LMS is well established and has been widely welcomed throughout the education world by LEAs and schools. The process of delegation of responsibility for funding from local authorities to schools brings in its train great changes in attitudes and the extent to which priorities are set. One of the ways in which the changes take place arises because authorities can no longer absolutely determine the way in which moneys are spent. Those decisions are now increasingly being made, as my right hon. Friend recognises, at school level.

We placed a great deal of emphasis, correctly I believe, on the importance of giving school governors, heads, teachers and parents much more say in the way in which the funding available at school level should be spent. One of the effects of that is that it will be for schools to decide in which way they spend their funds. As a result, it is vital that outdoor education centres are able and prepared to market their services and their excellent contribution—so ably set out by my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks—directly to schools.

It can no longer be assumed that their excellence is known and understood by local education authorities and that they will automatically direct their funding and pupils to the outdoor centres. In future, the centres, separately and, I hope, co-operatively, will sell to the schools, which are becoming increasingly independent in their funding and decisions, the excellence of their service and the relevance of what can be done for pupils. That will require changes of attitude, approach, policy and technique, and I suspect that we are seeing only the early stages of that.

I have heard my right hon. Friend's positive suggestions. I cannot immediately respond to them as positively as he would like, but I want to look carefully at them. They seem to revolve around a continuing element of central Government subsidy, either through local education authorities or directly to schools.

In all honesty, given the real constraints on public expenditure, central Government funding of such centres, by whatever route, could be provided only by taking money away from revenue support grant to local authorities. My right hon. Friend will be aware that it is for each local authority to determine its own budget and to decide how that budget should be allocated. As funds are increasingly delegated to schools, it is for governors and heads to decide which local authority services to support.

Where a local authority has reduced its centrally held outdoor education service or decided not to provide such support, the money may not be available to transfer. Where a local authority has decided to maintain its support, it could not be required to pay what would, in effect be a levy, to support similar services elsewhere. Therefore, there are problems associated with the approach suggested by my right hon. Friend. However, I do not want to totally rule out his suggestions at this stage. I want to see whether any of his suggestions are practical or possible.

I should like to take up the challenge laid down by my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks. The other concern often expressed is about the limitations placed by the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 on local authorities not trading beyond their margin of capacity where an increasing number of schools become grant maintained. I do not want to go into the details of what constitutes a margin of capacity, because that will be determined by finance officers, authority by authority.

Even where margins of capacity are reached or exceeded and the restrictions begin to apply to local education authorities' involvement, I believe that for outdoor education centres and other services hitherto provided by local education authorities, new possibilities exist, and I hope that they will explore them.

There is the possibility in the Education Bill of the Secretary of State designating a further two-year period of continuation of the service. It may be that the staff who provided the service until the margin of capacity was reached could look at management buy-outs where existing employees, perhaps those already in a business unit, would form a company to take over the service and provide it on a more flexible and widespread basis. The current providers could seek out a private sector partner and leave the aegis of the authority to give them flexibility beyond the constraints of the 1970 Act, which may bite on the increasing number of grant-maintained schools.

We are already aware of examples of that in other similar areas of service that have been provided hitherto by local education authorities. It is entirely possible, and is almost certainly the way ahead. Outdoor education

centres should be urgently investigating the different possibilities—not seeing themselves constrained, as hitherto, by being local education authority-owned or provided, but seeing themselves in a much more open and flexible context, perhaps marketing services differently and looking to a different marketplace altogether.

Outdoor education centres might, as an interim stage, set up trusts whereby income provided by the authority decreases over a specified period, requiring increasing independent income generation so that the move to full independence, under which constraints on provision are removed, is smooth. A number of local authority services have, indeed, already achieved total independence from former authorities, such as the Cambridge Education Personnel Service and Kirklees Music Service Educational Trust—the latter being a company limited by guarantee with charitable trust status that trades as the Kirklees Music School.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently met representatives of the school, who spoke with great commitment of their success in taking this very different approach and selling services in a different way.

I have received representations in addition to those of my right hon. and hon. Friends from a number of interested bodies about outdoor education centres. I am acutely aware of the problems. I hope that the matters with which I have dealt—I can give my right hon. and hon. Friends more details if they require them—provide interesting and revolutionary new ways ahead that could be explored by these excellent centres. I hope that they will take up this opportunity to explore them all, and if they do we shall give whatever help we can.

That is the positive way ahead, and the pessimism that has prevailed among the centres is unjustified. If they look at the ways in which other parallel services have been developed, they will find that they can take a much more optimistic approach to the future.

Although I well understand the reservations, hesitations and unhappiness that have been expressed by the centres, I hope that they will reconsider the possibilities for the future—that they will look not backwards to the traditional way in which services have been provided under local education authorities, but forwards at new and different ways in which they can work in the new environment that is being created by the increasing grant-maintained sector and by the changing role of local education authorities.

That is the way ahead, and I hope that with these few words I have been able to offer some idea of how we can move forward. Officials in my Department and I are always prepared to help in identifying how the centres can move forward and free themselves of the unhappiness and hesitation that they have understandably felt up until now.

I hope my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale will continue to play his part in forming a bridge between the centres, my Department and local education authorities, where they have a continuing role to play. In that regard, I hope that the debate has been a positive sign to my right hon. and hon. Friends and the centres to which they are so dedicated.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes to 12 o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Wednesday 30 June 1993*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## ENVIRONMENT

### Ozone Depletion

1. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to meet his EC colleagues to discuss measures to reduce the release of chlorofluorocarbons and other gases causing depletion of the ozone layer; and if he will make a statement.

**The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer):** Measures to protect the ozone layer were discussed at the Council of European Environment Ministers earlier this week. I hope that we shall agree a new European regulation on ozone-depleting substances in the autumn.

**Mr. Fabricant:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer and take this opportunity to welcome him to the Dispatch Box. He has made a seamless transition from agriculture to the environment. I should like to press him on the issue. Is there not more that we can do, especially in terms of recycling substances which are destroying the ozone layer?

**Mr. Gummer:** I thank my hon. Friend. We are doing a great deal to encourage recycling. We have made the venting of waste chlorofluorocarbons illegal; we have allocated supplementary credit approvals to local authorities for investment in recycling facilities for 1993-94; and we have given special priority to schemes to help in that direction. As these substances exist, it is important to ensure that they are used usefully, but that, in future, they are not manufactured.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** May I associate the Opposition Benches with the welcome to the new Secretary of State for the Environment? He may be assured of the greatest collaboration from this side in every initiative that supports good environmental practice and sustainability. In the light of allegations about a firm in Leeds, will he make it clear that anybody who discharges into the atmosphere materials such as chlorofluoromethane is liable to be prosecuted under sections 33 and 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990? Can it be made clear that prosecutions will take place as the law permits, and is the Secretary of State quite clear that, under his administration in the Department, there will be no mild response if people flagrantly break the law, but that he will make sure that that Act is enforced in the way that was intended?

**Mr. Gummer:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for the part of his question that was helpful. I do not want to refer to the case about which he spoke in the second part of his question, because that would obviously be improper. In general, I take a strong view about the need for this generation not to destroy the next generation. Therefore, the kind of activities to which the hon. Gentleman refers will be dealt with using the full rigour of the law.

**Mrs. Gorman:** Will my right hon. Friend take time to look at a report published in a national newspaper last week which casts grave doubts on the idea that locally produced, that is to say, earthbound-produced, chemicals have any effect at all on the ozone layer? The article said that the coming and going of holes in the ozone layer was a natural phenomenon. Before we begin to destroy the important refrigeration industry by banning one of its essential chemicals, we should take grave note of that report.

**Mr. Gummer:** My hon. Friend and I have often sparred on matters not dissimilar to this one. I advise my hon. Friend not to base her arguments on a selective number of reports. It must be accepted that the dangers to the ozone layer are now pretty well attested. Even if the attestation were less, the dangers of getting this wrong for the next generation are so great that it is proper for us to take very tough measures. The fact that we are taking such measures in concert with our European partners and with other partners throughout the world enables us to ensure that our important refrigeration industry is able to compete on level terms with that industry in other countries. After all, there are alternatives for the refrigeration industry in most cases and they are now being put into place.

**Ms Short:** May I join in welcoming the right hon. Gentleman to his new job? May I also welcome what he said about taking precautions for the next generation and say how genuinely sad I am that he has made a very bad start in that job? The previous Secretary of State promised that the United Kingdom would take the lead on tighter European Community regulation on ozone depletion. Is it not the case that we made no progress at the recent meeting because of the big row about carbon energy tax? Eleven countries in Europe want to make progress; the United Kingdom says no. Therefore, Europe cannot sign the climate convention and Britain is holding back progress on such issues for the whole of Europe. That is the start that the right hon. Gentleman has made in his job.

**Mr. Gummer:** I thank the hon. Lady for her kind remarks. In our meeting over lunch on the subject of which she speaks, we ended up moving from 11 to 1 against the United Kingdom, to 10 to 2 in favour, because every other member, bar two, felt that the Danish proposition did nothing to help prevent climate change. We felt that we ought to work at those things together. She will find—especially if she gives me her help—no one more concerned to protect the next generation than I am. I hope that she will not start our negotiations and discussions by making party-political points when there is no basis for them.

**Mr. Salmond:** May I join in welcoming the Minister to his new post? He will understand, however, in the light of his unfortunate radio interview, that many of us will be looking for some sign that he is now fully in command of the subject as regards the ozone layer. Can he tell us why

dry cleaning businesses in this country are not being offered any special assistance to convert machinery away from ozone-damaging processes, in accordance with the Montreal protocol, when my understanding is that assistance is available elsewhere in the European Community? When will the Minister consider assistance for dry cleaning businesses in this country?

**Mr. Gummer:** I would not have expected an unremitting welcome from the hon. Gentleman, with whom I have fought long battles because I am in favour of sea fish conservation and he opposes it, for many narrow-minded, short-term reasons, so he has to find some comment of that sort.

Britain's dry cleaning industry is as close to my heart as it is to the hon. Gentleman's and I recognise its difficulties. I am happy to consider whether other people benefit from things from which our dry cleaning industry does not, but it is not unreasonable to ask industry to meet requirements that are necessary for the protection of the future of this nation and the rest of the world. Businesses ought to meet those requirements and, in general, are doing so. They have been given time to do so and I hope that no one will take the hon. Gentleman's comments as an excuse for not proceeding as fast as possible.

## Council Tax

2. **Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of local authorities to discuss the implementation of the council tax.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry):** My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) discussed the council tax with representatives of local authorities in England in September 1992. My Department has continued to work closely with local authorities on all aspects of council tax implementation.

**Dr. Howells:** Is the Minister aware that many thousands of householders throughout England and Wales believe that their homes have been placed in the wrong council tax band, and that they are still waiting for their cases to be heard? Can he tell the House what measures he is taking to speed up the hearing of those cases so that those householders may find some peace of mind? That will help revenue collection in hard-pressed local authorities.

**Mr. Baldry:** Less than 3 per cent. of bandings have been appealed against and it is intended that the vast majority will be dealt with as speedily and effectively as possible. We anticipate that the vast majority of appeals will be dealt with during next year and many will be dealt with much sooner.

**Mr. Milligan:** Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that there has been a great welcome for the introduction of the council tax? In my constituency, in the first week, half the telephone calls to the local council came from people who wanted to know why their bill was so low, because they did not appreciate the generosity of transitional relief. Does he also agree that many people have been misled by Labour party-political broadcasts, which claim that council tax under Labour councils is £16 lower on average than under Conservative councils? Can he confirm that that is extremely misleading? If one compares like with like for homes in the same band, the tax is much less under Conservative councils.

**Mr. Baldry:** My hon. Friend makes some extremely good points. Six out of 10 people will pay less under the council tax than they did under the community charge. Band for band, Conservative councils cost less and deliver better services. Of course, it is absurd to compare average bill with average bill when the average band in a Labour area is band A and in a Conservative area it is band D. If we simply take the average band in a Conservative area, the tax is £107 less than the Labour equivalent.

**Mr. Straw:** Why does not the Minister wake up to the fact that the electors believed us on the council tax, not the Tories, which is why the Tory party was annihilated at the county elections and we had spectacular successes?

While the Minister is singing the praises of the poll tax, is he aware that his Secretary of State, when he was Minister for the poll tax, screeched around the country damning any idea of a property tax based on capital values, such as the council tax? The right hon. Gentleman even claimed that the poll tax was the

"clearest and fairest local tax ever"

and that it was, "a morally superior alternative" to a property-based tax.

Has the Secretary of State yet told the Minister whether he still holds such crackpot views, or does the Minister think that his right hon. Friend's desire to stay in office has got the better of his moral superiority?

**Mr. Baldry:** Electors should be very wary of listening to any estimates from the Labour party on anything to do with local tax. For example, Labour-controlled Birmingham city council said that the introduction of the council tax and this year's settlement would result in 3,000 redundancies. It then revised that figure to 1,000. In the event, it increased its full-time payroll by 2·3 per cent. So much for Labour estimates.

**Mr. James Hill:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the main question was about implementation? I must say that, from my postbag, there appears to have been a very smooth transition from the community charge to the council tax. Does my hon. Friend further agree that if people have any complaints about banding, they should write to their Member of Parliament as soon as possible? The implementation has been so smooth that I believe that the council tax is one of the best policies that the Government have introduced recently.

**Mr. Baldry:** My hon. Friend makes some excellent points. As I said, only 3 per cent. of bandings have been appealed against. That is a sign that the vast majority of people accept that their bandings are fair and reasonable. As I also said, six out of 10 people pay less under the council tax than they did under the community charge. We must also take into account council tax benefit, transitional relief and discounts—all of which further reduce the bills that people have to pay.

## Water Disconnections

3. **Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest information on the numbers of domestic households being disconnected from their water supply in order to recover debt.

**The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Tim Yeo):** In total, 18,636 domestic customers had their water supply disconnected in 1992-93 for non-payment of their bills.

**Mr. Jamieson:** Is the Minister aware that in my constituency of Devonport and in the region covered by South West Water, water charges are rising more rapidly than anywhere else in the country? That will inevitably lead to more and more people falling behind with their bills and they will then face disconnection. Does he accept that access to clean water is a basic fundamental human right which is essential to health and life? Will he introduce measures to outlaw disconnections and ensure that water companies use more acceptable means to collect their charges?

**Mr. Yeo:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Government are doing everything that they can to ensure that price rises are kept to a minimum. The fact is that rates of disconnection in the south-west are barely half the national average. Whatever else may be the cause, it is clear that rates of disconnection are nothing to do with the hon. Gentleman's concern about prices.

Disconnection must remain as a necessary last resort —a sanction on those who will not pay. It is not designed to dispossess those who cannot pay. In fact, over half of all households that are disconnected have their supply reconnected within 48 hours. No one who is seeking help from the Department of Social Security will be disconnected until his case has been investigated.

Prohibiting disconnections would burden those customers who pay their bills, in order to help those who refuse to pay theirs. That is a policy which characterises the Labour party and it explains why it remains out of office.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Will my hon. Friend confirm that water disconnections last year were substantially down on the year before—by between 10 and 12 per cent.—and that a great many hoops have to be gone through before anybody can possibly be disconnected?

**Mr. Yeo:** My hon. Friend is right; disconnections are down and so are court actions. She is also right that there are considerable obstacles to water companies disconnecting customers. They have to go through an elaborate legal process, and disconnection takes place only when all other routes have been exhausted. The overwhelming evidence is that it catches only those who have refused to pay and not those who are unable to pay.

**Mr. Chris Smith:** May I first welcome the Minister to his new post? Does he agree that it is an outrage that every week 360 families in Britain have their water supply disconnected, while we heard only this morning that the chairman of North West Water received a salary increase last year of 43 per cent., bringing his salary to £238,000 a year? When will we end the barbaric practice of cutting off people's water supply, which is essential to their life and health, simply to recover a debt? Why do we not follow the example of other countries, including Scotland, I am pleased to say, and outlaw that practice?

**Mr. Yeo:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his welcome. In the case of North West Water, I have seen a letter from his hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) to the Prime Minister today about the pay of the chairman of North West Water. Disconnections in the north-west are even lower than they are in the south-west; they are running at about a quarter of the level that prevails across the country. It is absolutely typical of the Labour party to make no mention of the huge increase in the investment programme of the water industry since privatisation—a £30 billion programme through the decade. The water companies invest £8,000 every minute of every day. The Labour party can think only about the politics of envy and their concern about salaries.

**Mr. Nicholls:** Does my hon. Friend accept that there ought to be a happy medium between the idiocy of free water advocated by the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devenport (Mr. Jamieson) and the level of water charges in the south-west? Does he accept that while it is not the Government's fault that the European bathing water directive has brought about extremely high water charges in the south-west, ultimately only the Government can deliver a solution? While I do not suggest that we should have free water, as the hon. Member for Devonport did, will my hon. Friend at least take on board that there is a problem in the west country which has to be addressed?

**Mr. Yeo:** Yes. I am grateful at last to have an intervention from my hon. Friend, who approaches the subject in a more rational light. Of course we cannot have free water; however, we entirely share his concern about the rate of price increases in the south-west and we are examining every possible option to find ways to restrain those price increases. I can assure him that, in complying with the European Community directives, we will make sure that we move no further or faster than we are absolutely required to do by law, and if there are any other ways of bringing those price increases under control and slowing them down, we are ready to discuss them with my hon. Friend and other hon. Friends from that region.

## Local Government Reform

4. **Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received in support of the Local Government Commission's report, "The Future Local Government of Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset".

**The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mr. David Curry):** At this stage of the review, representations are to be made to the Local Government Commission and not to me.

**Mr. Jones:** Is the Secretary of State aware that his proposals have gone down like a lead balloon and that the commissioners have been lucky to escape alive from public consultation meetings? Will he change the guidelines to commission and explain why he is prepared to spend large amounts of money on the review at the same time as cutting spending on front-line services such as education and police?

**Mr. Curry:** I have received representations from all over the House. Some of the recommendations have been well received—for instance in Avon, Humberside and Cleveland—and some have not been well received. However, we are only at stage 1 in a long process of consultation. The commission has to bring forward revised recommendations, the Government have to judge them and the House of Commons has to accept them.

People have plenty of opportunity to make clear their views. To write off the thing now would be silly and it certainly would not be the views of the Liberal councillors whom I met at the Association of District Councils meeting in Bournemouth.

**Mr. Knapman:** Is my hon. Friend aware of early-day motion 2153, signed by the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones), which suggests that we should stop the local government review and retain both county and district councils? Does my hon. Friend accept that everybody in Gloucestershire wants unitary authorities, for their increased efficiency and the savings that they will make, and that that opinion is shared by the county council and the district council—everybody in the county except the hon. Gentleman?

**Mr. Curry:** We should have to reflect hard before we decided that we were simply going to call the review off, as the hon. Gentleman's early-day motion says. It would be a wrong decision and it would be difficult to explain why in certain authorities, such as Cleveland and Avon, people were to have the opportunity of successor unitary authorities, but in other parts of the country that may have similar characteristics, that was not to be available. The sensible thing is to consider the review and how we should take it forward to ensure that it reflects local opinions and the need to deliver local services effectively, rather than to spend too much time on the competing territorial ambitions of councillors.

**Mr. Straw:** Is the Minister aware that the Labour party conference and the national executive have long and consistently supported the principle of unitary authorities and of the commission to examine those proposals? I therefore welcome what he has said. Does the Minister understand, however, that there is widespread anxiety about the commission's interpretation of its guidance, especially on the issues of cost and of community identity?

Does the Minister share the Labour party's view that the commission's current policy for local elections to be held once every four years only, in place of annual elections in most places, would be a disaster for local democracy and would greatly reduce the accountability of councils to their local electorates?

**Mr. Curry:** The Government have no religious views on how elections are to take place in successor organisations and we shall be willing to listen to representations on how that would make councils more accountable and effective.

The hon. Gentleman's comments on unitary councils reflect the opinion of many people. It is important that people have the opportunity to express what sort of councils they want. In all the debate about the review, we should not lose sight of the fact that the essential purpose is the delivery of services to people. If there is an overwhelming feeling that the review needs to be looked at to see how it can be taken forward, the Government are open to that. Sir John Banham has made similar comments. We do not want to lose sight of the fact that the review is about the delivery of services to people, and how best that can be done in an efficient way that reflects the opinions, feelings and identities of people.

**Mr. Butcher:** May I ask my hon. Friend to grasp Sir John Banham warmly by the throat and to ask him not to tinker with history and our heritage? He will be cheered to the echo if he gets rid of the aberration of Avon and restores the traditional county boundaries for all purposes other than local government, but if he carries on inventing history, or reinventing history, by, for example, creating an East Riding of Yorkshire that bears no resemblance to the original, those proposals will be as hated as the current counties of Humberside and Avon are.

**Mr. Curry:** I agree with my hon. Friend that one of the essential purposes of the review is to have regard to where people feel they belong and their identities. I know that there is a great anxiety over certain reunification movements. My hon. Friend will know that West Craven, in Yorkshire, has been put into Lancashire for reasons that —speaking as a Yorkshire Member—are always incomprehensible, but there is a move to return it to Yorkshire. It is up to people to express what they want from the review. It is at an early stage. The final recommendations must reflect local opinion and prove that they have done so. The Government have the discretion to accept the recommendations, to send them back to the commission or to make modifications within its spirit. There is a lot of work to be done. I listen carefully to what my hon. Friend and other hon. Members say about the feelings expressed by their constituents.

## Dioxin

5. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now meet a deputation of representatives from North Derbyshire to discuss dioxin and other related environmental matters.

**Mr. Yeo:** A meeting is proposed for 5 July between Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and elected members and officers of Derbyshire county council and district councils specifically to discuss dioxins in Derbyshire.

**Mr. Skinner:** I call on the Secretary of State for the Environment to meet the representatives and not just Her Majesty's inspectorate. Two years ago, dioxin was discovered in the milk in Bolsover. It was then found in the beef cattle and then in the soil. It has now been found in the next door constituency of Derbyshire, North-East. I call on the Minister to understand that we have a right to have meetings and a public inquiry. If dioxin was discovered in the pond that belongs to the Secretary of State for the Environment, there would be health inspectors and public inquiries until the cows come home.

**Mr. Yeo:** I am glad to see that the hon. Gentleman is in characteristically courteous form. The report on the subject and all the relevant information will be published as soon as possible after a decision has been taken on whether to prosecute Coalite. Meanwhile, the Coalite incinerator has been closed for modification. Before it can restart operations, it will have to meet stringent standards. The House will also want to know that the Government's commitment to controlling dioxin emissions was demonstrated yesterday by our agreement in the Council of Ministers to the directive on the incineration of hazardous waste, which sets very demanding limits. Bearing all that in mind, no purpose would be served by holding a meeting at this stage.

## Council Tax

6. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to alter the help available to people living alone under the council tax.

**Mr. Baldry:** People living alone are entitled to a 25 per cent. council tax discount. Many will also receive relief to ease the transition from the community charge. Households on low incomes qualify for benefit to offset part or all of their council tax liability.

**Mr. Pawsey:** I thank my hon. Friend for that extremely helpful reply. Can he confirm that when the Local Government Finance Act 1992 was passing through the House, Opposition Members voted against the principle of a discount for those who live alone? Will he further note that many single-person households comprise pensioners? Given the Opposition's alleged concern for pensioners, does he agree that voting against a discount means voting against pensioners' interests?

**Mr. Baldry:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Labour party made it clear in Committee that it objected in principle to the discount system. Labour Members made it clear that an incoming Labour Government would do away with the discount. Anyone who has a discount for being a single person, whether a pensioner or not, knows that if the Labour party had its way, discounts would be scrapped.

**Mr. Pike:** Does the Minister accept that despite what he has said, many elderly pensioners living alone are angry about the situation in which they find themselves? They were told that they would benefit most when rates were abolished, but they paid a lot more under the poll tax. Many of them are now paying even more under the council tax than they were under the poll tax. Will the Government consider introducing a banding lower than band A which would help many single people living alone and others who live in areas where there are many band A properties? In 57 local authorities, more than 50 per cent. of the properties are in band A.

**Mr. Baldry:** Pensioners must think it a bit rich for a party that did not want to have discounts at all to now act as the pensioners' friend.

## Construction Industry

7. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken by his Department since April 1992 specifically to assist the United Kingdom construction industry.

**Mr. Gummer:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply on 27 January, *Official Report*, columns *762-63*. Since then, the Government have introduced measures in the Budget to help the industry and my Department has undertaken a range of supporting activities including a review of sponsorship, three successful overseas trade missions, new consultative arrangements, an increased commitment to collaborative research and guidance on the involvement of private finance.

**Mr. Winterton:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that more than 500,000 people have lost their jobs in the construction industry during the recession, that housing starts are 46 per cent. down since 1988 and that commercial output is down by 35 per cent. since 1990? Does my right hon. Friend agree with the House-Builders Federation, with the Building Employers Confederation, with the Federation of Master Builders and with the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance which urge the Government further to reduce interest rates modestly, to abolish stamp duty, to increase expenditure on the repair and refurbishment of public building and housing stock and to ensure that those measures are introduced by our right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the autumn Budget?

**Mr. Gummer:** I will ensure that my hon. Friend's recommendations for the Budget are passed on to our right hon. and learned Friend. I agree that the construction industry has gone through a difficult time during the recession. It would be wrong of us to underestimate the degree to which that has harmed businesses. There is no doubt, however, that things are a little better. Total construction orders for the first quarter of 1993 are 22 per cent. higher than in the previous three months. Public works new orders are up 43 per cent. on this time last year. Public housing and housing association orders are up by 26 per cent. There is no doubt that the situation is improving after a very difficult time. What is important is that our right hon. and learned Friend should not take measures that would make even more difficult our exit from the recession. To burden us with greater debt would do that. I hope, therefore, that my hon. Friend will not seek to press our right hon. and learned Friend to move in that direction.

**Mr. Eastham:** Is the Minister aware that only a few weeks ago the Employment Select Committee conducted an inquiry and that the chairman of Blue Circle Cement appeared before it? We were told about the crisis and the job losses in the cement industry, due to the fact that electricity costs had increased by 40 per cent., with the result that the company is closing down many of its establishments and is now importing cheap cement from countries such as Greece. What does the Minister intend to do about high energy costs that are affecting the construction industry?

**Mr. Gummer:** I am happy to look at the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised, but I think that he must accept the fact that the cost of energy is something which all industries have to bear. Energy costs are particularly difficult in the cement industry because of the very high degree to which its costs are affected by electricity prices. However, these are not costs which can be passed on to others. It is a natural part of the cost of cement production. What is really difficult for the cement industry is the fall in orders because of the recession. What is therefore most important for the industry is that the Government continue with their economic policy and get us out of the recession much more quickly than any of our competitors.

**Mr. Budgen:** Ought not the construction industry and my right hon. Friend salute with gratitude Mr. George Soros and all those who saved the British economy on 16 September and gave us a new economic policy, lower interest rates and the construction industry the chance once again to play its important role?

**Mr. Gummer:** I am not sure which people we should salute, but we should have saluted the exchange rate

mechanism which enabled us to bring down our interest rates in the way that we did. We began to come out of the recession before we moved out of the ERM. My hon. Friend's thanks should range more widely.

**Mr. Battle:** The Secretary of State claims that, in his words, things are a little better. Is he not aware of yesterday's reports from the United Kingdom's largest housebuilders which show that the pace of recovery in the housing market has slowed down in the last four weeks, which is precisely the length of time that the Secretary of State has been in his new post? Is not the reality, as the Building Employers Confederation spelt out today, that the construction industry is one of the hardest hit industries in this Government-induced recession? Output was down by 14 per cent. between 1990 and 1992 and it is still on a downward trend. The number of new housing starts has fallen by 46 per cent. since 1988. Repairs, maintenance and improvement work is 18 per cent. lower than it was in 1989. Why does the Secretary of State for the Environment not take some responsibility for it? Why does he not use the recently published English house condition survey as a charter for renovation and repair and tackle the problem of the 1·5 million homes that are now revealed to be unfit? Why does he not re-employ the 500,000 building workers who are on the dole and ensure that sufficient homes are provided for all those who need them?

**Mr. Gummer:** If I may take the House back to the hon. Gentleman's first sentence, his early seminary training will remind him that that piece of logic does not stand up. One cannot take four weeks and think that that will lead to any understanding of what is actually happening. In the three months to April, housing starts and completions rose by 20 and 14 per cent. respectively. That is a sensible measure and one which the hon. Gentleman would normally take. I am sure that if he were judging the circumstances of a local or national Government run by Labour, he would take that kind of measure.

If we talk sensible measurements, the fact is that we are slowly but surely emerging from the recession. We shall get better. However, I am unlikely to have had the particular effect that the hon. Gentleman suggests I have over the past four weeks. He offers me the kind of power that would lead me to take credit for the good weather and that would obviously also be wrong.

## Local Government, Cleveland

8. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the Local Government Commission's proposals for Cleveland.

**Mr. Curry:** I am required to take a view on the final proposals which will follow further consultation of local opinion by the commission.

**Mr. Mandelson:** Does the Minister agree that the Local Government Commission, far from being the political fix that some people have described it, carried out its work in Cleveland in a fair, rigorous and conscientious way? However, is the Minister aware of the disgraceful scaremongering and climate of intimidation which has been created by some people who are opposed to the commission's proposals? Will he take it from me that the majority of people in Cleveland want four unitary, local-based councils and that nothing else will do?

**Mr. Curry:** We have had some extremely disturbing reports about intimidation by certain people, including the Labour-controlled Cleveland council which is fighting desperately for its survival. We have heard elsewhere of meetings being packed by local authority employees. Of course they have their voice and a right to express their opinions. However, so has everyone else and it is opinion as a whole which counts. If opinion as a whole wants the change in Cleveland as in Avon and in Humberside—and we all know that those councils perhaps never quite attached themselves to the affections of people in the way that some historical councils did—and if people continue to make their representations, they will get those changes.

**Mr. Bates:** Is my hon. Friend aware that Cleveland county council's campaign of lies and disinformation, which has been deliberately designed to spread fear and anxiety among the council employees and among the public they are there to serve, has been condemned this afternoon on both sides of the House? Will he therefore give an undertaking that those responsible for the scurrilous campaign to save their own skins at the taxpayers' expense will receive the fullest possible scrutiny of the Department of the Environment and the district auditor?

**Mr. Curry:** I wish to make it absolutely clear that the kind of activity that has been reported is clearly wholly unacceptable. Whether or not people like the proposals by the Local Government Commission, the commission is free of party political colour. It would be entirely wrong if we were to introduce any note of party politics into the way in which the commission goes about its work, no matter what opinions we may form about its conclusions. Therefore, if people are going to try to gerrymander local opinion and give a false impression, it is clear that we will know about that and form our conclusions about what we believe to be genuine objective local opinion on the ground of all people and not necessarily those who are councillors, who work for the council or who have a special interest.

## Urban Regeneration

9. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further plans he has to assist the regeneration of urban areas.

10. **Mr. Godsiff:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on current urban policy.

12. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his urban policies.

**The Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction (Sir George Young):** The Government will continue to support the regeneration of cities through their main programmes and through special measures. I am sure that the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) welcomes the impact in his and other urban areas of measures such as city challenge, the urban development corporations, the urban partnership fund, city grant and estate action. The Tyne and Wear UDC alone has attracted more than £500 million to its area since 1987.

**Mr. Byers:** Is the Minister aware that, due to over-concentration in the property market during the late

1980s, six urban development corporations have made a loss of £67 million as a result of the drop in property values? What steps does the Minister intend to take to ensure that, in future, public money is used for job creation and not for property speculation?

**Sir George Young:** I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not running down the excellent work of the Tyne and Wear urban development corporation in his constituency. There has been a net increase of more than 9,000 jobs in that area since the UDC started work. It has a budget of £37·5 million this year and is making progress in creating wealth, creating jobs and promoting enterprise in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

**Mr. Godsiff:** Is the Minister aware that about 10,000 jobs and training places will be lost in Birmingham as a result of his decision to cancel the urban programme? Is he further aware that the city council spent £120,000 at his request to prepare the bids which he then cancelled at the last minute? Will he now apologise to the people of Birmingham and refund that £120,000?

**Sir George Young:** The urban programme has not been cancelled. It is spending £7 million this year in Small Heath and is sponsoring about 10,000 projects throughout the country, promoting enterprise and wealth. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome Birmingham's success with city challenge, representing £7·5 million each year, a total of £37·5 million creating wealth, prosperity and jobs in Birmingham. He should look at the total investment in Birmingham from the Government and not concentrate on one small part of it.

**Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that in Liverpool, £17 million of urban programme money is being replaced by only £1·1 million of urban partnership, with the consequent destruction of more than 3,000 jobs? Is he further aware that in Dovecot in my constituency, investment in housing stock will now not be able to be supported by commensurate investment in the environment? What ideas does the Minister have to help the people of Dovecot improve their environment?

**Sir George Young:** Again, the hon. Lady's constituency was a successful bidder for city challenge, and the rewards for city challenge far outweigh the value of the urban programme. In addition to that, there is a housing action trust in Liverpool and we have the Merseyside task force and the urban development corporation. I urge the hon. Lady to look at the totality of investment by the Government in Liverpool. She will find that it has been very substantial indeed.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the fact that Government as a whole are now putting about £4 billion per annum through targeted initiatives into urban areas in this country? Will he look at the important priorities in many urban areas, including in my constituency, and the need to help target the relatively high levels of inner town urban unemployment? I appreciate the way in which his Department is assisting in that work.

Will my right hon. Friend also look at a matter about which he knows I am particularly concerned, and that is the difficulty with premises that are currently hotels which can be turned into hostels without seeking change of use planning permission? That issue is of great concern and is having damaging effects on the legitimate tourism industry. I appreciate that he and his ministerial colleagues are aware of the position. I welcome their interest and hope that my right hon. Friend will examine the matter.

**Sir George Young:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. He raised, in the latter part of his supplementary question, an issue that has been raised with me by a number of my hon. Friends who represent seaside resorts. I propose to discuss the subject with my ministerial colleagues in the Department of Social Security to see whether further steps might be necessary. I welcomed a note of sanity and perspective in the first part of my hon. Friend's supplementary question in relation to the debate on inner cities. It is indeed the case that since 1979 there has been a fourfold real increase in urban spending by my Department.

**Sir Donald Thompson:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the better aspects, arising out of the list of grants to which he referred, is the flexibility with which grants are applied? Will he continue with that flexibility and imagination, especially as they are applied in Calder Valley?

**Sir George Young:** Yes, indeed. The Department is anxious to get the best value from its programmes. We have a competitive regime which rewards local authorities and voluntary organisations that put forward value-for-money schemes which bring with them private funding and create jobs in their areas. I shall look with interest at any projects coming from my hon. Friend's constituency.

**Mr. John Marshall:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is necessary, for urban programmes to succeed, to have efficient and honest local authorities? Is he convinced that the local authority of Lambeth is efficient or honest? Does he agree that it is high time that the commissioners were sent in to run that council in the way it was once run?

**Sir George Young:** Like my hon. Friend, I read the report prepared by the former chief executive, Herman Ouseley, on the London borough of Lambeth, and it contained a number of worrying allegations which, I know, are being followed up in the appropriate quarters. It is a matter for concern if any local authority misuses its ratepayers' funds, and the appropriate avenues are available to people through the police or the district auditor.

**Mr. Vaz:** Does the Minister recall the last Conservative election manifesto, ironically entitled "The Best Future for Britain", which claimed that our cities had been transformed? After the abolition of the urban programme—as the Minister knows very well, there are to be no new schemes under that programme—and the loss of 34,000 inner city jobs, after the abandonment of city challenge, of which there is to be no third round, and after announcing savage cuts of more than one third in urban funding over the next three years, I am sure that the whole House agrees that our cities have indeed been transformed. Does not the Minister accept that it is high time the Government started to celebrate and support cities, instead of undermining them and denying them the resources that they so desperately need?

**Sir George Young:** I do not know how the hon. Gentleman has the nerve to come to the House and say such a thing. I have here a copy of *The Guardian* of 15 June, which, referring to the hon. Gentleman, says:

"He also said that Labour had been neglecting the inner cities and needed a new strategy."

Those are not my words; they are the words of the hon. Gentleman. He went on to talk about the establishment of an inquiry called City 2020—2020 being, presumably, the earliest year in which he thinks a Labour Government will take office. This inquiry, for inspiration, is to start by looking at the socialist stewardship of areas such as Lambeth, Islington and Hackney.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** Will my right hon. Friend think again about his Department's refusal to grant housing action trust money to Copley close in my constituency, in respect of which a very good case was made? I hope that he will see that that very important and deserving estate is given the help that it greatly needs.

**Sir George Young:** My hon. Friend and the London borough of Ealing are perfectly capable of putting forward another bid for estate action funds for that estate. We shall continue the estate action programme next year. If my hon. Friend would like to talk to the councillors and the director of housing of the borough and then resubmit the bid, we shall see whether, within resources, we can help.

## Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

11. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the environmental implications that may arise from the operation of THORP; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** As the hon. Gentleman will understand, I have received a number of representations about the environmental implications that may arise from the operation of THORP.

**Mr. Bruce:** What is the basis of the current consultation period, why has it been extended, and what does the Secretary of State hope to find out? Does he agree that, because the Government are not prepared to underwrite the contracts and because the electricity companies are not prepared to sign them, the Government are in a cleft stick, which will result in non-viability for THORP or in a blank cheque that will cost us all dear? Are there not real doubts about the economic viability and environmental safety of THORP? Should not the matter be cleared up sooner rather than later? Why should all those people have their agony and uncertainty prolonged?

**Mr. Gummer:** The hon. Gentleman must accept that Parliament has put me and my right hon. Friend in the very clear position of having to assure ourselves before granting, or refusing to grant, the necessary powers to start up THORP. I shall treat my responsibilities as the House would want me to treat them. I shall take as little time as is necessary to do the job properly. I shall do it as quickly as possible, but not in a slap-dash way. That is what the hon. Gentleman must expect. He does not help the case by making extreme allegations in either direction. Special interests are pleading on both sides. My job is to uphold the public interest, together with my right hon. Friend.

**Dr. Michael Clark:** What representations about the environmental implications of not starting up the THORP process has my right hon. Friend received? Does he accept that, even if we do away with THORP, the accumulated waste will not disappear and that, whatever we do in the future, it is far better to treat radioactive waste scientifically? THORP is a well-engineered, modern process intended to do just that, and it should be kept.

**Mr. Gummer:** My hon. Friend expresses a particular point of view. Clearly, the Government and others put their particular points of view in the debate on THORP, and I know how strongly people hold their views. My job in these circumstances is clear: before I and my right hon. Friend allow THORP to go ahead, I must satisfy myself that it is in the public interest. That is what I intend to do and I shall do so in such a way that, whatever the result, people can see that it is done properly. It would be wrong for a parliamentarian to seek to hurry one beyond a point where one can take seriously the opposing arguments or to delay one, which would also be unacceptable. What I am trying to do is not easy; obviously it is not easy because both sides have strong views, and a great deal hangs on the decision. The one thing on which the public can depend is that the House has demanded that the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are put in a quasi judicial position and that that position demands that we do not take a view until we have considered all the facts.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** On a constructive note, would the Secretary of State be prepared to consider supporting an authorisation to British Nuclear Fuels plc to undertake the commissioning of the uranium lines at THORP, particularly as it would mean that many jobs could be saved and also because BNFL has said that it is prepared to pay the £250,000 costs to decommission those lines in the event that, at the end of the day, THORP was not fully commissioned?

**Mr. Gummer:** I confess that I have a difficulty because the hon. Gentleman has, rather less constructively, already said that the Government are the reason for the problems. He said that he did not blame the company but that he blamed the Government whereas his hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), who is not a shadow agriculture spokesman—my right hon. Friend is a co-judge in the matter—said something quite different. He said:

"I think the management of BNFL are using the workforce at Sellafield as a bit of a gun to hold to the Government's head."

I therefore find it very difficult to decide what members of Labour's Front Bench are saying about this matter. I had better tell the hon. Gentleman that I shall do everything I can to carry out what I need to do with my right hon. Friend as rapidly as is consonant with doing the job properly. At the same time, if BNFL wishes a variation in its present authorisation, it must make the proposal to HM inspectorate as the law requires.

I remind the House that the problem is that we have always known that this type of decision is not easy. We therefore have a very clear procedure to follow. Although I know that it is disappointing for members of all parties, I am determined to adhere to the rules and regulations; otherwise, what the House has sought as a protection of the public interest would not exist. My job is to protect the public interest against what are necessarily sectional interests, either those of Greenpeace or of BNFL.

## Government Building Contracts

13. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions he has reached on the need for a pay-when-paid clause in Government building contracts.

**Mr. Baldry:** I am not considering any such clause. Government contracts are required to contain a clause committing the supplier or contractor to pay his subcontractors promptly.

**Mr. Evans:** Is the Minister aware that many companies across the country have full order books and are profitable but that they unfortunately cannot get paid? Will he assure me that the Government will set an example by paying their bills on time? Does he agree that the lot opposite know nothing about paying bills as their bills are paid by the National Union of Public Employees, the Confederation of Health Service Employees and the National and Local Government Officers Association, among others? Does he agree that the label "No say, no pay" hangs very well around their necks?

**Mr. Baldry:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Those who do good work deserve to be paid promptly. All Government contracts include provision for the prompt payment by main contractors of their subcontractors, usually within 30 days of receipt.

**Mr. Henderson:** The Minister will be aware that there is a great deal of concern among many subcontracting companies, including small companies in the building industry, that they are not getting a fair deal as subcontractors to main contractors for Government contracts. Will the Minister be honest with the House and acknowledge that the reason for contractual arrangements not being sufficiently tough is that main contractors, such as Tarmac, have received favours from the Government in their attempts to privatise the Property Services Agency?

**Mr. Baldry:** That is a ludicrous suggestion. As a Minister who sponsors the construction industry, my only ambition is to see the healthiest possible construction industry. That aim is something which the Labour party would not understand, however, because when it was last in government, it introduced a moratorium on many infrastructure contracts. We have clear Government contracts that stipulate that subcontractors should be paid within 30 days of their bills being presented.

## Local Government

14. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what weight he will give to local opinion in Gloucestershire in arriving at decisions on local government structure in the county.

**Mr. Curry:** The Local Government Commission's final reports must demonstrate that due weight has been given to community identities and interests.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** Is my hon. Friend aware that some local authorities are packing public meetings with their own staff? Is he further aware that certain local authorities distribute their own counter literature when distributing the Local Government Commission's literature? Will my hon. Friend ensure that those practices are fully discounted, and that the public have their fair say in the commission's decision on local government reorganisation?

**Mr. Curry:** I am determined that the final conclusion should rest upon the genuinely expressed wishes of local people, and not upon any rigging of that opinion.

## Serious Fraud Office

3.30 pm

**The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell):** With permission, Madam Speaker, I wish to make a statement following the resignation statement made yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) —[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"]—concerning the conduct of the prosecution of Mr. Asil Nadir by the Serious Fraud Office.

As to the background, on 16 December 1990, and subsequently on 22 October 1991, Mr. Asil Nadir was charged with a series of serious offences. On 7 February 1992, the case was transferred to the Crown court. A preliminary hearing was held on 28 February 1992 in front of the trial judge. He indicated on that occasion that it was his view that trial should take place in September 1992. On the application of the defence, who sought further time, the trial date was fixed, first for 8 March 1993 and, subsequently, following a further application by the defence, for 13 September 1993.

On 4 May 1993, Mr. Nadir fled the jurisdiction and went to Northern Cyprus in breach of his bail conditions. It is the intention of the prosecution to bring Mr. Nadir to trial as soon as that can be effected, and a trial is still fixed for 4 October 1993.

One of my duties as Attorney-General, with an overall purview of the prosecution process in England and Wales, and statutory supervision of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the director of the Serious Fraud Office, is to do all that I can to see that the prosecution process is conducted fairly and properly, so that alleged wrongdoers can be brought to trial and that their trial, wholly under the control of the independent judiciary, can be fairly and expeditiously carried out.

It is essential to bear in mind the respective limits of my own role, the role of Parliament and the role of the media. The control of the conduct of the trial is for the independent judiciary. Ultimately, questions as to the propriety of the prosecution and the fairness of the trial, including decisions upon any representations by a defendant's legal adviser that a trial cannot fairly be conducted, are for the courts and the courts alone.

In the context of my role as Attorney-General, it is perfectly proper for an hon. Member to make representations to me about any anxieties he or she may have concerning the conduct of a prosecution. Such representations are carefully and dispassionately examined. Between September 1991 and 10 May 1993, initially with my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire did so.

On a number of occasions, both in writing and orally —on which occasions the meetings were carefully noted by an official—he raised with me a number of concerns and allegations, each of which I caused to be carefully examined with the appropriate authority or body, and following which I wrote to my hon. Friend in some detail.

Yesterday in his resignation statement, my hon. Friend made public his anxieties, going into a good deal of detail in his own way, and called for what he described as an independent inquiry. I wish to explain briefly to the House how his concerns have been dealt with to date and why I do not believe that any such further and separate inquiry is called for or appropriate, and deal with the question of the publication of the correspondence, which I intend to place in the Library of the House in due course.

In doing so, I am intensely conscious, as the House will be, of the need to keep separate the roles of Parliament and the political process and the role of the judiciary. I believe, Madam Speaker, that you were entirely right to be anxious about potential breaches of our sub judice rule, and it is only in the exceptional circumstances that I ask your discretion to enable me to deal, albeit briefly, with the points raised yesterday by my hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend has, in summary, raised the following issues. He has accused the Serious Fraud Office of improperly seeking to harass and prejudice the defendant by allegedly tipping off the media as to the times and places of arrests and other aspects of the investigation; refusing to give proper consideration to a report prepared by the accountants Binder Hamlyn for the defence and failing to make proper inquiries in Northern Cyprus; improperly opening privileged documents; the allegedly improper seizure by the trustee in bankruptcy of Asil Nadir's papers and certain personal effects; and improper pressures allegedly brought by the Serious Fraud Office on the judge. I caused each of those matters to be investigated, and, in necessarily brief summary, the answers are as follows.

The assertions of improper briefing have all been carefully investigated. None was accompanied by any tangible or verifiable evidence from my hon. Friend. On the initial occasion involving the fall of the Polly Peck share price, the press were not even present until after that fall, and the raid had been in progress for some considerable time.

It is correct that two bags containing some privileged documents, among others, were opened in error by some police officers. The privileged documents were not copied; they were returned after the issue of privilege had been determined by an independent silk. The papers and effects seized by the trustee in bankruptcy were seized pursuant to an order of the court.

The report of Binder Hamlyn is part of the defence case. The Serious Fraud Office has had no opportunity to scrutinise the supporting documents. Assertions that their removal to this country would contravene local Cypriot law have been refuted by independent Cypriot legal advice. The Serious Fraud Office has been unable to obtain permission for its officers to investigate the case in Northern Cyprus, as each informal application has been met by the response that approaches must be through diplomatic channels, which the House will appreciate do not exist in the absence of formal recognition of the Republic of Northern Cyprus.

The alleged conspiracy to bribe the judge is the subject of a separate police investigation under the supervision not of the Serious Fraud Office but of the Director of Public Prosecutions. I do not propose to say more about it, as it has been dealt with in court, either in camera or subject to reporting restrictions.

With the exception of the publicity surrounding the arrests and other investigations, all these matters relate essentially to the court proceedings. Their substance and any effect that they may have on the fairness of the trial is essentially a matter for the trial judge.

Mr. Nadir has throughout, until he departed the jurisdiction, been represented by highly experienced solicitors and counsel; and, indeed, many of these matters have already been canvassed to a greater or lesser extent

with the court. I am of the clear view that it is mistaken and wholly inimical to our justice system to set up a so-called independent inquiry into the handling of such matters in parallel to a trial.

I now turn to the question of the publication of the correspondence. As the House knows, I have hitherto resisted such publication. The matters it contained were properly raised with me with the objective of seeing that the defendant's prosecution and trial were fairly handled. Inevitably, it deals with a number of issues that have been or may be raised in the preparatory hearings or the trial, which could run the risk of confusing the issues, or, from certain viewpoints, reflecting adversely on the defendant.

Thus, although the correspondence was not secret, and copies are undoubtedly in the hands of not only my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire my office, and the Serious Fraud Office, but Mr. Nadir's advisers, legal and otherwise, and Mr. Nadir, it did not seem to me at that stage that a responsible person should court unnecessary media attention by placing them in the public domain.

However, following the partial publication of so much of their substance by my hon. Friend yesterday in his statement, and the fact that the rest of the correspondence is likely to be the subject of intense search and speculation, it now seems to me that, subject to certain editing—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."]—it is better that the correspondence should be published. I am therefore arranging to place copies in the Library as soon as possible.

Editing will be confined to two points. First, the names of individuals who happen to be mentioned but whose involvement is purely peripheral have been deleted in order to respect their privacy. Having taken the advice of counsel, deletions will also be made covering the alleged conspiracy to bribe the judge, which is the subject of the continuing police investigation under the supervision of the Director of Public Prosecutions and which has been dealt with in court, either in camera or subject to reporting restrictions. I make it clear at once that it has revealed no credible evidence implicating the judge personally in any way.

In conclusion, the matters raised by my hon. Friend in the past 18 months have already been carefully and dispassionately examined. There is no precedent or justification for an independent inquiry in parallel to the trial. There is no justification for the defendant staying away. Any submissions about the fairness of his trial are matters for the judge and the courts alone.

**Mr. John Fraser** (Norwood): Attacking the integrity of the prosecution is a fairly standard line of defence. Can we assume that the Attorney-General considers such matters carefully and dispassionately, but also with a healthy scepticism, especially as substantial amounts of money have been paid by Mr. Asil Nadir in past years? Perhaps it is right to say that the integrity of the Serious Fraud Office was certainly not in doubt when it strongly opposed bail for the defendant in this case.

Having said that, does the Attorney-General recognise the legitimate anxiety about the use of the wide powers of the Serious Fraud Office, the width of the charges that it often lays and its potential to exploit the media, especially in high-profile cases?

I understand what the Attorney-General has said about alerting the media in the case, but I hope that he will recognise that there are three dangers. It is wrong for either the Serious Fraud Office or the police to give advance notice. of high-profile arrests for two reasons. The first is that such publicity is often more akin to a big fight than a long trial. It can prejudice the case and cause the conviction of innocent people. But equally there is a danger that it could bring about the acquittal of those who otherwise might be found guilty. So there are dangers both ways.

Does the Attorney-General recognise that there have been many cases, including the Nadir case, in which there appears to have been far too much coincidence between a high-profile arrest, sometimes in the early hours, and the press, including television, being present? Will he give that matter serious attention, in view of the effect that it is likely to have on the fairness of trials?

I welcome the publication of the correspondence. I understand the necessity for some editing to preserve the possibility of a fair trial, if that ever takes place. Will the publication include letters from all Members of Parliament who wrote to him, and not merely the ones from the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates)?

I repeat the question that I put to the Attorney-General last week on whether any of the letters contained declarations of interest by the hon. Members who made representations to him. I understand that it is our proper practice to disclose interests when we make representations on cases such as the Nadir case.

The Attorney-General dealt today with the allegations of bribery and of a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice that were raised yesterday, and said that they were being investigated. We are dealing with a case where a substantial sum was paid to the Conservative party. With hindsight, one could say that it might well have been with some expectation. Substantial sums must have been paid to fly the defendant out of the country. There is a question mark hanging over the source of bail and surety moneys.

Under all those circumstances, the Attorney-General is right to examine these matters. There must be the greatest concern if there is also any evidence of a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. I know that the Attorney-General wants to restrict himself on these matters, but can he say how much of a prima facie case there is? What is the strength of the evidence available to him? When—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, no."] These matters concern the House. When will he report back to the House on these matters?

My last question is this: so that no cloud hangs over any of these investigations and no suspicion attaches to any Member of Parliament, will the Attorney-General recommend to his colleagues in the Conservative party and on the Front Bench that the £440,000 paid to the Conservative party is now returned?

**The Attorney-General:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he has approached this matter, particularly in that his questions deal with the substance of the case. He is right to say that to attack the prosecution is a fairly standard form of defence. The prosecutor must look at the case dispassionately, and sometimes coldly.

Prosecutions are carried out without fear or favour, affection or ill will, and contributions to any political party in this country would not be taken into account by any Attorney-General or any independent prosecuting authority. I hope that I will continue to carry on what I consider

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to be an unsullied tradition, which I am sure is carried on by the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Serious Fraud Office. I rule that out utterly.

The powers of the SFO are wide and general. Although they do not arise specifically today, I believe that they are necessary. We are dealing with the investigation of frauds and potential frauds by people in the City and elsewhere who have the stewardship of enormous sums of other people's money. It is right that they should be open to careful, detailed and penetrating scrutiny.

The hon. Gentleman asked about advance tip-offs of arrests or other aspects of an investigation. I deplore, and the director of the SFO and the whole House deplore, any tip-offs that lead to unnecessary publicity. I have raised the matter with the director of the SFO and I know that he has raised it repeatedly with his staff. There is no tangible evidence to point the finger.

The House, and those experienced in criminal matters, will realise that necessarily some advance warning to people properly involved must be given of many or most of these matters. There are all too many areas from which either a tip-off can be obtained or a clever inference drawn by those with plenty of time and money to chase up these matters. I deplore that, and the SFO will do everything it can to prevent it. That is as much as I can say on that.

On the publication of the correspondence, I think that I am right that one should not publish the correspondence in general. Hon. Members should be able to approach me in private and—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Well, if hon. Members wish to, that is entirely a matter for them. Issues in the trial should be capable of being investigated dispassionately and carefully without the waters being muddied by unnecessary publicity.

Whether any individual Member who makes a representation to the Law Officers chooses to make that public is for them. I do not intend to publicise or publish the other letters that have been sent, but from whichever part of the House they have come, they have come perfectly properly.

On the question of the police investigation into the alleged conspiracy relating to the bribery of the judge, it is a continuing investigation and will be evaluated when the police make a report. It would not be proper for me to say more about it at present.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence** (Burton): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept our thanks for a prompt, thorough and careful statement, in the best traditions of his office? Does he agree that there is always a danger, when Back Benchers of all parties get carried away with their enthusiasm for the rights or wrongs that may exist in some judicial process, that ultimately we shall achieve the pollution of the pure stream of justice? We must be careful that what we do is not counter-productive.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept the fact that the best course in these matters is to let the lawyers and judicial process deal with all those issues at the time of the trial, if there is one?

**The Attorney-General:** I am most grateful for what my hon. and learned Friend has said. He is entirely right. Questions of justice and of trials are matters not for this House but for the courts.

**Mr. Robert Maclennan** (Caithness and Sutherland): I welcome the fact that the Attorney-General has decided to make this statement to the House and to publish the correspondence, subject to the necessary editing to which he referred. However, I suspect that those will not be his final words on the working practices of the SFO.

Although we sympathise with and share his concern at present not to prejudice the criminal proceedings against Asil Nadir by widening and further opening up his own investigations of which he has spoken, does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recognise that the disquiet about the SFO—not only in this case—will not evaporate without a timely and full inquiry into its modes of operation?

**The Attorney-General:** No. With respect, I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. A great deal of inaccurate and unfair comment is made about the SFO's activities. It is not altogether surprising. One must remember that the people with whom it has to deal and who are charged with serious offences are capable of defending themselves at all levels—not improperly, but they are able to make representations about the kinds of questions that they are asked to answer, whether inside or outside a court. It was this House that decided that the powers should be given to the SFO, and I believe that those powers are exercised impartially and fairly.

**Mr. Richard Shepherd** (Aldridge-Brownhills): When my right hon. and learned Friend calls for an inquiry to be made into allegations about the operation of agencies under his responsibility, is it the agency that investigates itself? If so, is that the most satisfactory way of assuring public confidence that that is appropriate? Could it not be self-serving?

**The Attorney-General:** The straight answer to my hon. Friend is, very often, yes, it is. I went straight away to the director of the Serious Fraud Office and asked him to have these matters extremely carefully looked into. He is a very senior and independent public official. Just as his predecessor was a most distinguished Queen's counsel, now the Director of Public Prosecutions, so he was a leading member and senior partner of one of the largest and most highly respected firms of solicitors in the country. He did not come into his office to abuse his position, and he is the person who, inevitably, can best instigate an investigation in such a case.

**Mr. Gerald Bermingham** (St. Helens, South): Does the Attorney-General accept that the Serious Fraud Office should perhaps adopt the practice of the commercial division of the City of London police of yesteryear, who merely asked a defendant to attend at a police station with a solicitor? That got over all the publicity. Does he not also feel that asking the SFO to investigate itself is a bit like asking a police superintendent to investigate himself? Is it not wiser to call in outside bodies, just as we do with the police force?

**The Attorney-General:** I shall deal first with the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question. It would seldom be wiser to do what the hon. Gentleman suggests. While any public body and any individual must expect to be open to scrutiny if the House thinks it right from time to time, it would normally be extremely disruptive to the prosecution process, and would be an easy card to play by those who wished, for whatever reason, to avoid conviction.

The hon. Gentleman asked about arresting people or otherwise interviewing them by arrangement. That frequently happens, but whether it happens in any particular case—arrests are operational matters for the police—must be an operational decision on each occasion.

**Mr. David Shaw** (Dover): Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider that many of the activities, events and statements of the past 48 hours may be a smokescreen hiding the real issue? That issue is that many pensioners and shareholders in Polly Peck have lost £100 million or more in places abroad from which the money cannot be brought back.

In that context, will my right hon. and learned Friend consider the objectives of the Serious Fraud Office, and whether it serves the public interest? Will he consider that what we want is a prosecuting organisation that can bring cases to trial sooner, and also take part in the recovery process in a more efficient manner than has been evident to date?

**The Attorney-General:** The object of the Serious Fraud Office is to investigate effectively and promptly very complex matters of national and international fraud. I have been involved, directly and indirectly, in these matters for more than 13 years, and I have seen developments through the original fraud investigation groups to the setting up of the Serious Fraud Office. For all the criticism, often uninformed, about the Serious Fraud Office, the speed and efficiency with which major cases are now brought to trial differ enormously from the position 10 years ago.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): As the Attorney-General has raised the subject of publishing, I hope that he intends to publish the names of all those MPs from whichever side they come. Will he also publish a detailed account of what the Lord Chancellor and Asil Nadir said when they had that discussion? Is it not rather odd that the man who sits on the woolsack during the day turned up to meet Nadir after he had fled from bail, although nobody else would have the attention of the Lord Chancellor?

That is why, although the Attorney-General might convince some Conservative Members about what this is all about, the people out there in the country believe that the connection between Asil Nadir, the Tory party and all that money was why he was able to flee this country, with the help of the people in the establishment.

**The Attorney-General:** If the hon. Gentleman would do a little more homework, he would not ask such idiotic questions in the House. There is no question of the Lord Chancellor having gone to meet Mr. Nadir, and if the hon. Gentleman had bothered to read any newspaper on the subject, he would know that, and would not have asked that question for the second time in about 10 days. I assure the House that the names that are edited out of the correspondence do not relate to Members of Parliament in any way.

**Sir Anthony Grant** (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that concern about tip-offs to the press before a raid or an arrest are not confined to one side of the House? It is a matter of concern, and it damages natural justice. Will my right hon. and learned Friend make it absolutely clear to the prosecuting authorities that the person who is the head and in charge must take responsibility for such leaks, and that if he does not, he will have to go?

Is my right hon. and learned Friend also aware that there is concern about the way in which prosecutions generally have taken place in recent years? Although they have to be independent, there is an impression that sometimes they are rather like a loose cannon rolling about. In that context, will he have another look at the evidence given by Customs and Excise to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry and at the evidence given by his predecessor in relation to the supergun inquiry, because that revealed a rather curious method of prosecution in our society?

**The Attorney-General:** I recognise what my hon. Friend says. First, I wholly agree with him—as do the director of the Serious Fraud Office and the Director of Public Prosecutions—that those tip-offs are thoroughly undesirable. No member of their staff is under any illusion as to that.

Having said that, those matters have been carefully looked into, and it is often completely unfair just to point the finger at the staff. In cases where it is well known that an arrest is likely at some stage, there is close media attention and, naturally enough, the media make every possible effort to try to find out when the arrest will be and it is quite difficult to conceal. However, I entirely take my hon. Friend's point, in principle.

As to prosecutions by the Serious Fraud Office being a loose cannon, I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would write or speak to me to let me know any particular points that he has in mind; they will be carefully considered. I think that many of the allegations are unfairly made, but I would certainly look at any that he has in mind.

In relation to the question of Customs and Excise and the DTI, that is already a matter of record, but I understand my hon. Friend's point.

**Mr. Andrew Faulds** (Warley, East): What term is there to the pursuit of this projected trial, and when would this sub judice rule lapse? As regards the correspondence, why does the Attorney-General refer to "all parts of the House", when he knows perfectly well that no one on this side of the House put in any applications on behalf of Asil Nadir?

**Hon. Members:** How do you know?

**The Attorney-General:** The sub judice rule is a matter for you, Madam Speaker. Briefly, we regard matters as sub judice while they are outstanding matters before the courts. As to the question of who did or did not make representations to me, I am in a better position to know than the hon. Gentleman.

**Hon. Members:** Name them.

**Sir James Kilfedder** (North Down): Will the Attorney-General tell the Serious Fraud Office that it should be more energetic in pursuing fraudsters who take tens and hundreds of millions of pounds from shareholders and others? Will he please assist the House by stating which members of political parties have made representations to him on behalf of Mr. Nadir?

**The Attorney-General:** Dealing with that second matter—it seems to be a matter of intense interest to the House—no representation that has been made to me has been in

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any way improper. [HON. MEMBERS: "Name them, then."] No. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] Because if I set a precedent of naming people—*[Interruption.]*—I can look round the Chamber and see people who have made proper representations to me on a variety of cases. I shall stick firmly to what I believe to be the proper procedure.

As to the question of the Serious Fraud Office properly pursuing fraudsters, that is its role. I believe that it does so carefully. If the hon. Gentleman knows of particular points where he thinks that it is not doing so, no doubt he will make representations to me and again I will look into them.

**Mr. David Trimble** (Upper Bann): I am sure that the right thing has been done through the publication of the letters. May I, however, refer the Attorney-General back to the publication of one of the letters in a newspaper last week? What inquiries have been made, or can be made, to try to trace the source of the leak? It must be a matter of very grave concern if there is any suspicion that a letter was leaked by public officials to get rid of an awkward questioner.

**The Attorney-General:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman that, if there were any question of a letter being leaked by a public official, it would be very serious. I think that most, if not all, public officials fully appreciate that. Those letters were not secret. As my statement has already revealed, they were likely to have been in the hands of quite a large number of people. One has to be a little bit sanguine about these leak inquiries, which are not easy to carry out. I make it quite clear to the hon. Gentleman that I deplore leaks.

In the light of the statement yesterday, it seems sensible to publish as a whole but, in principle, I believe, and shall continue to believe, that it is right that, if hon. Members make representations to me about the handling of an individual case, I shall not without their leave publish the substance of that correspondence, unless they choose first to make it public.

**Mr. Peter Viggers** (Gosport): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the sub judice rule, whereby we do not comment in this House on outstanding legal matters and criminal proceedings, is a crucial protection for the defendant and for the independence of our judicial system? Does he agree that this afternoon we have perhaps seen the tip of the iceberg of what might emerge if that rule were abandoned? Will he please ensure that he is not drawn further into the issue?

**The Attorney-General:** I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend said. The separation of powers—the different functions, the different rules of this House and of Parliament, the political process generally and the independence of the courts—is extremely important, and our sub judice rule is designed to that end.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): Does the Attorney-General accept that some people believe that double standards are developing in serious fraud trials, with defendants able to plead temporary Alzheimer's to bring a trial to an end?

In view of the propaganda on behalf of Asil Nadir—a person who is not prepared to face justice, whose representatives asked for deferment of the court hearing, and who fled bail in the most unscrupulous, unprincipled and disgraceful manner—can the right hon. and learned Gentleman assure the House that he will use every endeavour and will remain firm in his determination to bring serious fraudsters to justice?

In that light, surely he accepts that, to emphasise his independence in pursuit of that aim, the party of which he is a member should return all those moneys that it has received from people who are facing charges or have been convicted of serious fraud?

**The Attorney-General:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that, in my office, I shall do everything that I can to assist the administration of justice and the bringing to justice of wrongdoers of this sort and all other sorts. The last part of the question is not a matter for me.

On the hon. Gentleman's question whether a particular defendant should have his trial stopped or whether someone's prison sentence should be reduced because of illness, as perceived by the courts, that is entirely a matter for the independent courts.

**Mr. Tony Marlow** (Northampton, North): I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend that one of the worms in the fabric of government that needs urgent attention is the improper leaking of documents by people in a position of trust. I should be grateful if my right hon. and learned Friend could say—it would be helpful if he could confirm—that neither his office nor the Serious Fraud Office had anything to do with the leaking to the press of the letter from my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates).

**The Attorney-General:** I have absolutely no reason to think that either office had anything to do with it, and I entirely agree with my hon. Friend when he deplores it.

**Mr. Bruce Grocott** (The Wrekin): Can the Attorney-General understand that the nature and extent of representations made to him by Members of this House is a matter of public interest, because it enables us to determine whether the way that the matter has been treated is exceptional or normal? Therefore, can he tell us how many hon. Members have made representations to him, whether they are Ministers or Back Benchers—one Minister has lost his job—and whether he makes any distinction in the representations he receives between those that come directly from the hon. Member whose constituent is the subject of the charges, those that come from a public relations company acting on behalf of an individual, and those that come from an hon. Member who just happens to have a passing interest in the subject?

Above all, can the right hon. and learned Gentleman give us his assessment—people are entitled to know—whether what seems to be at any rate an exceptional degree of direct representation by letter and by personal meetings with him about this case is, in fact, exceptional or normal? If it is exceptional, he should tell the House.

**The Attorney-General:** On the last point, I can tell the House that the degree of representation was exceptional. I believe it to have been bona fide. Having heard the statement yesterday, I think that the House believes it to have been bona fide. As I have said in my statement today, the matter was carefully and dispassionately looked into.

On the question of how many other hon. Members have made representations, I have already answered a number of similar parliamentary questions, and I have nothing to

add to my answer to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). All representations, from whichever hon. Member they come and if they seem to have substance, will be looked at with equal care.

**Mr. Toby Jessel** (Twickenham): On the question of how to bring Mr. Nadir back to Britain to stand trial, in view of Britain's non-recognition of Northern Cyprus but its excellent relations with Turkey, is my right hon. and learned Friend in a position to say whether our right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is considering making further representations to Turkey with a view to the Turks also saying something to Northern Cyprus?

**The Attorney-General:** No. I do not think I can say anything on that subject. With some countries we have extradition treaties; with others we have not.

**Mr. Tony Worthington** (Clydebank and Milngavie): One can understand what the Attorney-General is saying about the undesirability of having an inquiry at the same time as a trial, but there is unfortunately one missing ingredient for the trial—we do not have Mr. Asil Nadir—and Turkey is not going to vote for Christmas. What will the Attorney-General do to investigate these serious matters if it is clear that there will be no trial?

**The Attorney-General:** The hon. Gentleman asks a hypothetical question. At the moment, it is certainly my hope that there will be a trial, and there is still a trial date fixed. I repeat that there is no justification for the defendant remaining away. Any representation that he wishes to make about the fairness of his trial should be made to the court.

**Mr. Peter Thurnham** (Bolton, North-East): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Serious Fraud Office must be properly equipped and resourced to deal fully with rich and powerful individuals? Without the likes of Mr. Nadir, we would not need a Serious Fraud Office.

**The Attorney-General:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. The Serious Fraud Office was set up partly because of a number of cases, which the House will have in mind, in which people who had at their disposal large sums of money—all too often, other people's money—departed to other parts of the world and managed to avoid prosecution. Since the Serious Fraud Office came into being, fewer of those people have been so effective. It has a very good record of careful and effective prosecution.

**Mr. Alex Carlile** (Montgomery): Does the Attorney-General agree that, for the Serious Fraud Office, which is an important institution, to be effective in the detection of serious fraud, it must have full public confidence? Does he agree that concern arises not only from the Nadir case?

I know that he is aware that, in relation to another matter which I will not name, last year a professional officer of the Serious Fraud Office forged a letter or fax purporting to come from my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel). Is he aware that the explanation given by the Serious Fraud Office for that outrageous forgery was that it was an April fool joke?

Is the Attorney-General aware that the lack of any disciplinary proceedings of any meaning in that matter is profoundly unsatisfactory, and does he not agree that the disquiet which was mentioned earlier about the organisation and conduct of the Serious Fraud Office will continue at least until a thorough review of its conduct—perhaps a private review—is carried out?

**The Attorney-General:** Starting with the last part of the hon. and learned Gentleman's question, no, I do not agree with that latter point. It is easy and understandable that people should criticise the Serious Fraud Office, and that those who are under investigation by it, or whose friends are under investigation by it, should often feel critical and express that criticism. The Serious Fraud Office carries out its work professionally and carefully.

There was a serious lapse from that standard in a grave error of misjudgment, about which I have apologised personally to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale. I have looked into it very carefully, and it was dealt with internally by the office. It was a very serious error of judgment, but it was not a matter of dishonesty or anything of that nature; it was a stupid thing to do, but the water should not be muddied. In general, the Serious Fraud Office does its work diligently and scrupulously.

**Mr. Spencer Batiste** (Elmet): Is it not clear that some elements on the Opposition Benches really want a system of televised political show trials, with the opportunity for them to play starring roles? In the interests of justice, will my right hon. and learned Friend resist that process with all the vigour at his disposal?

**The Attorney-General:** My hon. Friend makes the important point that the House, which is normally restrained on matters of judicial proceedings, is wise to be so restrained.

**Sir Donald Thompson** (Calder Valley): Will my right hon. and learned Friend persist in not disclosing other names? All of us, myself included, frequently write to him and to his colleagues at the Home Office about our constituents who are in trouble. Frequently, we are also asked by other hon. Members to write on behalf of their constituents, and we are asked to write on behalf of constituents of other hon. Members in support of their Member of Parliament. If that system is to persist, and if that form of justice is to continue, we cannot have names leaked, either positively or secretly.

**The Attorney-General:** I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It is important that people who have public jobs, whether that job is as the director of the Serious Fraud Office, the Director of Public Prosecutions, or the Attorney-General, should be trusted in their work. If they are found to have done their work improperly, they should resign. If hon. Members write to me in confidence, their confidence will be respected.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): Reflecting on the answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), the Attorney-General said that he hoped that there would be a trial. Is not that just a little disingenuous? What is the basis for that hope? If a Law Officer of the Crown says that there is a hope of a trial, presumably there is some basis for that hope. What is the basis?

**The Attorney-General:** There is no justification for the defendant in this case to stay away. There is no justification for any defendant to flee their bail. While I

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cannot say whether the defendant will return, I hope and trust that he will, and if he does, I believe that he will be fairly tried.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** No, not yet. I call Mr. John Fraser.

**Mr. Fraser:** Will the Attorney-General clear up one ambiguity that may have unintentionally crept into his answers? Can he confirm that he has had no representations from Labour Members of Parliament?

**The Attorney-General:** I think that I ought to stick to my principles and not say from where I have received representations. No representation that I have received from anywhere has been, in my view, in any way improper.

## Points of Order

4.17 pm

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Would you explain to the House the proper way in which personal statements are made by hon. Members? Yesterday, I thought that, although the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) had matters of great importance to raise, they did not seem relevant to a personal statement.

I understood that such statements were meant to be explanations of why Ministers felt it necessary to resign. I thought that the statement yesterday put the House, and especially you, Madam Speaker, in a difficult position. It may be that the whole nature and purpose of personal statements ought to be reviewed, or at the least clarified.

**Mr. Michael Jopling** (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. You may recall that I asked you yesterday to consider the way in which personal statements are vetted and agreed by the Speaker before their delivery and, in return, the personal statement is allowed to be made without interruption. I understand that that is not the case with personal statements about resignations. Have you been able to give some thought to asking the Procedure Committee to look into the matter, with a view to making all personal statements subject to the prior agreement of the Speaker of the day?

**Madam Speaker:** Let me try to help the House. Personal statements are vetted by the Speaker. Resignation statements are not vetted by the Speaker. I have no authority whatever to vet such a statement, nor did I vet the statement yesterday.

There is a lot of disquiet in the House about such statements. I have received a letter from the Chairman of the Procedure Committee, which I have not yet had the opportunity to read, but I believe that it suggests that the Committee may well look into that whole area. I am sure that many hon. Members will welcome the Procedure Committee's initiative. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".] I hope that I have laid this matter to rest. I want no further points of order upon it.

**Mr. David Martin** (Portsmouth, South): On a different point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that, yesterday, the Prime Minister raised with the Leader of the Opposition a document on Northern Ireland by the official Opposition spokesman on Northern Ireland, in which he proposed, in effect, constitutionally abandoning the Northern Irish people.

Since then, confusion has reigned, with some newspapers saying that his leader is going to back him, and others saying that he should be disowned. I wonder whether you have had a request for a statement, either from the Opposition's Northern Ireland spokesman or from the Leader of the Opposition, so that we can clear it up once and for all?

**Madam Speaker:** That is barely a point of order for me, but I have received no such request for a statement.

**Mr. Edward Garnier** (Harborough): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Can I refer you to the 21st edition of "Erskine May", page 230, where the manner of

taking the oath, affirmation in lieu of oath and the penalties for omission to take the oath are set out. The form of the oath is:

"I do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, her heirs and successors, according to law. So help me God."

As you know, Madam Speaker, if a Member does not wish to take the oath, he or she can affirm.

The penalties for omitting to take the oath or to affirm are:

"any Member of the House of Commons who votes as such, or sits during any debate after the Speaker has been chosen, without having taken the oath, is subject to the same penalty, and his seat is also vacated in the same manner as if he were dead."

In the Commons it is necessary to move a new writ immediately the omission——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. We are very interested in what "Erskine May" says. I read it regularly, but I should be glad if the hon. Gentleman would come to the point of order for me.

**Mr. Garnier:** You anticipated me, Madam Speaker, by two seconds.

In view of what is said in "Erskine May", can you advise the House whether the proposal mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin)—that Ulster should become an independent state and share sovereignty with the presidency of the Irish Republic—constitutes a revocation of the oath, and what consequences should flow from it?

**Madam Speaker:** That is a very interesting use of the time of the House before we reach the ten-minute motion.

**Mr. Charles Hendry** (High Peak): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. There is no "Further to that point of order." If it is a new point of order, I shall of course hear the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Hendry:** It is on a different aspect of that point of order.

**Madam Speaker:** No, I have dealt with it.

## Medical Act 1983 (Amendment)

4.21 pm

**Mr. Nigel Spearing** (Newham, South): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Medical Act 1983 to permit the Professional Conduct Committee of the General Medical Council to take action in specified circumstances in respect of conduct of a medical practitioner which they judge to be unacceptable professional conduct; and for connected purposes.

In simple language, the Bill would give greater optional and discretionary powers to the professional conduct committee of the General Medical Council than those that it currently possesses. I want to make it absolutely clear from the start that this is not an anti-doctor Bill or an anti-GMC Bill. It would give greater protection to the medical profession, and enhance whatever reputation the General Medical Council has at the moment.

The Bill further assumes that there is merit in, and that there will be a continuation of, self-regulation as a means of regulating the profession. That is considered by many to be preferable to any other alternative.

I am sure that the whole House agrees that only a very small number of doctors need to be involved in the sometimes controversial disciplinary procedures of the General Medical Council, and that the overwhelming proportion of the profession deserves the thanks and full respect of the public, whose protection is the advertised prime function of the GMC.

The Bill arises from two cases in my constituency, which I believe have revealed a lacuna in the aforementioned Act that gave the GMC its statutory powers.

Many hon. Members have had similar difficulties. I first introduced this Bill in the 1984-85 Session, and I introduced it in four subsequent Sessions. This is the sixth occasion on which it has been before the House. On 3 March 1987, I introduced a Bill under the ten-minute rule, as reported at column 757 of *Hansard*. This is an across-the-Floor motion, which has nothing whatever to do with other political matters.

I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) is in his place. He referred to a specific constituency case on 24 July 1985. On 25 March 1986, at column 842 of *Hansard*, he told the House about a distressing case in his constituency of the daughter of a well-known constituent of his, who had returned home from playing badminton. She was a healthy person aged 22. She had complained of pains and was given an injection for a strained ligament. Unfortunately, diagnosis did not take place, and the young lady died as a result of acute septicemia about three or four days later.

I have another sponsor in my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith). He is known to us as "Mr." but in the medical world that title denotes a consultant neuro-surgeon. He is a former member of the General Medical Council. In the past, this Bill has also been sponsored by Dr. Maurice Miller, a former Member of Parliament well known to many here.

The British Medical Association has passed a resolution not to oppose the Bill, and I know of no Member of Parliament, other than those who for a time have sat on the Treasury Bench in a certain capacity, who oppose it. I rather suspect that, when the Bill has been opposed over the years—perhaps by a Treasury representative on a Friday afternoon—that was because

*[Mr. Nigel Spearing]*

the GMC was not happy with the amendment of the Medical Act 1983, as it has other proposals which it believes would deal with the matter more effectively. I do not think that its view is correct, and I shall explain why.

The Bill, which the GMC has been preparing over the past two or three years, after extensive discussion inside the medical profession, deals with the related but not specific case of the performance of medical practitioners in respect of their general profession, and it might be able to take on board some of the complaints that reach the GMC. I put it to you, Madam Speaker, and to the House, that that is parallel to the disciplinary procedure and is not connected directly with it, certainly under current statutes.

To understand the Bill, I must explain what I regard as the lacuna within it, which I think was unintentional when it was passed in 1983. Under the Medical Act 1983, the only charge that can be made by the professional conduct committee against a medical practitioner is one of serious professional misconduct. The complaint reaches the PPC only after three stages of sifting. When it reaches the committee, those hearings are in public.

However, the problem is that, when the GMC conducts its own case against a practitioner, it says that the conduct must be related to certain forms of action. It says that the first consideration of the PPC is to determine whether or not the alleged misconduct has been found to be correct and proven. If the matters are found proven, the PPC has a further stage in its consideration: given that the allegation is proven, does it amount to serious professional misconduct? Only if it decides that it amounts to serious professional misconduct has it any penalties or sanctions of any sort other than the publicity available.

I am not a great one for penalties. I believe that remedies are sometimes better. The least remedy available to the GMC where serious professional misconduct is found is conditional registration or a reprimand. In effect, a conditional registration says, "Carry on doctor, but . . ." Certain actions are then specified for the doctor, such as to attend courses, not to perform certain activities, and to have conversations with the chairman of his local medical committee from time to time. Those actions can be varied case by case.

However, if the GMC does not find that the charges proved amount to serious professional misconduct, it cannot do anything, even if it finds that there has been professional misconduct as such or, as in the case of my late young constituent Alfie Turner in 1982, if it finds that there has been unacceptable professional conduct. The council can say that that is the case, but it has no power, because there is no relevant power in the Medical Act 1983 for the GMC to act.

That lack of power, where there is manifest professional incompetence which is seen and open, and where the charges found have been proved correct, causes public disquiet and disquiet inside the profession.

I have discussed the matter with the GMC and its presidents over many years. I informed the current president of the GMC that I was going to move my Bill today for the sixth time. He sent me a letter which refers to a letter which he sent me on 29 September, in which he says that it would not be timely to accept my Bill because it would not

"be in the long-term public interest for the introduction of these procedures to be delayed"—

that is, while a new comprehensive Bill is being considered—

"or in any way hampered by the introduction of an alternative amending the Medical Act."

However, my Bill is not an alternative. It will remedy a manifest and continuing defect in our legislation.

I wrote to the president of the GMC on 10 June, and I have a reply dated 29 June, which I received in full this morning and in a faxed form yesterday. I understand that a copy was sent to the Department of Health. I want to quote that letter because it is very important. The president states:

"I . . . should like to make it clear at the outset that the GMC's Professional Conduct Committee"—

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I am reluctant to interrupt the hon. Gentleman and I have been trying to catch his eye, but his time has run out.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Nigel Spearing, Sir Anthony Grant and Mr. Sam Galbraith.

## MEDICAL ACT 1983 (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Nigel Spearing accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Medical Act 1983 to permit the Professional Conduct Committee of the General Medical Council to take action in specified circumstances in respect of conduct of a medical practitioner which they judge to be unacceptable professional conduct; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 229.]

# Orders of the Day

## European Parliamentary Elections Bill

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Madam Speaker:** I inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

4.33 pm

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard):** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I stress at the outset that the Bill has no effect whatever on the powers of the European Parliament. The Bill is a consequence of the agreement reached at the European Council at Edinburgh that additional seats should be allocated to some member states. That agreement was a consequence of the large increase in the population of Germany arising out of unification of that country following the collapse of communism. The United Kingdom received six additional seats under the agreement. The Bill provides for their distribution within Britain and for the work needed to change the boundaries of European constituencies to incorporate the extra seats.

Under the European Parliamentary Elections Act 1978, which the Bill amends, representatives from Great Britain in the European Parliament fill single-member seats to which the candidate with a simple majority is elected. The Bill proposes no change in that system.

In the exceptional circumstances of Northern Ireland, as in local government elections, Members of the European Parliament are chosen by the single transferable vote system. Northern Ireland is a single constituency for that purpose. That system was introduced in the Province in 1977 to ensure fair representation for both communities, and we do not propose to change it.

We are prepared to participate in further Community discussions about electoral procedures for the European Parliament, but I must make it clear to the House that we see no case for departing from our traditional system. It is noteworthy that there is a movement in our direction in the Community, as people in other member states see the disadvantages of proportional representation. That hardly suggests that we should be moving in the opposite direction.

**Mr. Tony Marlow** (Northampton, North): I am grateful, as many of my hon. Friends will be, for the strong words that my right hon. and learned Friend has used about our excellent system of voting for membership of the European Parliament. It is obvious that next year we shall be having an election in this country on the basis of the first-past-the-post system. Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, so far as he is concerned, the European election after that will also be fought on the first-past-the-post system?

**Mr. Howard:** I have answered my hon. Friend. I see absolutely no case for moving away from our first-past-the-post system. I am convinced that it is the best system and I am confident that, in time, our view will prevail in the Community.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman** (Lancaster): I have the impression that Opposition Members are sceptical when my right hon. and learned Friend speaks about people in other countries coming our way. Does he agree that there has been total chaos in Italy, but that Italy has now come our way?

**Mr. Howard:** My hon. Friend is right to the extent that Italy is moving in our direction—not yet as far or as fast as I would like, but I live in hope. What we have seen are the first stages of a move in our direction. I am confident that in time we shall see more.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray): Given that the Community is shortly to extend itself from 12 to perhaps 16 seats, and given that the majority of countries use proportional representation, how does the right hon. and learned Gentleman reconcile that with article 138 of the treaty, which says that we should move to a uniform electoral system?

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. Lady will be aware that all decisions on what that uniform system should be must be reached by unanimity. During the period when the movement in our direction which I described is still taking place, we shall rely on our veto to encourage those other member states to move further and faster in our direction.

**Mr. Jeff Rooker** (Birmingham, Perry Barr): To avoid wasting time, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman simply confirm that Italy has changed from one proportional system to another proportional system?

**Mr. Howard:** As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), Italy is moving in our direction, away from a system of extreme proportionality to a system much closer to ours. I said that Italy had not moved as far or as fast as I would like, but I am an optimist.

The effect of clause 1 is that next year's European parliamentary elections will be contested with the following number of seats for each of the four territories of the United Kingdom: 71 seats in England, eight in Scotland, five in Wales and three in Northern Ireland. That represents an increase of five for England and one for Wales.

That distribution of the extra seats is, I believe, the fairest available, as the arithmetic clearly shows. I have put in the Vote Office—and my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) has copies available in the Chamber for hon. Members who wish to follow the matter—a note setting out both the current position and the effect of introducing the various options.

At present, the average electorate of a European Parliament seat in Wales is 1 per cent. greater than that in England. In Scotland, the average electorate is 10 per cent. smaller than that in England. So Wales is slightly disadvantaged compared with England and considerably disadvantaged compared with Scotland. England, too, is disadvantaged compared with Scotland. If all the new seats were allocated to England the average electorate for Wales would be 10 per cent. greater than that for England. In Scotland, the average would be 3 per cent. less than that in England. That option would therefore increase the disadvantage to Wales.

The most unsatisfactory change of all would be to distribute the seats on the basis of four to England, one to Scotland, and one to Wales—the solution suggested in the

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Opposition's reasoned amendment. This would mean that Scotland's unfair advantage would increase from the present 10 per cent. to 16 per cent., while the average for Wales would go from 1 per cent. more than England to 15 per cent. less, giving Wales an unfair advantage over England almost as big as that of Scotland.

By giving five seats to England and one to Wales, the most satisfactory result which does not disadvantage Wales is achieved. The average electorate in Wales would become 13 per cent. less than England's, but Scotland's would still be 4 per cent. less than England's, so both Wales and Scotland would still be advantaged over England, but to a much lesser extent than the four-one-one option favoured by the Opposition. The strength of the Union depends on all its parts being treated fairly. Once again, it is only the Conservative party that is prepared to stand up for a fair deal for England.

**Mr. Tom Clarke** (Monklands, West): Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman failed to take land mass into account? Does he appreciate that the existing Highlands and Islands constituency is larger than some countries in the Community? Is he not prepared to take into account the area that has to be covered by each MEP? Does he accept that if the Government's recommendation is adopted, Scotland's representation will be lower in Europe than in the House of Commons?

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. Gentleman anticipates precisely the point to which I was about to come.

The largest of the Scottish constituencies, in geographic terms—the Highlands and Islands—is already the lowest in terms of population. It would be very unlikely to be altered were there to be an extra Scottish seat. It is far more likely that there would be an extra seat in the central belt of Scotland, where there could be no conceivable argument of geographical fairness or of fairness based on the size of the electorate or any other criterion.

**Mrs. Ewing:** My House of Commons constituency lies within the Highlands and Islands European constituency, which is represented by my mother-in-law, Madame Ecosse. If the Secretary of State looks at the geography of the Highlands and Islands, he will see that the constituency's most southerly point is nearer to London than to its most northerly point. Thus, the servicing of the constituency involves a great deal of complication. Just getting to the islands is a problem. Indeed, the constituency has more islands than any other part of the European Community, and its land mass is bigger than that of Belgium. Does the Secretary of State not agree that it is desirable to take account of geography as well as of arithmetic?

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. Lady cannot have heard the answer that I gave a moment ago. In practice, what she wants would not make any difference. I should be delighted to take any possible steps to enable her to see more of her mother-in-law. Indeed, I can think of a number of ways in which the electorate could assist in that process—I am thinking not just of European parliamentary elections but also of United Kingdom parliamentary elections, in the next of which I hope that the electorate will take the necessary steps. However, this is not the best means of achieving that desirable objective.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Scotland is not the only part of the kingdom with very large constituencies. The constituency that I had the honour of representing years ago—then Cumbria, now Cumbria and North Lancashire—includes all of Cumbria and three very large House of Commons constituencies in north Lancashire, and is bigger than the rest of the north-west put together. I certainly had some travelling to do, but I loved it.

**Mr. Howard:** My hon. Friend is completely right. She makes an entirely apposite point.

**Mr. William Cash** (Stafford): My right hon. and learned Friend referred very skilfully to the European Parliamentary Elections Act 1978, but that Act was amended in 1981 and 1986. Has he not noticed the specific reference to the role of the Boundary Commission? It would not be right to say that the European constituency boundaries create more difficulty for the Boundary Commission than do the House of Commons constituencies, which have to take account of geography, shape, accessibility and so on. With regard to the European parliamentary boundaries laid down in the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1986, it is provided that if at least 500 electors make any representation—not by reference to criteria laid down in respect of Westminster—there must be a local inquiry. Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that this Bill represents a step well away from arrangements enacted as recently as 1986?

**Mr. Howard:** I hope that my hon. Friend will bear with me, as I am dealing at the moment with the distribution of seats in Great Britain. Of course there is an important point with regard to the role of the Boundary Commission and I shall come to that in due course.

**Mr. Marlow:** My right hon. and learned Friend is being very brave in at last securing an element of fairness for England in the European Parliament. Will he go one step further and reduce Scotland's representation in the House of Commons so that England can have fairness here?

**Mr. Howard:** My hon. Friend will be the first to appreciate that this is not an appropriate legislative vehicle for any endeavour of that kind.

In the figures that I have given, I have made no mention of Northern Ireland as it is proportionately the best represented of the territories of the United Kingdom, with three Members of the European Parliament for a population of only 1,153,204. That level of representation is for good reasons. First, any fewer seats would result in Northern Ireland's being the least well represented of the home countries. Secondly, the three seats allow the communities to be represented roughly in proportion to their numbers.

**Sir Teddy Taylor** (Southend, East): The Secretary of State has been talking about the six extra seats—whether they be Scottish, Irish, Welsh or English. We are told that the extra cost will be £250,000. My understanding is that that sum would provide only one and three quarters MEPs. Is this bargain-basement Europeanism? How have the Government done their arithmetic?

**Mr. Howard:** I am always keen to help my hon. Friend in his search for value for money. The sum to which he referred is the cost of reorganising the constituencies to enable us to implement the provisions of the Bill.

**Mr. Andrew Bowden** (Brighton, Kemptown): On the question of cost, I should like to ask my right hon. and learned Friend what I ought to say to those of my constituents who believe tht there are already too many MEPs, do not know what those MEPs do, and who say —perhaps unfairly—that they never see or hear of them. *[Interruption.]* I am expressing a view that has been put to me not infrequently by constituents. Are we justified in increasing the number of MEPs, who have very limited power and virtually no influence? Is there any point in having more of them before they have a real job to do?

**Mr. Howard:** My hon. Friend is inviting me to dip a toe into some very troubled waters. I am a little reluctant to accept his invitation, although I realise that it was extended with the best of motives. I am sure that even my hon. Friend acknowledges that it is sensible for us to take advantage of increased representation for the United Kingdom when there is to be increased representation for other countries. No doubt we shall all do our utmost to make sure that the people who represent the United Kingdom will do so sensibly.

**Mrs. Edwina Currie** (Derbyshire, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend think it possible that my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) misheard slightly and that most of the criticisms to which he referred were about Members of this House?

**Mr. Howard:** If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I think that the sense of hearing of my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) was probably accurate on this occasion.

**Mr. Nick Hawkins** (Blackpool, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, even after the proposed redistribution, the proposals will still result in a greater number of electors per seat in England than in Scotland? Is that not one of the reasons why it is appropriate for the seats to be awarded principally to England?

**Mr. Howard:** My hon. Friend is quite right. Even after the distribution of seats proposed in the Bill, England will still be at a disadvantage compared with Scotland and Wales, but it will be a much smaller disadvantge than that which would flow from the alternative arrangement suggested by the Opposition parties. That is why I said that only the Conservative party is prepared to fight for a fair deal for England.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow) *rose*——

**Mr. Howard:** This is the last time that I shall give way before dealing with clause 2.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Perhaps I can make the Secretary of State more comfortable by saying that, however unsatisfactory the position in the Brighton area, we in east Scotland get excellent value from Mr. David Martin and Mr. Alex Falconer.

**Mr. Howard:** I note the hon. Gentleman's view on that matter.

Clause 2 and the schedule to the Bill set out the machinery proposed for making recommendations for the constituencies for the 1994 European parliamentary elections.

I now come to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). The recommendations will be made by two special ad hoc European parliamentary constituencies committees, one each for England and Wales, appointed by the Home Secretary. It is a one-off task and does not form part of the duties assigned to the parliamentary Boundary Commission by the 1978 Act or, indeed, by the 1986 Act. That is solely because time does not permit that course to be followed.

There is wide agreement that the process should be completed by the end of November. The Boundary Commission's procedures would not enable that date to be met, but it is my intention that, subject to those time constraints, the procedures that we adopt should follow as closely as possible the procedures which the Boundary Commission would adopt.

The membership of the committees will be selected in consultation with Opposition parties, and I shall seek agreement with them on this matter in exactly the same way that I would if I were appointing Boundary Commissioners. I am delighted to say that, subject only to confirmation of the necessary timetable, I have the agreement of one existing Boundary Commissioner to sit on the committee for England and that of one existing Boundary Commissioner to sit on the committee for Wales. I certainly intend to appoint more Boundary Commissioners if it proves possible.

**Mr. Tony Blair** (Sedgefield): Let us be quite clear about this. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman saying that, with regard to the appointments to and the independence of the committees, the process of consultation and agreement with other parties will be exactly the same as with the Boundary Commission?

**Mr. Howard:** Yes.

The committees will adopt procedures which—again, subject to time constraints—will follow the consultation arrangements which the Boundary Commission would have followed. Due to the time constraints, it will not be possible to hold public inquiries, but I am confident that full opportunity will be made available to all who wish their views to be taken into account.

It is clearly important that the shape of the constituencies is settled as quickly as possible, taking account of the need for proper public consultation, so that the political parties can select candidates and prepare for the June 1994 elections in good time. I shall therefore ask the members of the committees to start work immediately on their appointment and before Royal Assent.

**Sir Peter Tapsell** (East Lindsey): Does my right hon. and learned Friend not recognise that an important point of principle is involved? Why is it right for us in the European context to abandon the traditional methods and safeguards that we observe when choosing or altering British parliamentary boundaries? Does that not tend to reinforce the fears of those of us who believe that every step down the European road tends to weaken this country's traditional democratic safeguards?

**Mr. Howard:** I do not think that my hon. Friend's fears are justified by anything in the Bill. He talked about our traditions, but this will not be the first time there have been no public inquiries on the designation of constituencies for European parliamentary elections. When the first direct European Parliament elections took place in 1979, the process for drawing up the constituencies did not make

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provision for public inquiries. So there is a precedent—this is not a novel departure in the context of the European Parliament.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** We were promised that it would never happen again.

**Mr. Howard:** I do not conceal from my hon. Friend the fact that I would have preferred to appoint the Boundary Commissioners in the usual way and to hold public inquiries, but there is no time. We have checked carefully how long that procedure would take, and I am satisfied that time does not permit us to adopt it. It is for that reason, and for that reason alone, that I proposed the alternative procedure and, as I have tried to say, I am attempting to mirror to the greatest possible extent within the time contraints the procedures which would be followed were the Boundary Commissions to be set up.

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** If any Home Secretary of any political party were to say that the British parliamentary constituency boundaries were to be changed but that the traditional method of doing that was to be abandoned due to pressures of time, there would be an outcry from all parties and throughout the country, so why should the argument be acceptable in the European context, especially bearing in mind that in 1978 we were given an absolute assurance that such a procedure would never be followed again?

**Mr. Howard:** I have made as clear as I can the reasons why we propose to follow this course on this occasion. I do not think that I can add anything to what I have said.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Howard:** I am happy to give way, but I have already given the reasons for pursuing this course and I shall only be able to repeat them in answer to further interventions.

**Mr. John Marshall** (Hendon, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, although the Boundary Commissions' reports for Europe were published in July 1983, because of the public inquiry system the boundaries were not finalised until March 1984? Would such a delay not make it almost impossible for candidates who are seeking to fight constituencies of 500,000 people, which is very much more difficult than fighting a Westminster constituency?

**Mr. Howard:** I think that my hon. Friend is right. There was widespread agreement that we needed to have the constituencies finalised in good time before the election, for reasons that we all readily understand. As I have said, it was for that reason that I have included this procedure in the Bill.

**Mr. Christopher Gill** (Ludlow): If we cannot do what is necessary through the Boundary Commission because of the lack of time, how do we explain to our constituents, who will surely want to know, that we are appointing a committee rather than referring the issue to the Boundary Commission when we have lost more than six months since it was originally agreed that the number of seats would have to be increased?

**Mr. Howard:** I have a suspicion that the issue will not be uppermost in the minds of our constituents, but when it is raised we shall have to tell them—and there are few people better placed to do so than my hon. Friend—that we have had an especially heavy legislative timetable this Session and that we have been occupied with other matters, which has made it very difficult for us to deal with this issue until today. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be able to put that case persuasively to his constituents.

**Mr. Cash:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that the European Parliamentary Elections Act 1978 related to a tin-pot Assembly by no means the same as that referred to in the proposals contained in the Maastricht treaty concerning European political parties, the process of integration and all that goes with that? I therefore argue —and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will agree—that the requirements for greater control are necessary by virtue of the fact that the Maastricht treaty enhances the powers of the European Parliament. It is therefore essential that the criteria followed are no less significant than those which apply to the Boundary Commission. By bypassing the insertions in the 1986 Act, my right hon. and learned Friend is depriving 500 or more electors, notwithstanding the local inquiry, from having an opportunity to have their say on a far more important matter than that which applied in 1978.

**Mr. Howard:** With great respect to my hon. Friend, he has got it wrong. The criteria that will be used to draw up the new constituencies will be identical to those that the Boundary Commissioners would follow. The procedures, however, will be different.

**Sir Peter Tapsell** *indicated assent.*

**Mr. Howard:** I am glad to have the assent of my hon. Friend..

The 500 people to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford referred will have full opportunity to make representations, which will be taken fully into account. The difference is that there will be no opportunity for a public inquiry. I wish that that were not so, but the time constraints make it impossible for such inquiries to be delivered.

**Mr. Bowden:** Arising out of the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill), and accepting that there are considerable time pressures facing the Boundary Commissioners at present, would my right hon. and learned Friend be prepared to consider that between the next two European elections the ordinary processes by which we decide our parliamentary boundaries should apply? That would enable local difficulties or complaints about relatively minor matters to be negotiated through public inquiries. The boundaries would be honed rather than decided roughly through the committee, as proposed.

**Mr. Howard:** I very much hope so. I do not find it easy to look so far ahead in such detail, but I hope that we shall be able to do what my hon. Friend regards as important.

**Mr. Dalyell:** May I intrude on this matter?

**Mr. Howard:** By all means.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Although I concede to the Home Secretary that this is not what Bernard Ingham, of happy memory, would call the

"talk of Two Feathers in Hebden Bridge",

none the less, on what grounds will the criteria deciding the constituencies be different from the normal Boundary Commission criteria which decide parliamentary boundaries?

**Mr. Howard:** The criteria will be those with which we are familiar and will include those which instruct the Boundary Commissioners or the members of the ad hoc committee to look at the numbers in and geographical configuration of a constituency. There will be no difference between the criteria employed by the committees and those employed by the Boundary Commissions. It is the procedures which are different and I want to make the differences as few and as small as possible. The criteria will, however, be identical.

**Mr. Blair:** I do not believe that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has grasped the force of the point about a public inquiry. He has refused such a possibility because of the problem with the timetable, but many people feel that that time constraint is due to the delay in bringing the Bill forward. If there were a way in which a public inquiry could be held and its recommendations published within five or six weeks, that would surely be a sufficient amount of time.

**Mr. Howard:** I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman overlooks the practicalities of these matters. I have sought the most careful advice that I can obtain. I am clear that the timetable that is agreed as desirable simply cannot be met if we introduce public inquiries into the process. That is the only reason why I have been driven to the conclusion that I have explained to the House.

**Mr. Rooker:** If my memory serves me correct, the right hon. and learned Gentleman entered the House in 1983. He may not therefore recall that it was just about two months—a matter of weeks—prior to the 1983 general election that the House approved the reorganisation of constituency boundaries. I did not know the constituency boundaries on which I would fight the 1983 election until the House had approved the order, just two months before that election. If that could be done for the House, surely it could be done for Euro-elections to be held in June next year.

At the heart of the Bill is the integrity of our democratic procedures, which govern how boundaries are drawn. The Prime Minister gave his own word—I hope to deploy the record of that later—that the Bill would maintain the integrity of our democratic procedures. They will not be maintained by stamping out the possibility of a public inquiry, however tight the time scale may be.

**Mr. Howard:** I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. The integrity of the process is guaranteed by the integrity of those who carry out the task. They will be independent and they will be selected in consultation—and, I hope, agreement—with the Opposition parties. I hope that many of those individuals will be Boundary Commissioners.

As to what happened before 1983, the hon. Gentleman tempts me to remind him that, whatever the time at which the order providing for the constituencies was laid before the House, everyone knew what those constituencies would be because they had been agreed by the Boundary Commission in good time for the 1979 election. It was only on the basis of a disgraceful example of gerrymandering by the Labour party that those changes were not introduced in time for that election. I do not believe that it does much credit to the hon. Gentleman or to his party to remind the House about what happened.

**Mr. Rooker:** That is not true.

**Mr. Howard:** Oh yes it is—that is exactly what happened. The Boundary Commission made recommendations in good time for the 1979 election, but the Labour party was terrified of having to fight the election on those boundaries, so it indulged in a shabby piece of procedural gerrymandering which made it impossible for the election to be fought on those boundaries. That is why we had to wait until 1983.

**Mr. John Maxton** (Glasgow, Cathcart): The right hon. and learned Gentleman has got the wrong date.

**Mr. Rooker:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before I sought re-election to the House in 1983, I attended a public inquiry in Birmingahm of the Boundary Commission relating to changes made in 1981-82. How could that meeting relate to boundaries decided on before 1979?

**Mr. Maxton:** The Home Secretary has got the wrong date.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. There seems to be a slight difference of opinion on dates. Perhaps hon. Members on both sides should do further research so that agreement can be reached.

**Mr. Maxton:** It is the Government side that has got it wrong.

**Mr. Howard:** I can quite understand the sensitivities of the Opposition about the gerrymandering exercise which took place immediately before the 1979 election.

**Mr. John D. Taylor** (Strangford): Perhaps we can leave gerrymandering and get back to the criteria. The committees will apply the same criteria as the Boundary Commission. Does that mean that the new Euro constituencies in England and Wales will not take in parts of Westminster constituencies, but entire Westminster constituencies?

**Mr. Howard:** Indeed it does. I will discuss the specific criteria in a moment, but I can answer the right hon. Gentleman's question in the affirmative.

**Mr. Roger Knapman** (Stroud): Does my right hon. and learned Friend believe that the usual conventions will be followed and that those who have attended the Second Reading and shown their interest by making interventions and speeches will in due course be invited to form the Standing Committee?

**Mr. Howard:** As my hon. Friend will know, those matters are not for me. I understand that the Committee stage of the Bill is likely to be taken on the Floor of the House, so there will be ample opportunity for my hon. Friend to make his points.

**Mrs. Currie:** Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the opinion on his supportive Back Bench is that the event to which he referred, when Mr. Callaghan gerrymandered the boundaries in the belief that it would help the Labour party in the 1970 election, did not take

*[Mrs. Currie]*

place in 1979 but in 1969? Of course, it did not help. Before my right hon. and learned Friend replies, he should have a look at the Box.

**Mr. Howard:** It is not always easy to distinguish between one piece of Labour party gerrymandering and another. It comes naturally to the Labour party. Undoubtedly, if Labour Members were ever to sit on the Government side of the House they would be up to the same tricks again.

I hope that the members of the committees to whom I have referred will publish their draft reports in mid-August. I then envisage about four to six weeks of public consultation and a further month or so of subsequent deliberation before final reports are published in November. Approval by Orders in Council would then follow.

The criteria that the committees must follow in considering the distribution of seats will be the same as those laid down in part II of schedule 2 to the 1978 Act. They specify that each European parliamentary constituency must consist of at least two parliamentary constituencies, that no parliamentary constituency can be included partly in one European parliamentary constituency and partly in another, and that the electorate of each constituency must be as close as possible to the electoral quota for that part of Great Britain, having regard to special geographical considerations where appropriate.

This Bill is not concerned with the powers of the European Parliament, but the extra seats for the United Kingdom will give this country a greater voice in the important jobs of scrutinising the Community budget, exposing fraud and calling European Commissioners to account. The Bill sets out the right way of allocating our extra seats to different parts of the United Kingdom. It deserves wide support, and I hope that it will receive it. I commend it to the House.

5.11 pm

**Mr. Tony Blair** (Sedgefield): I beg to move, to leave out from "That to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to the European Parliamentary Elections Bill which has been delayed without justification; which does not provide for the Boundary Commission to establish new boundaries with the power to hold public inquiries and proper consultation; and which does not provide for an additional seat for Scotland."

The first point that should be made about the Bill is that it is long overdue. Indeed, we have encountered some of the problems that the Home Secretary described precisely because of the delay in bringing the Bill to the House. On 14 December, the Prime Minister announced that the review would take place following the Edinburgh summit.

At the summit, it was agreed that, as a result of unification, the German allocation of seats would increase to provide for proper representation for east Germany. Eighteen seats were agreed for Germany and six apiece for France, Italy and the United Kingdom. That means that the latter three countries, with populations of about 56 million or 57 million, will return 87 European Members of Parliament, and Germany, with a population of about 80 million, will return 99.

I immediately wrote to the Home Secretary on 14 December asking for clarification of the procedures, because we supported the principle of six extra seats but wanted to be sure that the proper procedures would be followed. It took almost six weeks for a reply to come through, on 27 January 1993. It is right to say—of course, this was before the Home Secretary took office—that there were fairly constant reminders and requests to expedite matters.

There has been an enormous delay in bringing the Bill forward. That delay is relevant for reasons that I shall give in a moment. I do not simply raise it to make a point about the delay—it is relevant to the two principal points that we are discussing with regard to the Boundary Commission and the issue of public inquiries.

There are three main aspects of the Bill that we should consider: first, it will not be the Boundary Commission but a sub-committee appointed by the Home Secretary that will draw up the new boundaries; secondly, there will not be the full process of public inquiry that is normally associated with boundary changes; and, thirdly, there is the issue of distribution of the seats, which the Home Secretary has done on the basis of five for England, one for Wales and none for Scotland.

We believe that the Bill is justified if it provides for six extra seats, but it must be done on a proper basis. The reason for having the Boundary Commission draw up the boundaries is obvious—it is independent, it is respected and it has the expertise. It is also what the Prime Minister promised would happen when he announced the extra seats for Britain. He said:

"The provision of six extra MEPs will mean that fresh boundaries are set across England, Scotland and Wales, which will be a matter for the Boundary Commission, not the Government."—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1992; Vol. 216, c. 35.]

Today, the Government say that the Boundary Commission cannot perform the task, first, because the commission is too busy with the Westminster constituencies. However, I now understand that the reason is a technical one—the Boundary Commission, as a statutory body, would need specific parliamentary power to draw up the new boundaries. Because of the time problem as a result of the delay, work on the new boundaries would have to begin immediately. I understand that the Boundary Commission would be unable to do that work on an informal basis and, apparently, such considerations do not apply to any new and different committee that the Home Secretary appoints.

Let us be clear about this. If it is merely a technical matter, that is one thing. But if there are any circumstances in which the independence or integrity of the process is called into question, that would be another matter. At the minimum, we would demand that, so far as the guarantee of independence is concerned, this must be the Boundary Commission in all but name if there is a genuine technical objection to the Boundary Commission pursuing it; where possible, Boundary Commissioners should serve; it should be effectively the same secretariat that services it and there should be the proper and normal process of consultation over any additional members so that we can be sure that this is the product of a cross-party agreement and there is no question of people who are susceptible to the Government or are supporters of them being appointed. That seems to be an entirely reasonable list of demands.

I now turn to the question of the timetable. The big omission is the omission of any proper public inquiry. I submit that the existence of the process of a public inquiry

is an important part—not merely a usual part—of the process of consultation when a boundary redistribution takes place. I do not believe that the House would for one moment contemplate allowing a redistribution of Westminster boundaries without a proper public inquiry.

Therefore, it seems to be wrong in principle to say that we should have such a redistribution of European constituency boundaries without some public inquiry element. The process allows scrutiny and cross-examination and matters often emerge during public inquiries. Most people who have been through the process would recognise that it is a valuable and, indeed, integral part of the process of scrutiny and consultation.

**Mr. Cash:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, contrary to what the Home Secretary appears to believe, the trigger for a public inquiry, which is the 500 or more electors or an interested authority, under the European Parliamentary Elections Act 1978, as amended by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, has been left out of the procedure, or am I wrong? Does he have a view on that?

**Mr. Blair:** I understand that the effect of the Bill is that there will not be a public inquiry, whether or not there are 500 or more electors. Obviously, we wish to see that element of public inquiry inserted in the Bill. What I find unsatisfactory about what the Home Secretary said is that we have an assertion that there is insufficient time available. However, we must examine that assertion before we simply accept it at face value.

**Mr. Marlow:** If the hon. Gentleman's amendment is successful as a result of a decision of hon. Members, abstentions or whatever, and if the Bill is voted down—even if the amendment were successful—would we have elections on the same basis as at present? What process would be used?

**Mr. Blair:** The Government would have to introduce a Bill in consequence of the reasoned amendment. I hope that they would do that. That would be their clear conventional obligation in the House.

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** Some people, especially people outside the House, might think that the expression "public inquiry" is rather meaningless. But that is far from the case. The Boundary Commissioners have just been examining my parliamentary seat. The examination produced an initial recommendation which, after the public inquiry, was substantially changed because there was a local outcry in Lincolnshire. The commissioners have accepted the changes to their original recommendation suggested by the public. That would not be possible under the proposed procedures, and it is wrong.

**Mr. Blair:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) has just reminded me that about 70 per cent. of boundary changes are altered after the public inquiry. Perhaps my mind is unduly concentrated on the matter because my constituency will go through the process of a public inquiry next Monday. The public inquiry is important because Members of Parliament, parties and people who have objections often attend, so there is necessarily much more detailed consideration, as anyone who has seen the process at work will understand.

**Mr. Howard:** I do not want there to be any misunderstanding on this issue. The procedures will allow for consultation to take place and representations to be made after the members of the committee have published their provisional recommendations. There will certainly be opportunity for changes to be made to those provisional recommendations in the light of any representations that are made. Of course, my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) is right to say that there will not be a public inquiry. However, all the people who would have attended the public inquiry and wanted to make their views known will be able to make representations. The members of the committee will be perfectly able to take account of those representations and change their provisional recommendations in the light of them.

**Mr. Blair:** The Home Secretary is less than persuasive. Of course it is true that, according to his timetable, people will be able to make written representations. But the point that is being made to him is that in the process of an oral inquiry people can attend and the commissioners can be subject to proper scrutiny and cross-examination. I shall give evidence at the inquiry next week in my constituency.

I suspect that what often happens—indeed, I am certain that it frequently happens—is that the proposals to change the Boundary Commission recommendations are driven by the interests of political parties. That is natural and entirely sensible from the standpoint of the political parties. In a process of public inquiry, such recommendations can be tested and the commissioners can decide whether they are merely a desire to sort out the boundaries in a way most convenient to a political party or whether there is a genuine objection about the way in which constituencies are represented.

Therefore, I believe that the Home Secretary crucially underestimates the importance of holding an inquiry in public. We are on particularly strong ground when the reason for the truncation of the timetable is delay by the Government.

**Mr. John Marshall:** The hon. Gentleman's figure of 70 per cent. may apply to reorganisation of Westminster parliamentary constituencies, in which a ward may be moved from one constituency to another, but in a reorganisation of European parliamentary constituencies whole Westminster constituencies may be moved. The number of changes that occurred as a result of the public inquiries after the 1983 review was nowhere near 70 per cent. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that under the procedures adopted in 1978 significant changes were made through the representation system? Does he agree that the system adopted in 1978 by the Labour Government was precisely the same system as that which is being adopted this evening?

**Mr. Blair:** I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman is right about the current boundary changes, but, in any event, it was made clear after the 1983 review that the process would have proper public inquiries built into it from then on.

The Prime Minister said in the House back in December that the normal political processes would apply through the Boundary Commission. Paragraph 7 of the schedule—perhaps the Home Secretary or whoever replies to the debate could comment on this—says that it is for the Secretary of State to

*[Mr. Blair]*

"lay the report before Parliament together with the draft of an Order in Council for giving effect, whether with or without modifications, to the recommendations contained in the report."

It is important to know exactly who will be responsible for making those modifications.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall). Moving bits of constituencies is a vastly different kettle of fish. In the current boundary changes, I have been given some remarkable fragments which bear no relation whatever to each other. It is a different matter when one moves whole constituencies. It is a much simpler process.

**Mr. Blair:** I do not understand why that should be a point against holding public inquiries here, because, if anything, it means that the process can be expedited in a sensible way. On any basis, there will be a relatively limited number of inquiries. In a moment I shall show how public inquiries could be built into the timetable. As I understand the Home Secretary's argument, he does not argue that there is any reason of principle for not having public inquiries. He says that he would prefer to have public inquiries, but that the time constraints simply do not allow him to do so. That should not pass without proper investigation.

**Mr. Rupert Allason** (Torbay): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that people can attend a public inquiry and have a fair crack of the whip and that, even if they do not achieve what they hoped, they recognise that justice has been seen to be done? There is a vast difference between that procedure and some shenanigans of written submissions to a faceless committee which writes back a form letter saying, "Thank you very much, Guv, but push off."

**Mr. Blair:** Whether that point will console me if the Boundary Commission plays around with my constituency next week, I do not know. I certainly agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is important to have a public inquiry. Otherwise, the representations are simply written and the commission will not consider any oral representations. There is no opportunity for cross-examination of key witnesses, as there is in normal inquiries. The reason why oral inquiries are held on any matter is precisely that the scrutiny is greater and more profound than when written representations are handled behind closed doors.

**Mrs. Currie:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He is being patient. Has he realised that we are likely to have new boundaries for every European election for some years as a result of either boundary changes to the Westminster constituencies, which are likely to need to be reflected in the European boundaries, or the enlargement of Europe, which is the cause of today's Bill? If we are likely to have changes every five years, is it not about time that we developed some agreed system that would be a great deal speedier and cleaner than the attractive but leisurely system that we have for Westminster constituencies, which takes rather more than the 10 years that it is supposed to take?

**Mr. Blair:** It is precisely such interventions which will worry many people in the House. The hon. Lady is saying that this is not an exceptional case and that the new procedures should become the norm. Yet the Home Secretary justified his position by saying that the new procedures were exceptional. Many people are worried that if the issue is conceded once, it will be accepted as something which should be conceded for a period of time.

I return to the point that in the end the debate must be a matter of analysis of the timetable. If, as I hope to show in a moment, proper time can be found for public inquiries without undue delay, public inquiries should be held.

**Mr. Rooker:** The point about paragraphs 7 and 8 of the schedule is crucial. Under the present arrangement, the Boundary Commission, not Ministers, will, after a draft proposal and a public inquiry, decide whether to issue an amended draft proposal. In this case, it is clear that the Minister, not the committee, will agree to issue the amended proposal. Opportunites sometimes arise for even a second public inquiry. That occurred on a previous occasion in the Finchley area, if I remember correctly. That point is crucial. It has to be transparently seen that the system has integrity from start to finish. The system will be damaged if there is no opportunity for a face-to-face verbal inquiry in which witnesses can be challenged and the commission that made the original proposal can decide whether, on the force of the arguments, to issue another proposal.

**Mr. Blair:** I understood that drawing up the boundaries would not involve any ministerial decision. Perhaps the Home Secretary could confirm that.

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) combined two points in his intervention. He made a point about face-to-face contact, which is obviously what one gets at a public inquiry. He also said that, as a result of the procedures that we propose, the original committee would not decide whether the representations that were submitted were such as to cause the original recommendations to be altered. On that, the hon. Gentleman is wrong. Members of the committee, who will make their recommendations and receive representations in exactly the same way as the Boundary Commissioners, would decide, without a public inquiry, whether, in the light of the representations, they wish to change their original recommendations. The committee will have the power to do so. In that respect, the procedures that we expect to follow will be identical to those which the Boundary Commission would follow.

**Mr. Blair:** I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr will make that point again during the debate. Is the Home Secretary giving an assurance that there will be no ministerial involvement in assessing whether the provisional recommendations of the Boundary Commission are altered or modified?

**Mr. Howard:** The procedures would be identical to those that would otherwise be followed. The procedures always provide that when either the Boundary Commissioners or the members of the committee make their final proposals, the Home Secretary can make orders in accordance with those proposals or modify them. That is always the case. There is no difference between what we propose in the Bill and what normally takes place.

The procedures will be as follows: the members of the committee will publish their provisional recommendations; they will receive representations on those

recommendations and decide whether to alter their original view in the light of the representations that would be received; they will then submit their final recommendations to the Home Secretary, who will then make Orders in Council. The Home Secretary has a discretion to modify final recommendations. I cannot remember when that discretion was last exercised.

**Mr. Graham Allen** (Nottingham, North): It never has been.

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. Gentleman says that the discretion has never been exercised. He may well be right about that. I have no reason to suppose that that practice would be any different on an occasion such as we are debating. The form and the language used for that stage of the process would be identical. I repeat what I have said time after time. Although there would not be room for a public inquiry in the process, and subject only to that omission, the procedures will mirror as closely as possible those that apply when the Boundary Commission is involved.

**Mr. Blair:** I accept the point that the Home Secretary makes. But the existence of the power to which he has referred adds weight to the need for a public inquiry. There is even greater pressure on the Minister not to exercise that power, because the full process of consultation will not have been completed.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** The hon. Member was probably still at school at the time and may not recall the occasion when a Labour Home Secretary had the audacity to lead his troops into the Lobby against his own orders.

**Mr. Blair:** The hon. Lady is absolutely right. I do not remember that occasion.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** I shall try to seek some compromise in this difficult situation. Would not it be in accordance with the spirit of this excellent Bill if we were simply to go home now, cancel the debate and send a written representation to the Home Secretary about what we think about the Bill? He could carefully consider those representations and then—perhaps tomorrow—let us know his conclusion. Is not the issue of a public inquiry that there is a massive difference between having a debate about something and simply sending letters that are carefully considered? Is not the matter one of principle rather than a minor bureaucratic point as some people think?

**Mr. Blair:** The hon. Gentleman has made his point well. The Opposition often feel that, even after a full debate, our points are not always taken on board fully.

The timetable, I would submit, would allow for the public inquiry process. The consultation of the committee membership could be achieved, one would think, within days of the Bill receiving Second Reading. The committee could determine provisional recommendations certainly within a couple of weeks. Those provisional recommendations could be published, let us say, a couple of weeks later. There could be a final date for representations. Notice of the public inquiry could be given—it could be four weeks on such a timetable. There could be then a week of public inquiries. We understand that public inquiries would be necessarily limited to a maximum of about 10 inquiries. There would be another month before final recommendations were determined, and another couple of weeks before publication.

That process from giving notice of the public inquiry to the publication of the final recommendations would take about 10 weeks. Looking as reasonably as one can at the matter, it does not seem to be impossible to do that. If the Home Secretary had been able to give a clearer illustration of why that was genuinely not feasible, he would have found a greater echo in some of the comments that he made in the House. If the process were to be put back to mid-December, which is not impossible, that could be done within the proper time scale and would allow for the public inquiry to take place.

I understand elements such as the transcripts and commissioners' consideration and other matters. I return to the powerful point that the Government, if anyone, are responsible for the delay. They have dragged their heels. *[Interruption.]* It does not lie in the mouths of Conservative Members to blame their own side.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** We do.

**Mr. Blair:** Well, the hon. Lady may do so, but she must sort that out with the Government.

It cannot be right that the delay is used as a reason for not having a proper timetable for public inquiries. I have shown, or at least raised a prima facie case, that even with the constraints of time there is room for a public inquiry. We believe that it is important that the fairness of the procedure should not be a casualty of the timetable in the Bill.

There are three effective reasons why there should be an additional seat for Scotland. First, there are the special geographical considerations. If we leave out the seat for the Highlands and Islands, on the current basis Scotland does not have a much lower average electorate than England. The effect of giving England four extra seats instead of five reduces the average by only 7,000 voters per seat. The effect of giving Scotland an extra seat would be to reduce the average electorate by 55,000. If the calculation were purely numerical, the outcome would have been six, nothing, nothing—six seats for England and none for Wales or Scotland. A seat has been given to Wales and we support that.

If there is one for Wales, there should also be one for Scotland. That would leave Wales and Scotland similarly balanced. I am not suggesting that there is not a case for six seats to England, none to Wales and none to Scotland or even five, one, none, but there is a strong case for the position that we are advocating. Indeed, if the Secretary of State looks at his own table, he will see the strength of that case made out, because Wales and Scotland are treated differently.

We ask support for the notion that there should be an equitable distribution of the seats and a proper way of determining the redrawing of European seat boundaries. They are important matters when new boundaries are drawn up and new seats given. The procedure must be sensible and fair. It must erase any appearance of substituting some ad hoc committee run by the Government for a proper independent body. The Secretary of State has moved towards meeting the objections to independence and I accept that. However, I am not satisfied, and I do not think that my hon. Friends

*[Mr. Blair]*

are either, about the issue of the public inquiry. For that reason and the other reasons that we have given, we ask for support for our reasoned amendment.

5.40 pm

**Sir Roger Moate** (Faversham): It is evident from the speeches and interventions that there is equal concern on both sides of the House for the principle of regular, fair and independent boundary reorganisation. That is a fundmental part of our democracy.

It is significant that there is not the same concern for these European proposals. One must ask why my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary should espouse so fundamentally and clearly the principle of independent, regular boundary reviews—so essential to our parliamentary democracy—yet feel it possible to recommend to the House a truncated and simplified system for European boundaries. Alas, he has left the Chamber, but the fundamental difference is that Westminster boundaries matter to this House and the public, whereas fundamentally, after many years of experience with this, the Strasbourg boundaries do not. If they did, there would be no proposition such as the one before us tonight.

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd):** There is another, simpler explanation: we have a deadline of June next year.

**Sir Roger Moate:** A deadline would not be enough to undermine the principle that is so important to the House if we were talking about Westminster boundaries. I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend. I agree with the Bill. It is a matter of supreme indifference to my constituents and to most constituents whether or not these new boundaries are determined by the full Boundary Commission and public inquiries or by a committee.

I would go further: I suspect that it is of supreme indifference to them whether or not they get the six extra seats. They will not cheer if the Bill is passed or weep tears if it is not. Had we declined to take these six seats, people would not be particularly upset. I admit that there are some with ambitions to represent their areas in Strasbourg or Brussels who would be disappointed, but for the vast majority that is not the case.

The important message that we can deliver to the world at large following today's deliberations on the Bill is that we should now examine the logic of what we are doing and the fundamental principles on which this and previous legislation are based. I can say that as one who is on the record as having voted in November 1977 against the original direct elections Bill. I believed it wrong then, and I believe it wrong now. If one believed it wrong then, it is logical to continue one's objections to the increased number of seats and the further entrenchment of the principle of direct elections.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden), who has now left us, was a little unkind when he referred to the general public's perception of Members of the European Parliament. I am not saying that he was wrong, but it was unkind to draw attention to the fact that most members of the public do not know their MEPs, are not aware of their role and have little contact with them. That is reflected at elections, when the percentage turnout is pathetically low. It is derisory.

That is not a criticism of MEPs. They are worthy, earnest, dedicated, conscientious men. My MEP is an honourable man, as are they all. Given their remit and their constitutional role, they cannot respond as we expect elected representatives to do. That is the point that we are entitled to examine when we consider this Bill today.

We now have an opportunity to examine the Bill in the light of developments in the Community and other developments, particularly one referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). She rightly pointed to the changes that will be forced on us by the enlargement of the Community.

The proposal to increase the number of seats has come to us because of the enlargement of the Community by the inclusion of eastern Germany. As enlargement progresses and the Community of 12 becomes ultimately, I hope, the Community of 20, what then? Every time we take in two or three new member states, are we to have a new Bill of this sort? If so, what are we going to do? Will we reduce the number of Members per nation so that we do not increase the size of the Parliament, or will we increase their number until we have an assembly of 1,000 members?

I would find it rather amusing to be a member of such a Parliament. I suspect that it would give the same sort of pleasure as was given to the inhabitants of the tower of Babel. In practical terms, however, it cannot work. Surely it is incumbent on us now, during these interesting proceedings, to say what we want, and to ask where the European Parliament is going and what it is about.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** I agree with every word of my hon. Friend. Does he accept that, if we defeat the Bill tonight and throw it out, there will be no extra MEPs in any country, because, under the Edinburgh agreement, if one country rejects the legislation, there will be no extra MEPs? Could we not save a great deal of public expenditure and avoid all the problems that he has described by agreeing to chuck out the legislation?

**Sir Roger Moate:** That is a tempting thought, but I do not feel in a destructive mood.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** Constructive.

**Sir Roger Moate:** We should be constructive, and we should examine the Bill. After all, we have a Committee stage, when some such proposal could be tabled.

Let us consider what we should do in future. I say to my hon. Friend and even to the most enthusiastic Europeans, if I may use that phrase, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), that we must consider what will work in future, because it is self-evident that the directly elected European Parliament is not working as we believe it should. It is not responsive and responsible to its electorate as a Parliament should be.

The situation will not improve; it will become increasingly difficult. Therefore—this is the serious message that we must examine today, because if we do not, we shall have to return to it time and again—in the light of the enlargement of the Community, we should return to the system that we had before the 1977-78 legislation, which was nomination by this House. If we had such a system—or, at least, the option of such a system—we

would not face this legislation. That is an important proposition, and soon the Community will come back to recognising the advantage of it.

If, indeed, we believe in a Europe of nation states and want the central institutions to be responsive to our national legislatures, think of the advantages of returning to the system that worked rather well before 1977—that hon. Members of this House should be nominated by their parties to serve in the European Parliament. They could work there in rotation or for a limited number of years.

The advantages are self-evident because, being Members of this House, they would be in touch with their electors and responsive to the real world instead of being in their ivory towers elsewhere, with electorates of some half a million. That system worked before, and I believe that it could work again.

In pursuing that logic, some nations may not want to follow that pattern, but others do. If we believe in subsidiarity, it should be left to each member state to determine how it selects those Members who are to represent this nation in that Assembly.

Instead of the Government simply diving into this Bill, how much better it would have been had we raised at Edinburgh and the recent negotiations the prospect of subsidiarity applying to the method of choosing Members to go to the European Assembly.

**Mr. Allason:** Does my hon. Friend agree that, as there have been grave doubts about the word "subsidiarity", this is an opportunity for the Government to demonstrate exactly what it means, and to have it work in this case? This is a classic case in which subsidiarity might work, yet the Government have rejected it and are producing a new invented mechanism specifically for Europe.

**Sir Roger Moate:** This debate gives us that opportunity.

I repeat what I said at the beginning: it is a matter of supreme indifference to my electors how those boundaries are changed—whether by a boundary commission or a committee. That does not undermine the principle of independent boundary commissions for Parliament, where it matters for democracy, but I see no evidence to suggest that it affects real democracy in the full sense of the word, because my constituents are not influencing the democratic power of MEPs. The system does not allow for that, so it cannot be fundamentally important.

We should now say, let the Government have the system. Although it is not satisfactory, they are probably right to say that there is no alternative. But let us send a message loud and clear that this is the time to re-examine the basis of the directly elected European Parliament.

**Mr. Cash:** I agree with the thrust of what my hon. Friend says but take issue with him on whether the powers of the European Parliament have been significantly increased under the Maastricht treaty. If this Bill is enacted, it will apply to the provisions of the Maastricht Bill, when enacted. Therefore, the powers of co-decision and all that go with them, which European parliamentarians will acquire, will be attributable to those Members who will sit in those new parliamentary constituencies.

**Sir Roger Moate:** I have heard my hon. Friend express that view about increased powers of the European Parliament, and undoubtedly there are some. I am an optimist, and believe that those powers are neither extensive nor wide, and will not grow. It is our task to try to prevent them from growing.

I therefore maintain my position that it is of no great significance whether we have six more Members, because they are doing nothing effective or helpful to this country. Individually, they may be superb and they are delightful men and women, but collectively their constitutional role is muddled, and the system by which we send them to Europe is wrong.

In the meantime, it does not matter what happens to those six seats. Let Scotland have them all if that makes it happy. It will do England little harm. Alternatively, Wales could have half.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** Or Gibraltar.

**Sir Roger Moate:** My hon. Friend makes a serious point. Gibraltar is a deserving cause for representation in the European Parliament. If Luxembourg can have such a large representation, Gibraltar must be equally entitled. Let us give Gibraltar all six seats. If that is not satisfactory and we are to conform in some way, let us give them to other worthy organisations such as Age Concern, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds or the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The matter is of no great constitutional importance.

Ultimately, we must deal with the matter, and we have had no answers yet on how the European Parliament is to mould itself to a Europe of 20 separate sovereign states. There are those who will not for one moment yield the principle of direct elections, because they see them as a symbol of a nation state, albeit a federal, centralised one. To them, it is almost a principle of religious importance, because that pretension to a unitary state requires direct elections.

If the converse is true, and we believe in a Europe of nation states and decentralisation, we should get away from direct elections and return to the system whereby this Westminster Parliament nominates Members to the European Assembly.

5.55 pm

**Mr. Jeff Rooker** (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I had a great deal of respect for the hon. Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) and did not believe that I would hear such a frivolous speech. It horrifies me because if we want to take our membership of the European Community seriously, as I believe the majority in the House and the country do, to treat the matter so frivolously does no justice to the House of Commons. I am extremely disappointed in the hon. Gentleman.

There is a role for national Parliament. Because of changes in the Community, which will undoubtedly occur within the next few years as a result of increased membership, the nature of the European Parliament will change. To try to keep the numbers sensible, it may mean a reduction in the number of directly-elected Members for each existing member state, and there will probably be a role for a second chamber made up of members of national Parliaments. That would provide a check and a balance. Each stage of democracy should have checks and balances built into it. I see possibilities there, although I do not wish to pursue the matter in detail.

I do not accept that the principle of subsidiarity applies in this case. I agree that a case can be made for it but it has

*[Mr. Jeff Rooker]*

no strength simply because, if the European Parliament is to be treated seriously, bring the Commission to heel and have some control over what happens within the Commission, it is important that that Parliament is elected on a common, uniform basis and in a way that is compatible within Parliament. If each member state could send Members there on a wholly different basis—some elected, some appointed and others in different forms—it would negate the strength of a possible powerful check on the Commission by a democratically-elected European Parliament. I therefore do not accept the argument that each member state should be able to choose how it sends members to the European Parliament.

We are debating an important issue. We should not say that the turnout in the elections does not matter. As democrats, we should encourage maximum turnout at every election as part of the democratic process. It is up to our constituents to choose whether to participate in the debates. We should not argue that they do not care about the election and that we need not bother them with public inquiries as they can send letters. We should not tell them that that body and that election do not matter and that therefore their votes have no value. That sends a terrible signal to our constituents about what we think of the worth of their participation in how their country is governed.

I say that in the widest sense because not all power now resides in this House. Over time some of our powers have gone to the greater good of the European Community. On the whole, our constituents benefit from that, so it does not behove us to say that the elections do not count and that therefore it does not matter about the mechanism for those elections. It is more crucial for this country than for the other countries of western Europe. I freely declare my view that the elections should be based on proportional representation, as should the elections to this House. But I shall not pursue that matter today.

This is the only country in Europe that elects Members of Parliament on a single constituency, first-past-the-post arrangement. That has a destabilising effect on the composition of the European Parliament because, as we know from the 1989 election, a small change in the way the electorate votes can make a huge difference to the party representation of Great Britain in the European Parliament. The other member states are rightly aggrieved by that because they all subscribe to a system of proportionality by which representation is reflected in proportion to the votes cast for parties.

Our system is not proportional and we make no attempt to make it so except in Northern Ireland. That alters the party groupings in the European Parliament, the time available for speaking and the composition of its committees, and that is wholly disproportionate to the wishes of voters throughout Europe. Other countries have every reason to be aggrieved by Britain's slow progress on our commitment to a better and fairer system.

The Labour party conducted a long review of electoral procedures and systems. I attended all 28 of the meetings which were chaired by Lord Plant of Highfield. At our final meeting there was only one vote against recommending our party to subscribe to proportional voting based on a regional list system for the European Parliament. That view has been endorsed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition, and I am certain that it will be carried at our annual conference in the autumn.

By the end of the year and before the next Euro-elections Labour will be committed to a proportional system for those elections. I regret that the Government have not taken the opportunity presented by the Bill to bring our system up to date in line with article 138 and the proposals endorsed by a committee of the European Parliament in March. Those proposals would enable England, Scotland and Wales to retain single member constituencies up to a maximum of two thirds, the other third to involve a system of proportional top-up so that votes are matched to the representation of the political parties. Hon. Members think that people vote on an individual basis and that we have huge personal votes, but in European constituencies, with electorates of 500,000, people will vote on a party basis. The nature of our representation in the European Parliament should reflect that vote.

**Mrs. Ewing:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman's comments on proportionality. Has he looked at the implications for Scotland, Wales and England separately, bearing in mind that Scotland and Wales each have four major political parties whereas England tends to have three? There should not be a cross-boundary transfer of votes; representation should reflect the votes cast in Scotland, Wales and England.

**Mr. Rooker:** I accept that without equivocation and, of course, that applies in some other member states. However, because they use proportional systems, the small parties in those states are not snuffed out. In the nations of Scotland and Wales the parties represent large proportions of the electorate. Political parties are in the process of competition and of maximising support for their ideals and principles. It is not our role to organise systems to snuff out other parties. A proportional system, however it is based, must reflect the nature of the nationalist vote and other votes in Scotland and Wales. The dilution of the English vote must not be used to snuff that out.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** Under the hon. Gentleman's proposal, would there be a national list system or a list system for the different component parts of the United Kingdom?

**Mr. Rooker:** I think I said that we propose a regional list system for the European Parliament. Regions can be drawn in different ways but clearly Northern Ireland would be designated as a region and in that context would not be attached to any part of the mainland because that would not form a cohesive whole that any hon. Member could recommend. Scotland and Wales would be separate regions: it would be difficult to propose otherwise. The regions of England would need to be examined.

That is Labour's general proposal but we have not dotted all the i's and crossed all the t's because the detail is a matter for negotiation between the parties in the House and interested bodies outside. It is not for one political party to say, "This is what will happen." The Secretary of State is effectively saying through the Bill what will happen and there will not be proper discussion.

**Mr. Hugh Dykes** (Harrow, East): The hon. Gentleman is well known for his pioneering work in his party and outside on these matters. Was not it a great tragedy that in

1977 the Labour Government cynically removed the regional list construction from the original draft Bill and went instead for giant constituencies? The latest disappointment also is that there will not be an additional member system for the six seats.

**Mr. Rooker:** I am not in favour of rewriting history. On a free vote the House had a choice between single member constituencies—the huge existing ones—and a regional list system. A schedule to the Bill that the hon. Gentleman mentions contained both systems. I voted for first-past-the-post, single member constituencies, but since then I have seen the disbenefits of that system in local, regional and national elections and I have changed my mind. There is nothing wrong in learning from one's experience: I thought that that was what life was all about. Such systems were proposed during the time of the Lib-Lab pact. The last Labour Government recommended that the House support the regional list system, but on a free vote the House chose not to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) spoke about Scotland. In his speech, the Home Secretary repeated words from a Home Office press release. The idea of fairness in elections is a new Home Office concept. On pure arithmetical fairness the proportions are 5:1:0—five to England, one to Wales and none to Scotland. To try to rule on the basis of arithmetical fairness, ignoring community interests, Britain's political geography and the nations that make up the United Kingdom, would not take account of the aspirations and opinions within the United Kingdom. Therefore, I could support an extra seat for Scotland.

I wish that the city of Birmingham had the same representation as the city of Glasgow, but as a result of agreements over time Scotland is over-represented because of its geographical position and the historical understandings that have served the nation well. I am prepared to live with that. We do not propose the imposition of a uniform system. The Government have an arithmetical case but political logic demands that Scotland should have an extra seat.

**Mr. Gyles Brandreth** (City of Chester): I am not sure where the hon. Gentleman stands on the issue of one man, one vote, but surely the essential issue is that individuals are voting and not land masses. Therefore, the arithmetic makes a difference. It is people, not space, and the natural formula to follow is based on arithmetic.

**Mr. Rooker:** If it were just a question of arithmetic, there would not be various shaped constituencies for this House. Massive deviations are accepted, even at a time of boundary redistribution, over and above the arithmetical figure. America follows the arithmetic almost to the last 0·5 per cent., which means joining together districts that have no affinity just to make the numbers right. That is the problem with first-past-the-post, single-member constituencies and we have to live with that. It is one reason why I no longer subscribe to that system.

This House and the European Parliament should reflect, on a party basis, the votes cast in the ballot box, and that can be achieved by using one of a number of PR systems, whether single-member based with a regional top-up, a list or multi-member single transferable vote, as in Northern Ireland. That is the only way to get around the arithmetical difficulty of every constituency not being the same size.

I want to raise the issue of delay in bringing this matter before the House. In some ways this debate, in which my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield has forcefully argued against the snuffing out of public participation in the way that the boundaries are drawn, is happening only because of that delay. One would think that no one knew that there would be a delay. We seem to be overlooking the fact that from July to December last year Britain held the European presidency. When the Prime Minister went to the Edinburgh summit, it did not come as a surprise to him that there would be extra seats.

I corresponded with the Prime Minister on that issue between October and March. I want to share some of that correspondence with the House. On 23 November, in response to a question about the size of the European Parliament, the right hon. Gentleman wrote:

> "We are, as Presidency, doing all we can to work for a solution . . . We are taking soundings with other member states before Edinburgh."

I checked the newspapers—although I did not do a massive Sherlock Holmes job—and I could not find a single account of the Prime Minister, during the presidency, raising the matter in the House or in the country. No briefing emanated from No. 10, prior to Edinburgh, about public participation in or soundings with other member states about the issues surrounding extra seats.

The Prime Minister also said in that letter:

> "As far as the redrawing of European Parliamentary constituency boundaries is concerned, various options for doing this are being considered, but I am confident that we can work out a solution once an agreement on the number of seats has been reached."

That agreement was reached at Edinburgh a few weeks later.

**Mr. Cash:** Does the hon. Gentleman recall that it was Germany's absolute insistence that it should have 18 additional seats—despite the fact that it had previously said that it would not press for them—that precipitated this process? It is another example of our giving in, as we always do in Europe, to the overall pressures exerted by the Christian Democrats and the European People's party, and all that goes with that. That is the real reason for this Bill.

**Mr. Rooker:** That is xenophobic nonsense. If the structure of the European Parliament is to reflect the people in the nation states, while ensuring that small nations like Luxembourg are not snuffed out, the representation of countries such as Britain, France, Italy and Germany—which all had roughly the same size populations before reunification—must now be adjusted to take account of German reunification. Germany virtually absorbed another nation state of 17 million to 18 million citizens, so it deserves greater representation. No other member state deserves greater representation. On the basis of arithmetical fairness, there would be extra seats for Germany but none for any other country.

It is political logic that has resulted in not just Britain, France and Italy, but all the other countries, except Luxembourg, gaining extra seats. Political logic is the very argument that we would use for Scotland.

**Mr. Stephen Milligan** (Eastleigh): Would not the correct solution have been simply to have given Germany

*[Mr. Stephen Milligan]*

extra seats to reflect its greater population after reunification? The complication has arisen because the French were afraid of losing out to the Germans.

**Mr. Rooker:** All this happened a long time ago, at the Edinburgh summit last December. There has been plenty of time for the issues to be resolved.

In my correspondence with the Prime Minister, I said that while we held the presidency Britain should give a democratic lead to Europe by pushing to have the issue resolved. On 30 December, having reached agreement at Edinburgh, he responded:

"This breakthrough will give us time to redraw constituency boundaries in time for the June 1994 elections."

He also referred to the importance of the European Parliament being able increasingly to scrutinise the Commission. That is crucial, but nothing happened. There was silence. The Government put forward no proposals for how that would be done.

By February, I had become quite angry and I accused the right hon. Gentleman of seeking to delay the issue to create the conditions for an electoral coup d'etat and have boundaries drawn behind closed doors. That is what will happen under the Bill. It is important to put his response on the record. In his letter of 16 March he said:

"the question of how to allocate the extra seats is far from simple. It needs to be considered carefully, and it will be considered carefully. Consultation with Opposition parties will form part of the process. But I am not prepared to discredit the system by forcing colleagues into making unduly hasty and ill-considered judgments".

I should have hoped that it went without saying that

"one of our main concerns will be to ensure that whatever methods are used should be seen to be independent of political considerations. Our proposals will maintain the integrity of this country's democratic traditions."

This Bill does not maintain that integrity. Boundaries will be drawn up behind closed doors, without public scrutiny or participation.

Some might take the view that the European elections do not matter. My view is that all elections matter when our constituents are asked to exercise political choice through the ballot box. Anything we do to devalue the procedure for next year's European elections will, at some future time, be used as the thin end of the wedge to undermine what happens in local government and, probably, in this place.

**Mr. Marlow:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Rooker:** I had intended to sit down, but as the hon. Gentleman has been generous himself I shall give way first.

**Mr. Marlow:** In view of the hon. Gentleman's strong feelings and the vehemence with which he expresses them, it would be of interest to many Conservative Members if he would confirm that he will be voting against the Bill.

**Mr. Rooker:** I shall vote for the reasoned amendment——

**Mr. Marlow:** Why?

**Mr. Rooker:** The reasoned amendment sets out the reasons for our opposition to the Government's proposals. The key reason is the damage to the integrity of the democratic process in our electoral system. That should concern all Conservative Members, whether or not they are classed as Euro-sceptics. Labour Members should be concerned about whether or not we support the move to a more unified Europe. Any damage to the integrity of our elections to the European Parliament could in future be used to damage the integrity of our elections to this place. I am not prepared to stand to one side and keep quiet about that.

6.18 pm

**Sir Teddy Taylor** (Southend, East): You have had to listen to all the Euro-assurances over the year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am sure that you are sad that so many of them are subsequently broken or thrown aside.

I remind those on the Government Front Bench that in 1978, when there was an unusual election system without the Boundary Commission having its proper representation, we were told that it would never happen again. Absolutely key assurances were given, while some people were yawning, yet now we are again being told, despite this Bill, that it will not happen again.

Others have mentioned the obvious objections to the Bill. I hope that the Government will not disregard the Scottish point. Although it does not matter all that much where the seats go, to give one to Wales but not to Scotland could be regarded as rather unfortunate, or even as a slight on Scotland. One reason for that is the figures.

If the Government were to distribute the seats 4:1:1, the representation for Scotland and Wales would be almost identical. It would be 440,000 for Wales and 436,000 for Scotland. However, with no extra Scottish seat, there would be 444,000 electors for each seat in Wales, and 491,000 electors for each seat in Scotland, so a Scottish Euro-constituency is far bigger than a Welsh one.

We should not forget that the spirit of the Act of Union was that Scotland would get more representation. As my hon. Friends often complain, we have 71 Scottish Members of Parliament, when we should have a far smaller number on proportional representation, but we are guaranteed that number of seats. Although, to my knowledge, the EC was not mentioned in the Act of Union 1707, my understanding of the distribution of European seats was that we should try to maintain the spirit of that Act.

I know that it does not matter all that much, and I do not care a great deal where the seats go, but I hope that the Government will not disregard the fact that silly little slights can be taken very badly in Scotland.

I am sure that the Minister of State, Home Office will also be well aware that some of us are suspicious about the Government's preference for Wales. During the recent Maastricht debate, those dreadful Welsh nationalists were jumping up and down to do whatever the Government told them. We had the impression that, if the Government had told the Welsh nationalists to walk into the centre of Trafalgar square and say, "Long live red socialism," while standing on their heads, they would have done it. The Scottish nationalists, by comparison, showed a healthy independence by voting in a more sensible way, and certainly not as Tory stooges.

Quite apart from the obvious issue of not being unkind to Scotland in a foolish way, we should bear in mind the fact that anything the Government now give to Wales but not to Scotland will be viewed against the grave suspicion that they are honouring or trying to reward their friends —those little Welsh nationalists.

**Mr. Marlow:** My hon. Friend could offer his Scottish compatriots a certain amount of reassurance. Not only will they still be relatively over-represented in the House, but many English seats and English European seats are also represented by Scotsmen.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** Right hon. and hon. Members should not think that I am trying to make a case for giving seats to Scotland and Wales. Arithmetically, there is no case, but if one gives a toffee apple to one child, one should give one to the other as well. I am sure that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) will say that it is not right to mention children, and that we should talk about brothers. I apologise for that mistake. I withdraw it absolutely, and I hope that she will not quote me, in Glasgow or elsewhere.

From a democratic point of view, which I am sure all Southend residents will share, we are concerned about the casual attitude to democracy stemming from the EC. We have a democratic right to a public inquiry about constituencies. That right has been chucked aside simply because it is a Euro-matter, and because of the alleged time scale.

The other day, I asked the Minister how many letters he had written to the Boundary Commission. The answer was that there had been no correspondence. The Government could have involved the Boundary Commission had they started a little earlier. They could still do it now, although some of their work might have to be set aside, but I hope that the Government will try to make sure that we have a public inquiry.

I am more worried about clause 2(2), which is the kind of thing that King Charles used to do. That splendid chap Oliver Cromwell, who did a great deal of good for Britain, chopped off the king's head because he spent money and acted without parliamentary approval.

The Clerks will have seen that, in clause 2(2), the Government are setting up a committee, and we are letting them spend money before the House of Commons approves it. I did not think that the Home Office would be associated with such measures; it is what we expect of the Foreign Office.

The Home Office is saying, "We are presenting a Bill and we want to spend the money and appoint people before we have parliamentary approval." That is wrong, but we should not get too excited because, as we all know, our democracy is being set aside, washed away and chucked in the bucket as a direct result of our European involvement. Every right hon. and hon. Member knows what is going on and is sad to disregard it. However, I shall put three brief points to the Government.

If we chucked out the Bill, no European country, whether Belgium or the Republic of Ireland, would have any extra MEPs. Would that be a good or a bad thing? First, I hope that hon. Members will bear in mind the Government's problems with financing. The Government face horrible problems with money. I am told they are now borrowing so much money that income tax will have to go up by 2½p next year just to pay the interest on the money we are borrowing this year. So we should watch the money.

Appointing extra MEPs will cost a great deal of money. The basic salary of an MEP from Britain is £30,800. There will be a subsistence allowance of £128 a day for every day spent away from home, an attendance allowance of £130 a day for every day they sign on at the European Parliament, an allowance of £52,692 for secretarial and research costs, and an additional allowance for other office costs of £23,060. Then, of course, there are travelling expenses, so the total is £40,000.

**Mr. Geoffrey Hoon** (Ashfield): I am sorry to be late in interrupting him, but may I take the hon. Gentleman back to the point about the legal consequences of the United Kingdom not taking up the six extra seats? Why is he arguing that, if the United Kingdom chooses not to take up the extra six seats, that necessarily has consequences for other countries? It was not a treaty change; it was a decision of the European Council, and it could well follow that, simply because the United Kingdom chose not to elect six extra MEPs, that would have no effect on the other 11 member states.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** I do not have the details, but it was an agreement, not a treaty. The agreement required member states to take appropriate action. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to say that it is not in the treaty, but the wording is such that, if one country does not take the steps, the others are unable to do so. As the European Parliament, with 500 MEPs, costs about £390 million, and this little Parliament costs £175 million, we should bear in mind the costs.

The second reason why we should be reluctant to appoint more MEPs is that it would be an insult to Gibraltar. It is totally wrong that right hon. and hon. Members are not prepared to consider the dreadful situation there. It is in the EC, but it is not in the EC. The problems we had with Spain and the need to stay friends with Spain involved various deeds and arrangements in the Council of Ministers and elsewhere, and means that we are treating Gibraltar with contempt. For example, Gibraltar's attempts to build its own little airport have been turned aside by the European Court, because Gibraltar is not in charge of anything.

It is the only part of Europe without representation, it does not have the same rights as French or Portuguese overseas territories. It would be an insult to Mr. Bossano and his excellent democratic Government and to all the people of Gibraltar, in which I have no interest except love and affection for good democrats, were we not to do something before we appoint more MEPs.

Finally, before we appoint more MEPs and agree to spend more money, we have to face up to the financial consequences for political parties in the United Kingdom. I have been astonished to see everyone getting so worked up and excited about Mr. Asil Nadir and possibly the money he has given to the Conservative party. People say that that is bad and unreasonable, but nobody is considering the fact that the European Parliament and the parties in it are keeping the political parties of Britain alive. No one seems to be concerned about that. There is concern about the possibility of graft, corruption and the influence that some chap from Turkey is going to exert over Ministers, but no one is prepared to consider what the European Parliament and European funding—basically slush funding—are doing to political parties in the United Kingdom.

The amount of money involved is enormous. People are not prepared to consider what will happen to the parties and how much more money will be spent if the Bill is passed and there are more MEPs. The amount of money spent on MEPs in 1988 was £26 million—on what are regarded as the operating expenses of political groups, the

*[Sir Teddy Taylor]*

European information campaign, the purchase of data processors, the hire and maintenance of equipment and other activities.

That clever man Jean-Marie Le Pen is, I understand, concerning the Scottish Labour party by planning to visit Edinburgh. It should not worry, because this year Mr. Le Pen has held conferences in Paris, Dublin, Rome, Vienna, Venice, London, Lisbon, Madrid and Nice. Such conferences are lovely, because there are about four hours of discussion——

**Mr. Tom Clarke:** The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that Labour Members are not at all concerned about Mr. Le Pen, because, happily, a few hours ago, he announced that he was not visiting Edinburgh. That is a welcome decision for Scotland.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** If that is a welcome decision for Scotland, it is a bad one for the five-star hotels. The hon. Gentleman will be well aware that, when Mr. Le Pen and his friends go places, they stay in five-star hotels—all Euro-funded with taxpayers' money.

When I meet poor people in Southend and elsewhere who are short of cash and need things doing in their council houses, the fact that those guys are regularly holding great conferences, staying in five-star hotels and not discussing anything but having a glorious time at public expense annoys me. If the Bill goes through, with the help of the Home Office, there will be more money for such events.

I have heard all kinds of stories about the Labour party. I do not want to single the Labour party out, because I am sure that all parties are the same. I have heard astonishing tales of the amount of funding from European Parliament funds that goes to the United Kingdom Labour party. I have tried to find out about that. I have heard astonishing tales about allegedly letting properties, making money for the provision of information and making money for the provision of figures for the United Kingdom Conservative party. I have heard astonishing tales—in fairness, they are not so bad—about the Liberal Democrats because of the special relationship they have with the European Liberals.

The parties are not associated. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) will accept that the People's party, which seems to be the one linked with the Conservatives, does not support Conservative policy at all, but is in favour of federalism and social charters, which I am told our party is against.

I tried to find out how much money is being made. I consulted our splendid House of Commons Library, and it consulted the European Parliament office first. That office said that, if there is any information available about all the money received by the political parties from Europe, it will be available through the political groups in Strasbourg. Our splendid Library staff then went to the European Parliamentary Labour party and the London Office, EPP group, of British Conservatives, to see whether they could supply details of income received via the European Parliament. The Library said:

"I am afraid that neither was enthusiastic about supplying figures".

That is terrible because, sadly, as we know, our country is insolvent, and the political parties are too. Everybody seems to be worried about how they can be subject to influence and how my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East and his friends may get their arms twisted by people from Turkey and Cyprus. Should we not be worried about the Euro slush fund that is keeping the parties going? As my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) said in his personal statement yesterday, people deserve to be told.

I hope that, before we pass the Bill, the Government will say that, before we agree to more MEPs and more money—all the slush funds to keep parties going and officers paid and events paid for and the handing out of lots of money—people should be told——

**Mr. Marlow:** My hon. Friend is again making a powerful point. We all have a great deal of respect for our right hon. Friend the Minister. It is open to him to get in touch with central office before he gets to his feet later, and he could probably satisfy my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East by telling him precisely how much money the Conservative party has received from European sources over the last year.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** I am sure that all the parties are the same. We have all read about overseas accounts. That splendid chap Lord McAlpine, a great British patriot, knew all about such numbered accounts. My hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire, a straight and honourable chap, is not aware of such events. It is not his fault that he works so hard for his constituents that he sometimes does not know about some of the devious ploys that are adopted by political parties—such as numbered accounts in Jersey and so on. One cannot find out about that, so even if the Minister——

**Mr. Cash:** Would my hon. Friend accept, following the point that he made to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), that it may be extremely difficult for the Conservative party to be able to give exact figures of the amount of money given in the Conservative cause in respect of the European People's party, because its policies are diametrically opposed to those espoused by the Government in relation to European matters? It would be an absolute scandal if we are taking any money off them.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** That is crucial. I hope that the Minister will think about that. I accept that that party's policies are different from the British Tory policies. It wants to do more ridiculous Euro-things. If that party is providing the cash, what kind of influence will that have? Will the Government say that they do not like the EC or make such statements? The vice-chairman of the Conservative party, who works so hard and sometimes pops into debates, will be well aware that, if that party were to develop totally different policies on the EC, it could have frightening consequences for Euro-funding.

We know that the Conservative party is facing a crisis, like all parties. Piles of cash are coming from the EC to the European Parliament fund. That affects not only political parties, but the CBI. I have tried to find out by writing time after time and asking how much money the CBI gets from the Euopean boys for providing information, providing seminars and all the rest of it. It will not tell me.

If we have more MEPs, as suggested in the Bill, it is time that we had the facts from the EC and from this Parliament about where the money goes and who gets it. If there is one thing we are entitled to know in Britain, it

is where the European money goes and to whom. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East knows more about European money than anybody.

**Mr. Dykes:** Do I assume that my hon. Friend is in favour of the disclosure down to the last pound of all the accounts of the Bruges group?

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** If a British taxpayer or the taxpayer in Europe is putting money into something, they should be told where it is going. If my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East—I appreciate there are not so many wealthy people these days, because they are members of Lloyd's—wants to give his money to the Bruges group, or to any other group, that is a matter for him. Is taxpayers' money being handed over to promote political efforts and to twist the arms of political parties? I noticed how all the political parties are becoming more and more pro-EC. Why? They say that it is not like that, but they are provided with accommodation and with information.

On the basis of private conversations that I cannot repeat in detail, a former MEP, who was a senior official of the Conservative party, told me that lots of money is going. I also know, from a member of the Labour party who might be unreliable but who seems to be a good chap and supports a good football team, that the same thing is happening in his party. Perhaps the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) can tell us more about what happens in the Ulster Unionist party. He is someone I know I can rely on.

If we are to have more MEPs and spend money on them, we should insist in Committee, with the help of the Labour party, which has always stood for the working man, freedom, liberty and straightness, that every penny of taxpayers' money going to political parties is disclosed. Then at least we would know what is happening.

I see that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has kindly come back for my speech and I am grateful that he has returned to hear me. I hope that the Government can give three minor assurances. First, there should be full disclosure of public funding from the European Parliament for political parties. Secondly, we should sort out Gibraltar, which is terribly important. Thirdly, which is also important, as long as we can avoid additional costs, the right thing to do is to do what we should do with all these Bills: we should pay no attention to them. When the vote comes, we should perhaps not express an opinion. The real work comes in Committee. We shall want to keep asking many questions and we shall insist on getting answers. With a new Home Secretary who is prepared to get on with the police, which is an amazing step forward, we look forward to straightforward, honourable answers. I hope that we shall get them.

6.39 pm

**Mr. Robert Maclennan** (Caithness and Sutherland): Membership of the European Community, to which this country assented in a referendum—the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) does not seem to have come to terms with the result, never mind a number of subsequent events—carries with it the requirement in international law to move towards a common system of election to the European Parliament. I regret the fact that since it became clear that the European Community would seek to enlarge the European Parliament to take account of the adherence of East Germany, the Government have done nothing to advance towards the fulfilment of that international obligation.

The Government have stood on the sidelines, despite the fact that Britain held the presidency for the last six months of last year while these matters were discussed in the European Parliament. Today, the Home Secretary opened his speech by stating his intention, on behalf of the Government, to exercise a veto against the other 11 member countries of the European Community if they introduced a proposal for a proportional system of election. That smacks of the old saw, "Storm in the channel; continent isolated." Yet again, it appears that the Government wish Britain to stand alone, at odds with the growing consensus within the European Community and without any regard to the consequences for this country's standing and influence in the institutions of the Community.

The Bill is unfortunate in that it takes us no nearer the objective of a common electoral system and simply reinforces the discrepancies caused by our system of first past the post. That not only results in our unrepresentative contributions—approximately one quarter of the electorate is unrepresented in the European Parliament—but has the distorting effect of shifting the balance within the European Parliament for other countries as well. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) made the point forcefully and I need not labour it. As a matter of comity, it is time that the Government recognised that we do these things not only to our own damage, but to the damage of the institutions to which we subscribe.

Even by the standards of British constitutionalism, the Bill falls far short of what might have been expected. It does not build on our experience of altering European parliamentary boundary seats by establishing boundary commissions and acting on their recommendation after a proper process of scrutiny. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) pointed to the length of time that has elapsed between it becoming clear that an additional six seats would be made available to this country—it is fair to say that that realisation pre-dates Edinburgh, although the change was confirmed at Edinburgh—and the Government's explanation of what they propose to do.

There was no White Paper, there was no Green Paper and there was no statement. No explanation was given in answers to parliamentary questions or in letters to Members of Parliament, and there was no debate in the House. I do not believe that that is an appropriate way in which this country should strengthen its democratic participation in the European Community.

On looking at the terms of the Bill, the position appears to be even more disturbing. The Government are taking it on themselves to establish a committee that will decide what recommendations to make to the Home Secretary, who in turn, under paragraphs 7 and 8 of the schedule, will present them to the House of Commons, subject to such modifications as may be decided on. It is not clear on the face of the Bill whether the modifications are intended to be made as a result of the recommendations of the partisan committee. It is clear on the face of the Bill that the changes may be made by the Home Secretary. That is simply an outrage.

There may be a precedent that gives the Home Secretary a residual power in such matters under the

*[Mr. Robert Maclennan]*

conventions of this country. Such oddities of constitutional practice certainly exist. But, to my knowledge, it is not a convention that has ever been followed by a Home Secretary.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The power has never been used, but it is part of the legislation on boundary reviews. The Bill merely repeats what is in existing legislation. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's determination was to depart as little as possible from the previous wording. I dare say that he will depart as little as possible from previous practice and that he will not want to present modifications. However, he has that power. It is written into existing legislation that deals with boundary reviews.

**Mr. Maclennan:** The Minister confirms my reading of the Bill. He confirms that the Home Secretary intends to retain a power that, in the context of a procedure involving public inquiries and public representations in which objections can be made, might have no serious consequences. However, in the context of this procedure, in which a committee, appointed by the Home Secretary, is not required to accept representations in the form of public appeal procedures and is not provided in statute with arrangements for modifying its recommendations and publishing them in the normal way, it is a dangerous power. It is an erosion of our normal democratic standards and it undermines the integrity of our democratic institutions.

That such a step should be taken at all is bad. What concerns me is not only the issue of the six seats, but the fact that the procedure is a precedent which will, no doubt, be built on again. The Government give scant regard to the fragile conventions that hold democracy together in this country. When they do not like a local government, they wind it up entirely. How can we take any comfort from the assurances that were given by the Home Secretary earlier in the debate that he does not envisage using this power?

I turn from the inadequacies of the proposed procedures to what might have been included in the Bill. If there is a timing problem—I am not convinced that there is, and what the hon. Member for Sedgefield said about the alternative timetable was extremely compelling—it could be eliminated entirely by adopting a proportional system of election that would not require the Boundary Commission, still less this bastard committee, to determine boundaries.

On the basis of five seats for England and one for Wales, which is the Government's choice—or on the basis, which we believe is more appropriate and which the Labour party has expressed to be more appropriate, of four seats for England and one each for Wales and Scotland—the new seats could have been allocated according to the largest average vote system, under which the number of votes cast for each party would be divided by the number of seats won by that party, plus one. That system operates effectively in the Federal Republic of Germany. It results in a greater proportionality of distribution of seats and in the votes cast for election to the European Parliament being reflected in the number of members elected to the European Parliament.

Few objective people would deny that we have an unjust system. Had we had such a proportional system as I recommend—we should prefer, like the hon. Member for Perry Barr and the Plant commission, to which the Leader of the Opposition subscribes, a regional list system—we should not have found that more than 2 million people who voted for the Greens in this country at the last elections for the European Parliament did not have a single representative in that Parliament. It was the biggest vote cast for the Green party throughout Europe, but it has no representation in the European Parliament. Furthermore, in 1985 there would not have been a comparable discrimination against those who voted for the alliance parties. Under such a system as I have advocated, the alliance parties would have had some 15 seats.

The Bill is highly defective and should not be passed. We shall therefore vote for the amendment that has been selected by Madam Speaker, though it does not go as far as I would wish it to go in criticising the Government. Furthermore, we shall vote against Second Reading. In doing so, I must make it plain that we have no wish to disfranchise the 17 million East Germans. We wish merely to succumb to the irresistible temptation, after 15 years, to enfranchise 25 per cent. of the British electorate.

We recognise that it is time for this issue to be faced squarely by our Government. In March of this year, proposals were advanced in the European Parliament. We are proud of the fact that the action that we as a party took in the European Court, in which we ought to establish the right of the citizens of this country to a fair voting system, assisted in the process of concentrating minds upon the need to implement the international obligation to move towards a common system of fair voting. We wish that to be done as soon as may be. We do not believe that the Government will be able to adopt this stand-pat position, which the Home Secretary described at the beginning of the debate as the exercise of the veto, for much longer. Justice will be done.

6.54 pm

**Mr. William Cash** (Stafford): I begin by referring to the provisions in the Bill with which the Home Secretary dealt in his speech. As he mentioned that the Bill is governed to a certain extent by procedures similar to those adopted for previous European parliamentary occasions, I should point out that in 1978 when the proposals—on which, I understand, we rely to some extent for precedent—were first put forward, the powers of that assembly were very different. It was by no means the same kind of Parliament as is envisaged under the Maastricht treaty proposals. Furthermore, it did not meet the aspirations of those who would like to take us further and deeper into a more integrated Europe.

It is important not to allow the Home Secretary to skip over the fact that it is not the 1978 Act, as originally presented to the House and enacted, with which we are concerned when it comes to the main constitutional changes proposed in the Bill. Under the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, very significant changes were made to the 1978 Act and it is to those provisions that I wish to refer because they are now part of the 1978 Act, as amended in 1986. As I pointed out in an intervention, it is those provisions which provide, under paragraph 5(a) of schedule 2, for the Boundary Commission, if it thinks fit in respect of European parliamentary constituencies, to cause a local inquiry to be held in respect of any European parliamentary constituency or constituencies.

It is not simply a question of whether, in respect of Westminster, the Government are somehow dodging and weaving—we are talking about the European parliamentary constituencies as stipulated in the 1986 Act. Therefore, the point made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), by my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) and by other hon. Members about the Westminster comparison is not wide of the mark—they are dealing with the essential principle. What some of them have not observed, however, is that this is a provision which already applies in respect of European parliamentary constituencies. The commission of the offence is thus compounded by the fact that in 1986 our own Government made provisions of a kind which I believe ought to apply in this Bill.

The problem goes deeper than that. As I pointed out —I am anxious to be corrected if this is wrong, because beneath all this verbiage there is a certain complexity and the Bill has been drafted with considerable skill—one could be forgiven for thinking, when looking at schedule 2, that sometimes it refers to the principal Act and sometimes to the 1986 Act. One has to work out precisely which Act one is talking about at any given moment in time.

Under paragraph 5(a), not only is the Boundary Commission empowered to cause a local inquiry to be held in respect of European parliamentary constituencies, but where it receives representations objecting to the proposed recommendation from an interested authority, that is to say, à county council, a district, a London borough, or a body of electors numbering 500 or more, the commission shall—not "may"—not make recommendations unless, since publication of the notice, a local inquiry has been held in respect of the European parliamentary constituency.

In a recent enactment of the House in respect of the European parliamentary constituency question, there is an obligation not only to have a Boundary Commission review, but to follow simple prescribed procedures. The simple reason for that is that it is not possible for people's views to be taken into account properly unless a public or local inquiry is held.

Within that inquiry, there are also provisions with regard to the application of the Local Government Act 1972 procedures, which govern the manner in which inspectors or persons holding such inquiries conduct their proceedings. I remember that in some ancient tome somebody once said that justice is to be found in the interstices of procedure.

If we look a little downstream in respect of the procedures that were proposed for the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 as applied to the European Parliamentary Elections Act 1978, we find that for the purposes of any such local inquiry the person appointed to hold that inquiry may by summons require any person to attend at a time and place, give evidence, produce documents and take evidence on oath.

There are further provisions with respect to whether people can be imprisoned if they give false evidence. I am not suggesting for one moment that it would automatically follow that those powers would be required, but it appears to me that in respect of the boundary proposals under the committee of men, who I have no doubt will be very distinguished——

**Mr. Rooker:** They will certainly all be men.

**Mr. Cash:** Hopefully it will be a committee of men and women. They will be appointed and, as has already been pointed out by hon. Members, they will not be subject to any of the procedures to which I have referred.

I was a little disconcerted by the reply of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to one of my interventions. He suggested that the procedures being followed were in all material respects the same as those being followed in respect of Boundary Commissions for Westminster, let alone the European parliamentary constituencies. I have to admit that I was a little concerned about that.

If, as my right hon. and learned Friend alleges, there is no substantial difference between the provisions of the Bill and the procedures set out in the 1978 and 1986 Acts, I am bound to ask why we are not allowed to have those arrangements, bar only the question of a local inquiry. How long would all this take? As we are dealing with relatively few, large constituencies, would it have made any difference if we had had local inquiries?

I imagine that all the relevant material is already accumulating in the Boundary Commission's computers as a result of the current review. Most of the raw material, which takes time to accumulate, would already be available. I therefore cannot see that there should be much delay.

I am sure that the Minister of State, Home Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd), will enlighten me if I am wrong, as I hope that I am in this respect, but I understand that the interested authorities and the 500 electors that I have mentioned are being excluded. That is the essence of the operation. As local representatives and individuals, they should have an opportunity to make their objections known because funny things happen on the way to boundary reviews and it is very important that we get this right. I hope that the Minister of State will correct me if I am wrong.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** It will be quite possible for them to make their feelings felt and to make their points, but, alas, they will have to do so in writing because there will almost certainly not be time for the normal local reviews which have been a feature of normal Boundary Commissions in the past. However, the committees will expect to hear from interested parties and will take careful note of what they are told. If there is time, some of the interested parties will be seen and heard.

**Mr. Cash:** I have always had the greatest faith in my hon. Friend the Minister, but I am not terribly convinced by that reply. It is not a question of the integrity of the so-called three wise men. The point relates to the functions that they are given which enable them, within the statutory arrangements that we are enacting—with or without their abilities, capacity and function—to perform the democratic function about which I am so concerned. Although the people concerned are very important and distinguished, what are they expected to do? By excluding people across the whole of Great Britain from making such representations, we are doing a great disservice to democracy in this country.

Although I have not had a reply to this point—no doubt the Minister of State will assist me when he replies to the debate—I cannot understand why, for the year 1993-94, we are adopting a policy, procedure and principle

*[Mr. Cash]*

which departs from a principle passed as recently as 1986 in respect of European parliamentary constituencies. I simply cannot understand that.

With respect to the time factor, I believe that most of the public inquiries could be disposed of in one or two days. One would not expect them to continue for any length of time. The fact that there are so few of them, and the fact that many may not be contested, suggests that the Government are making a great mountain out of a mole hill—which leaves me with a deepening concern, if not a certain suspicion, about the reasons for all this.

**Mr. John Marshall:** Does my hon. Friend accept that when we went down the public inquiry route in 1983-84 the European parliamentary boundary proposals were produced in July 1983? Public inquiries were held, the results of which were collated by the Home Office, and the final boundaries were announced in March 1984. We are talking about a time gap of about eight months after the commission reported. Does my hon. Friend really believe that, with that kind of time gap, we could do the whole job in time to put candidates in place before the next European elections?

**Mr. Cash:** Some fairly sensible points have already been made about where the fault lies, because the timetable was known at the Edinburgh summit. Furthermore, I believe that the issues of principle are so important and overriding that they should not be allowed to interfere with what appears to be a relatively medium-term or short-term consideration.

We are dealing with a very important matter. As some hon. Members have already said, there is a slight difficulty in relation to the proposal in the context of enhancing the powers of the European Parliament if it is seen to be the thin end of the wedge. If the anticipated process of integration and deepening is to continue and we are to establish in the Bill the principle to be used on future occasions, and we have no assurance to the contrary—I do not look for assurance because I object to the issue as a matter of principle—as the deepening process goes on and the neutering of this place continues, it becomes more important to ensure that the democratic process applying to European parliamentary constituencies is enhanced.

Let us not forget that we are dealing with the provision of greater powers. I have pointed out that the European Parliament is now engaged, under the Maastricht treaty, in a process of co-decision which has been greatly underestimated. People who know most about the subject believe that the European Parliament is getting considerably greater powers than many had anticipated —*[Interruption]* I think I hear my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) say that that is good. He may be saying it in his usual jovial manner, but I gather that he is glad to hear about extra powers being given in that way.

My hon. Friend probably knows that he recently had the support of a distinguished right hon. and learned Member of the Conservative party. I refer to none other than the Chancellor of the Exchequer who, in a *House Magazine* profile in January of this year, was quoted as saying that he, too, was pro-European and held views similar to those held by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East. I will only comment that if my right hon. and learned Friend holds such views, we must watch with great interest his progress as Chancellor of the Exchequer in relation to the exchange rate mechanism and economic and monetary union.

**Mr. Dykes:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for referring to that article, which gave me great pleasure. He may feel reassured about plans for the European Parliament if he accepts my proposition that it does not mean that the powers of national parliaments will be reduced by the powers of the European Parliament being increased in the future. It is a question of the separation of powers and the addition of a separate layer of political activity.

**Mr. Cash:** My hon. Friend makes an interesting observation. I think it is the first time that I have heard him put so much emphasis on the importance of national parliaments, an issue to which I shall come later. We acknowledge that the European Parliament has an important function to perform. But we must make sure, in relation to the decision-making process—another subject which I shall develop—that opinions, when turned into political programmes and policies, reflect, within national parliaments and the European Parliament, a parallel philosophy as expressed by the political parties represented at both levels.

We must consider the deeper political questions that lie at the heart of the Bill. With what sort of parliamentary boundaries are we dealing, and what issues must be considered in connection with the increased number of United Kingdom representatives to be elected to the European Parliament? In that connection, a massive problem is emerging in relation to the Conservative party vis-a-vis the Bill and the widening of the European Community. All Conservative MEPs belong to the European People's party. I have been watching with interest and concern the divergence that has been emerging between that party on the one hand and the Conservative party in this House on the other.

I need not elaborate on the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) about financing because I am anxious tonight to concentrate on the issue of compatibility between the policies that we pursue in Britain as members of the Conservative party and the espousal of the basic programme of the European People's party, the detail of which has just become available to me and which sets out the basis on which that party is now going forward—if that is the right word; I prefer to say backward—into Europe.

I will cite a few examples of the way in which the representatives who are supposed to be elected under the proposals now before the House will conduct their policy-making. I am dealing with a matter of fundamental constitutional importance to the British House of Commons and its relationship with the European Parliament, as set out in articles 137 and 138 of the Maastricht treaty. Dealing with the issue of representation and elections, which is what the Bill is all about, the treaty states:

> "The European Parliament shall draw up proposals for elections by direct universal suffrage in accordance with a uniform procedure in all Member States."

I was delighted with the terms used by the Home Secretary to repudiate the idea of that uniform procedure having anything to do with proportional representation. It goes on:

"The Council shall, acting unanimously, after obtaining the assent of the European Parliament, which shall act by a majority of its component Members, lay down the appropriate provisions which it shall recommend to Member States for adoption in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements."

That means that within the European Parliament there is, under the Maastricht treaty, a requirement for that Parliament, by a majority of its members—I shall later discuss who those members will be—to make decisions about what it will recommend, and its powers in that connection are considerable.

The European People's party, comprising Conservative MEPs and Christian Democrats, is, under the provisions of the Bill, clearly intended to have increased representation. When that happens, there will be an increase in the impact of that party's decision-making, not only on this country but on other European countries, including Germany, which will get a proportion of the additional 18 representatives.

The same will apply to other member states, in each of which candidates will be standing for the European People's party. So that party will have increased representation in the European Parliament. Its members must have the hope of forming a majority view to influence the extent to which there is a move to proportional representation. The European People's party has some extraordinary policies, which are at variance with the policies of the Conservative party in Britain.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. I am at a loss to understand what the policies of any party in Europe have to do with the Bill or the amendment. Perhaps the hon. Member will explain the relevance.

**Mr. Cash:** I will explain. I am considering the procedure when a candidate stands on a platform in connection with the Bill, remembering that our discussion today is about representation in the European Parliament. It is not just a legitimate question; it is an essential question about what is to be achieved. This is not just a constitutional measure; we are dealing with policies in relation to the new Europe that is being created. It is not a technical question of no importance.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman is not convincing me. I shall be very grateful if he returns to the contents of the Bill and of the motion in the names of Opposition Members.

**Mr. Cash:** Article 236 of the paper to which I have just referred says:

"It is the European Parliament, elected by universal suffrage, which primarily ensures that Europe is built"——

**Mr. John Marshall:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Does the Bill make any reference to an article 236? I cannot find one.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I am having the same difficulty. I must, for the third time, ask the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) to stay within the framework of the Bill and the motion. I shall be very grateful for his co-operation.

**Mr. Cash:** The article 236 is to be found in the paper to which I have referred. I made that clear, so my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) must not have been listening. I am referring to the powers being sought by European parliamentarians—a matter that is undoubtedly directly relevant to the provisions of the Bill.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman again, but I respectfully suggest that he read the title of the Bill and direct his remarks to it. I hope he appreciates that I do not want to have to intervene again.

**Mr. Cash:** The title is the European Parliamentary Elections Bill.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I was referring to the long title.

**Mr. Cash:** The long title says that the purpose of the Bill is to

"Give effect to a Decision of the Council of the European Communities",

taken in Edinburgh, giving 18 seats to the Germans.

**Mr. Rooker:** What the hon. Gentleman cannot do, and what no one else has done so far, is prejudge the outcome of the elections. The Bill deals with a people's choice. The whole thrust of the hon. Gentleman's argument presupposes which parties will win. That is what he has been talking about for the past 10 minutes. As a democrat, he has no such right. The people are sovereign. They decide through the ballot box. The purpose of the Bill is to enable them to do so.

**Mr. Cash:** I agree very much. I am not prejudging anything. The battleground upon which people are to exercise their freedom of choice in due course will be determined by the manner in which they address themselves, through European parliamentary elections, to attainment of the objective of turning policies into laws. Under the procedures of the Boundary Commission, representations may be made by 500 electors or by an interested local authority. Such people do not just waffle about shape, size and accessibility; they talk about the whole question of the type of representation they want. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) and I attended a meeting the other day. We were talking about the boundary review——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Can the hon. Gentleman explain to me how, when the Boundary Commission looks at areas, it decides what the people think about party policies and makes its judgment accordingly? That is not my understanding of the situation. If the hon. Gentleman cannot give me such an explanation, he must return to the content of the Bill. Otherwise, I shall have to ask him to resume his seat.

**Mr. Cash:** The criteria that ought to be adopted include geography, accessibility, convenience and constituency shape. These are all matters that one would expect to be aired in a public inquiry, if one were held. It is in the course of such exchanges that people raise questions about the kind of constituencies they want.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, referred me to the long title, which indicates that the purpose of the Bill is to

"Give effect to a Decision of the Council of the European Communities, 93/81/Euratom, ECSC, EEC, of 1st February 1993 having the effect of increasing the number of United Kingdom representatives to be elected to the European Parliament".

If there is to be an increase in the number of United Kingdom representatives, it must be proper, in the relevant Second Reading debate, to refer to those people——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Those remarks are completely irrelevant to the Bill and the motion. I hesitate to repeat myself, but I must warn the hon. Gentleman that if he does not return to the subject of the debate I shall have to ask him to resume his seat.

**Mr. Cash:** In my view, this Bill disgraces the democratic process along whose lines we expect our democratic system to develop. Over the past 20 or 30 years, clearly defined procedures have been laid down—for example, in the European Parliamentary Elections Act 1978 and the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986. There is no doubt whatsoever that this is a departure in principle from those arrangements.

I should like to refer to an excellent research paper. I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will not regard this as being in any way out of order, as the paper was prepared by a House of Commons research team in connection with this very Bill. It is made perfectly clear that the 1978 precedent is not by any means one upon which we can rely. It deals with the Welsh boundaries body and with the reviews that were carried out as recently as 1991. There is a whole range of recent precedents very much in favour of having a proper public inquiry procedure. The paper refers to the manner in which the whole process ought to be conducted.

Not long ago—on 15 April this year—Mr. Robert Adley, our late, lamented friend and colleague, put to the Secretary of State for the Home Department the following question:

"if he will make a statement on the arrangements he intends to make for the additional European parliamentary constituencies."

The Minister of State, in reply, said:

"My right hon. and learned Friend is currently consulting with colleagues on this matter. Once proposals are formulated, we will consult formally with the Opposition parties."—[*Official Report*, 15 April 1993; Vol. 222. c. 938.]

**Mr. Dykes:** I am sorry to trouble you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I seek your guidance. I am rather puzzled. My hon. Friend is starting to quote a House of Commons research memorandum. Presumably he intends to do so word for word. There may be precedents, but I must ask whether this is a new procedure that is permitted. Is it correct and proper?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, the procedure is that there should not be too many quotations. I was listening with great interest and, although it is up to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) to make his own speech, I remind him that many other hon. Members wish to participate in the debate.

**Mr. Cash:** I am grateful for that intervention. I was about to read out the Minister of State's reply. He said:

"We shall not necessarily use the boundary commissioners to propose the new boundaries because they are very much occupied with the parliamentary boundaries, but we shall want to have similarly independent recommendations for the new Euro-constituencies. We are determined that there will be an opportunity for public consultation, although it will be constrained by a comparatively tight timetable."—[*Official Report*, 15 April 1993; Vol. 222, c. 938.]

I must say that I gained no satisfaction from the Home Secretary's opening remarks today or from the Minister of State's answer. The proposals are not providing the independent recommendations which would be expected if the arrangements were being made on a reasonable footing.

It is a matter of grave disquiet to me and other hon. Members that the Bill will do a great deal of damage to the integrity and reputation of the House and, indeed, to the processes with which people are used to dealing. Public inquiries may be the only opportunity for people to make representations about the type of constituency in which they wish to vote. I was amazed to hear the rather specious argument about the timetable. It has nothing to do with the timetable. I cannot for the life of me understand why we cannot be told the real reason.

Will the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), or whoever is to wind up the debate, be good enough to answer two simple questions? The first is, what is the real difference between the proposals in the Bill and the arrangements to which we are accustomed—based on real precedents, not merely that of 1978—for European parliamentary constituencies, as developed up until this year? Secondly, what would be the delay if we followed the procedures that have already been well established? I believe that we are entitled to straightforward answers to those questions.

7.32 pm

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray): I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and hon. Members will be glad to know that I do not intend to speak for as long as the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). I intend to deal with two specific aspects of the Bill: how the seats have been allocated within the United Kingdom and the system of election.

The House will have noticed that I and my hon. Friends tabled our own reasoned amendment, although Madam Speaker has decided that it should not be selected. We shall, therefore, support the reasoned amendment tabled by the official Opposition although I wish that they, like us, had mentioned proportional representation.

I wish to chide, albeit gently, the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) for some of his remarks about my colleagues in Plaid Cymru. I do not think that he warned them that he was going to mention them—perhaps he had not intended to do so—but it ill becomes any hon. Member to call any other hon. Member a stooge. The House should recognise that members of other parties have the right to decide how to cast their votes on principle. My colleagues in Plaid Cymru have consistently pledged themselves to the European ideal. From time to time we may be found in the Lobby perhaps accepting the lesser of two evils, but we vote according to the principles to which we aspire and according to the ideals that we regard as precious to our countries and our peoples.

I deal first with the allocation of seats, which is an important aspect of the Bill. I have raised the issue several times in the past few months with the Home Secretary and with the Foreign Office, arguing each time that it is important for Scotland to be given an additional seat. I found it depressing to listen to the Home Secretary start on the basis of the numbers game. I do not think that the allocation of any seats, whether for a European constituency, a Westminster constituency or a local government unit, can be based solely on the numbers game; identity, geography and communications should all be taken into account.

It is interesting to trace how the seats were originally allocated for direct election. When the United Kingdom first agreed to the idea that there should be directly-elected

seats to the European Parliament, the argument that the United Kingdom should have 81 or 82 seats was based on the concept that Scotland and Wales should have additional seats. It is effectively recorded by Dr. Garrett FitzGerald in his autobiography "All in a Life", in which he mentions the negotiations and discussions that were held with the then Prime Minister, now Lord Callaghan.

It was argued that the United Kingdom was to have 81 or 82 seats in the European Parliament, Scotland 10 and Wales five. Having won the argument for additional representation at that stage, Scotland was allocated eight seats and Wales four. In 1993, however, Scotland is not to have an additional seat, although Wales at least is now to reach the position that it should have reached in the 1970s.

I also argued strongly for the geographical dimension to be taken into account. The Home Secretary and other hon. Members found it amusing when I referred to the Highlands and Islands constituency in which Moray is located. The Highlands and Islands constituency stretches some 380 miles from north to south and contains more islands than are attached to Greece. Communications are difficult, and the Member of the European Parliament has to travel by train, boat and plane to meet his or her constituents. I am not making a special plea on behalf of my mother-in-law who is capable of defending her own position. I am talking about the practicalities which would affect any MEP who represented that constituency.

The constituency stretches from Muckle Flugga in the north of Shetland down to the Cumbraes and the islands of Bute and Arran. It covers a huge area, but it has a strong identity and integrity because there is a commonality of difficulties among its rural parts. It is the largest constituency in Europe and has an equivalent land mass to Belgium, but one single MEP is asked to represent the whole area.

I therefore argue that there is a strong case for considering Scotland not on the basis of numbers but on its geographical area. It is on that basis that there are 72 Members of Parliament from Scotland in this House because the House recognises the transport difficulties. Unlike hon. Members with London constituencies, I cannot fly to Inverness, conduct a surgery in the evening and then vote here at 10 pm. Scottish Members of Parliament are here from the beginning of the week until the end because of the geography of our country. The Government must take that geography into account when considering the allocation of seats, as should the Boundary Commission when considering parliamentary constituencies and the Scottish Office when considering local government units.

The hon. Member for Southend, East suggested that Wales had been given a toffee apple because it was to gain an additional seat. I do not begrudge the people of Wales an additional seat, but those who display that attitude towards the nations of Wales and Scotland do themselves and the people of England whom they represent a great disservice because it is not the attitude that the Scots, the Welsh and the English have towards each other. Scotland as a nation argues that it should be compared with nations which have a similar status.

Denmark has a population of 5·1 million and it has 16 seats in the European Parliament. We have 5 million people in Scotland and we get eight seats. It seems that if one votes in Scotland, it is worth half of a Danish vote. The Republic of Ireland has 3·6 million voters and 15 seats —yet again a Scottish vote is worth half that in Eire. Tiny Luxembourg, which is roughly the same size of our capital city, Edinburgh, has an electorate of 0·4 million and has six seats compared with Scotland's eight.

The Home Secretary had obviously not thought through his remarks carefully when he said that it was only a Conservative Government who would fight for the people of England. That will be noted in Scotland and Wales and offence will be taken, not because of some nicety, but because his remarks show a disregard for feelings and aspirations of those nations. Similar behaviour is evident elsewhere.

The nature of the elections is also a matter of concern.

**Mr. Dalyell:** The hon. Lady does not need me to defend her, but does she agree that it would be better if a Minister from the Scottish Office were present on the Government Front Bench? After all, her name must have appeared on the annunciator. Such a presence is especially required when one recalls that, in November 1992, at St. Andrews, the Secretary of State for Scotland gave some specific assurances on this matter. Equally, the introduction to the White Paper, "Taking Stock", referred to the need to

"take steps to complement and add to Scotland's strong representation in Europe".

At least we are due an explanation about why that promise has not been honoured.

**Mrs. Ewing:** The hon. Gentleman has made a fair point. I am conscious of remarks by the Secretary of State, who said that he was bidding high for Scotland's position in Europe. He has not fulfilled that pledge. It is a shame that no one from the Scottish Office is here, unlike the official Opposition, who have maintained a presence in the Chamber. No doubt there are reasons for that absence, but, as a matter of courtesy and given the importance of the Bill, it would have been helpful if someone from the Scottish Office were here, to pay attention at least.

**Mr. John Marshall:** Would the hon. Lady care to comment on the absence from the Chamber of that most European party, the Liberal Democrats? None of its Scottish, Welsh or English Members is here.

**Mrs. Ewing:** Far be it from me to defend the Liberal Democrats, but, to be fair to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), he has been present from the start of the debate. Before he departed, he had to listen, at great length, to the hon. Member for Stafford. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) was also present for a short time. That, however, is not the point. The fact is that no one from the Scottish Office is present during this important debate.

I agree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) that a principle lies behind the argument about proportional representation. Many of us could spend a great deal of time arguing about the pros and cons of various systems of proportional representation. The principle that underpins our beliefs, however, is that we should move towards proportionality. We should not argue now about particular details.

Article 138 of the treaty of Rome, to which the United Kingdom is a signatory, relates to the ideal that, ultimately, a uniform electoral procedure should be followed in all member states, based on the principle of universal suffrage. That procedure is followed in Northern Ireland, but not in mainland Britain.

The amendment tabled by the Liberal Democrats refers to the De Gucht report, which has been debated in the

*[Mrs. Ewing]*

European Parliament. I have followed the arguments about proportional representation with interest, and I am concerned about aspects of that report. Even if proportional representation is not adopted for the forthcoming elections to the European Parliament, I hope that the Government will commit themselves to following that procedure for the next set of European elections.

I want to put down various markers about the De Gucht report and its various recommendations. Karel De Gucht is a Liberal Democrat from Belgium. When he first reported to the European Parliament in 1990, he submitted a draft proposal that would have successfully abolished Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland as electoral entities over a 10-year transitional period. He proposed, initially, to eliminate our first-past-the-post system by introducing multi-Member constituencies that were to become progressively larger until the constituencies corresponded with the member states, with a minimum of three Members per constituency from 1994, a minimum of five Members per constituency from 1999 and no constituencies from 2004.

I find it difficult to agree with that proposal because the identities of Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England must be retained in the context of the European Parliament. If the Government or any other parties are considering the De Gucht report, they should be careful about aspects of it.

De Gucht was, originally, not in favour of a threshold being introduced, but he eventually accepted the 5 per cent. proposal. He did not proceed, however, to make it clear that the votes could not be transferred across the boundaries or borders of the various constituent parts of the United Kingdom. If a 5 per cent. threshold applied to a member state, the danger is that the United Kingdom would treat all four of its constituent parts as one. That would have repercussions for the various parties.

In the previous European elections, the Scottish National party took 26 per cent. of the vote in Scotland and we ended up with one of the eight European Members of Parliament to which Scotland is entitled. If that vote were transferred to a United Kingdom-wide vote, the SNP, even after gaining 26 per cent. support in Scotland, would be reduced to 2·6 per cent. of the vote according to the United Kingdom threshold. We would therefore not have gained representation in the European Parliament. That would be a gross insult to those people who turned out and voted for the SNP.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** We in the Ulster Unionist party are also extremely conscious of that problem. There is an alternative. If the threshold is decided on a national basis, the SNP could fight in England, where there are many Scottish voters. Certainly the Ulster Unionist party would put up candidates in England if that threshold operated on a national basis.

**Mrs. Ewing:** The right hon. Gentleman makes a reasonable point and it has been considered carefully by my party in the past. Various other regulations pertaining to broadcasting, for example, would be unfavourably affected if we put up candidates in English constituencies. I often receive letters from people in England asking me to put up an SNP candidate in their area. There are, however, logical reasons for not doing so. We are a Scottish-based party and we do not have any imperialist ambitions. We are seeking self-government for our country.

If the De Gucht recommendations for the threshold were applicable across the United Kingdom, as a member state, that would be in breach of the Act of Union of 1707, which retained Scotland as a legal entity. The Scotland-England border is regarded in international law as an international boundary. I would fight to ensure that votes cast in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England were treated separately, whether a 5 per cent. threshold operated for other parties that may stand, such as the Greens, the Monster Raving Loony party or whatever. A 5 per cent. threshold should apply to each of the constituent nations.

**Mr. Dykes:** The hon. Lady has made a reasonable point. Would she care to enlighten us as to which members of the public have written and from which constituencies suggesting that the SNP should put up candidates in English seats? Did they include people from Southend or Staffordshire?

**Mrs. Ewing:** I cannot recall, off hand, the exact location of everyone who has written to me. My geography is not perfect. I can assure the hon. Gentleman, however, that I have had several requests from English members of the public who would like SNP candiates to stand in their area. Given that so many former Conservative Members who represented Scotland have had to come south of the border to find seats, other people might find that, if SNP candidates stood in England, there would be too many Scottish accents in the House.

It is wrong to base the allocation of seats solely on numbers. There is a strong principle for other arguments to be brought into play. The people of Scotland will be extremely disappointed that there will not be an additional seat, given the comparisons that I have made with other small nations.

The second issue relates to proportional representation. There have been various signs that the Government are considering the possibility of proportional representation in elections towards the end of the decade. Will the Minister give an assurance that if proportional representation is to come into play, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England will be treated as separate entities and the system will be agreed through consultation with all the political parties in the House, not simply the result of a cosy arrangement between the Government and the Labour Front Bench?

7.49 pm

**Mr. John Marshall** (Hendon, South): I listened with great interest to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). At one point, he said that he was not prejudging anything. That came as a great revelation because I thought that he prejudged everything relating to Europe. One sometimes thinks that my hon. Friend is one of the Rip van Winkles of British politics because he speaks almost as though we had not joined the European Community in 1973. He certainly speaks as though we did not have a referendum in 1975 and never passed the Single European Act—and, indeed, he did not vote for it.

The debate is interesting because those hon. Members who have complained about time and the fact that they do not accept that as an argument for having the great and the

good to determine the boundaries are the same ones who went on at length during the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. They are the same ones who voted against business motion after business motion and delayed the proceedings of that Bill for the maximum time. Perhaps if my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford had spoken slightly less on that Bill and voted for some business motions, this Bill would have been before the House a long time ago.

**Mr. Cash:** My hon. Friend is launching into something that I find slightly unusual in view of the fact that I have always regarded him as an hon. Gentleman and an hon. Friend. Not so long ago, he invited me to his constituency to talk about these matters. Furthermore, it was clear that the audience agreed with what I had to say. I hope that my hon. Friend will bear it in mind that his constituents seemed to share many of my views.

**Mr. Marshall:** My hon. Friend was invited to my constituency, like so many of my hon. Friends. Most of those who come to my constituency support Government policy in its entirety. I believe that my constituents should be given a whole range of policies for examination. I assure my hon. Friend that the number of constituents who wrote to me supporting his point of view could be counted on the fingers of both hands. On the basis of my postbag, he did not attract as much support as perhaps he thought he was attracting at the time.

Hon. Members who argue about time ignore the delay that they caused in the parliamentary process earlier this year. As one who fought two European elections, I find the time argument persuasive. In 1979, I was fortunate enough to be selected to contest the ensuing Euro-election for London, North. At that time, it had 10 Westminster parliamentary constituencies, of which seven were Labour. I had three months in which to become known to 500,000 people. Similarly, in 1984, we did not know the boundaries until March, which was only three months before the election.

Such a time scale makes it impossible for candidates to become known to their electorates and people to judge the worth of the individuals for whom they are being asked to vote. Therefore, any procedure that will expedite the final decision about boundaries must be welcomed.

Some hon. Members have argued that it would be feasible to have the local inquiries and the Boundary Commission deciding the boundaries. Let us go back to 1983. The Boundary Commission produced its proposals in July 1983—undoubtedly, it has been working on them for some months. The inquiries took place in December 1983 and the boundaries were agreed in March 1984. We are talking about a period of about nine months after the original proposals came from the commission. If we adopted that approach tonight, the new boundaries would not be in place in time for the next European elections.

It has been suggested that if we had the system proposed by the Government, which is the same as that which prevailed before the 1979 European elections, the representations made by interested groups would be ignored. That is not the lesson of history because, in 1978, the proposed boundaries for London included one or two absurd suggestions.

The people in London wrote to the commission and said that they did not like what the commission was proposing to do. They recognised that they could not have a public inquiry, but they believed that, for example, Southgate did not have a great deal of affinity with Hackney—it had an affinity with Finchley, Enfield, North and Edmonton rather than Hackney. The Boundary Commission looked at the maps and said that that was right, and the boundaries were redrawn in that way. If wise men who come forward with proposals make similar mistakes and people write in, those men will listen to what is said and propose boundaries that everyone will find acceptable.

So far as the Scottish argument is concerned, I pay a great tribute to the European Member of Parliament for the Highland and Islands of Scotland. She is an hon. Friend and signed many of my motions. She represented that constituency with a flair that few people could match.

Let us look at the numbers in Scotland. If we had an additional seat in Scotland, I do not believe for one moment that we would be dividing the Highlands and Islands constituency because it is already numerically the smallest of the Scottish constituencies. That extra seat would be in the great industrial belt of Scotland and we would be knocking a bit off Glasgow or one of the Strathclyde constituencies to make another seat in Scotland. That would mean that Scotland, which is over-represented numerically in this House, would be even more over-represented in the European Parliament. It would mean that an average constituency in England would contain 20 per cent. more electors than an average constituency in Scotland. That seems to be unjustified by the geography of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland constituency. Therefore, that argument is not persuasive.

I welcome the fact that we are continuing with our system of single-member constituencies for England, Wales and Scotland. That is a great strength with regard to our representation in the European Parliament. Some of the systems adopted by other countries are inherently undemocratic. The French and German system involves a national list. The French socialists had President Mitterrand at the end of their list in 1979. He stayed as a European Member of Parliament for the first day and then resigned so that someone else could take his place. People were conned by his presence on the list to vote for the French socialists.

The French Gaullists had a tourniquet system under which everyone on the list spent a short time in the European Parliament. Mr. Chirac was a European Member of Parliament for a short time. The House may be interested to know that during that time his button was pressed while he was on duty in Paris—he was recorded as voting in Strasbourg while he was undertaking mayoral duties in Paris. The whole system of a national list is not appropriate to the European scene.

The national list system provided Mr. Le Pen with the ability to produce several European Members of Parliament from France. If the French had had a first-past-the-post individual constituency system, as we have in the United Kingdom, the Le Pen group would not have elected one person to the European Parliament.

Another problem with the national list system in the European Parliament is the huge power that it gave to the party machines. The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) will confirm that the Gaullist system was such that, if one got on the wrong side of Mr. Chirac in the European Parliament between 1979 and 1984, one was told that one was out—one would not even be No. 81 on the list in the next election.

*[Mr. Marshall]*

The system gives excessive power to the party machine. I do not know how my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford would fare under a national list system, but I do not think that he would even make first reserve. Some hon. Members might say that that is an argument in favour of a national list system, particularly when my hon. Friend is giving one of his not so brief speeches.

The real problem with the national list system is that a constituent who has a problem does not know whom to turn to. I remember being asked years ago by the British unit trust industry to table a question for question time in the European Parliament. We were told that all other unit trust industries throughout the Community felt strongly about the matter and would back us up after we asked our question. We asked the question, and a British Member asked a supplementary. There was another supplementary question from a British Member, and then there was a deathly hush.

I was told that the trouble was that the French industry did not know whom to turn to. The French did not have a particular Member whom they could ask about the subject. The German industry was in the same position. Members of the European Parliament may not have the same number of constituency cases that Members of Parliament at Westminster have, but the number is growing, and it is surely right that the link between the MEP and his constituency should remain as it does in the House of Commons.

**Mr. James Molyneaux** (Lagan Valley): The hon. Gentleman referred to confusion in the minds of the electors in Northern Ireland. We are Members of the sovereign Parliament of the United Kingdom, and we shall be until we are either abolished or eroded by our masters in Brussels. Confusion arises when constituency cases that are within the remit of the House of Commons are dealt with by some MEPs in Northern Ireland, for the simple reason that industrialists and private citizens do not know where to go, and they end up writing to all three local representatives. The lines get crossed, and we then spend half our time trying to disentangle the mess.

**Mr. Marshall:** The situation in Northern Ireland is complicated in that there are three MEPs from three different political parties. We all know the particular reasons why there is proportional representation in those elections in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** What is the reason?

**Mr. Marshall:** The right hon. Member for Strangford surely cannot be so ignorant or naive that he does not know the reason. Obviously proportional representation exists in Northern Ireland so that both sides of the religious divide can feel that they are represented in the European Parliament. That is probably a good thing, given the unusual politics of Northern Ireland. I spent some years in Glasgow, and I discovered what Irish politics were all about.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Glasgow is not in Ireland.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** The accuracy of the remarks of hon. Members is not a matter for the Chair.

**Mr. Marshall:** I was about to explain that the politics of Glasgow in the 1960s were similar to the politics of Northern Ireland. I well remember canvassing in a council election and an elector saying that she was tremendously pleased to see a Conservative candidate at last. She then asked what my religion was. I replied Church of England, and added, "I suppose that is it." "No," she said. "You see, I am a Christian and I cannot vote for a Catholic." That was the politics of the east end of Glasgow in 1963, and I suspect that it is the politics of Northern Ireland today.

One of the tragedies of the European Parliament is that, even though MEPs have been directly elected since 1979, the Parliament so far does not have a single seat. The administration is in Luxembourg, the committees sit in Brussels and the plenary sessions take place in Strasbourg. One of the reasons for that is the indifference of national state governments to that problem. The absence of a single seat for the European Parliament affects its efficiency and, therefore, affects the efficiency of those who are elected to it and whose election we are discussing this evening.

**Mrs. Angela Knight** (Erewash): Does my hon. Friend agree that if the European Parliament had one seat the administration would be cheaper, which would be beneficial to the United Kingdom and to all the other members of EC?

**Mr. Marshall:** I shall answer that intervention briefly, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I saw you confer with one of the Clerks. It obviously would be cheaper, more efficient and more convenient for those who work in the European Parliament if everything were centralised rather than having three different centres, which benefits no one.

The European Parliament can be said to have in some ways power without responsibility. It has the power to vote for expenditure without the responsibility for raising the taxes to meet that expenditure. That is one issue which the Foreign Office and others will have to consider in the future.

The Bill takes account of the need to have the boundaries in place in good time. Without the Bill, there would be a grave danger that the boundaries would be agreed far too late to allow candidates in the constituencies to mount effective campaigns. Therefore, I hope that the Bill will receive a Second Reading and have a speedy Committee stage. I also hope that the Bill will be approved by their Lordships before both Houses rise for the summer recess. It is I think important that these constituency boundaries are agreed speedily so that candidates know where their constituencies are to be and can get to know their electorates and, even more importantly, their electorates can get to know them.

8.6 pm

**Mr. John D. Taylor** (Strangford): I am delighted to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, and to follow that ridiculous speech by the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall). His characterisation of Glasgow was outrageous. To suggest that religion is a factor in Glasgow politics in this day and age is nonsense and will not be well received by the people of Scotland.

Likewise, the hon. Gentleman's explanation of why Northern Ireland was given a rigged electoral system for the European elections was disgraceful. Northern Ireland Members represent people irrespective of their religion —whether they are Roman Catholic or Protestant. We are

delighted to have the privilege to represent them in this, our sovereign Parliament. We represent our constituents in *the same way as Irish Catholics and Protestants in* England are represented by Conservative and Labour Members. We resent the hon. Member's interpretation of the way in which seats are allocated to the Province of Northern Ireland.

The hon Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) referred in his usual humorous way to the European Community and in particular to the operations of the European Parliament. He referred to the funding of the British Labour party and Conservative party by the European Parliament. He challenged me to spell out the exact figures. He referred to the European information fund as a slush fund. That was somewhat unkind.

The hon. Member for Southend, East implied that there was a great deal of secrecy about the European information fund. He said that he had tried to obtain details of the funding of the Conservative party and the Labour party from the House of Commons Library and had failed. He said that he had contacted the European Parliament offices at Queen Anne's gate and, once again, had failed. But there is no secrecy whatever about the fund.

The European information fund is included in the parliamentary section of the budget of the European Community. A specific line in that budget refers to the European information fund. The result is that the British Conservative and Labour parties each get about £1 million from Europe to assist in the funding of information relating to the European elections in the 12 months between now and polling day.

It is not just the Conservative and Labour parties, but the Scottish National party, the Ulster Unionist party, the Social Democratic Labour party and even the Democratic Unionist party that are assisted in that way. We get only a few thousand pounds each because we are small parties, but the two main British parties do not hide the fact that they get £1 million or thereabouts each. This year, the Labour party will get much more than the Conservative party, because it is now the largest party from the United Kingdom in the European Parliament. So there is nothing hidden. It is not a slush fund. The figures are all there for everyone to inspect, and that is how it should be.

We must remember why we are having this debate and why the Government are presenting the Bill. It is because of the new order in Europe. The whole political scene in central Europe is changing. The Soviet Union has broken up. A vacuum has been created in central and eastern Europe. Germany has become united and is replacing the Soviet Union in that vacuum. It has taken the initiative in recognising several states in the former Yugoslavia. It is the new role of Germany in Europe which brings about the need for more seats for Germany in the European Parliament. It is only because eastern and western Germany have formed a united Germany that we in the United Kingdom are getting six new seats. Therefore, we must adjust to the new European order, which means accommodating greater Germany in the European Parliament and adapting to its changing role in the Community as the lead nation in western Europe.

The European Parliament is not a real Parliament, like this one. It has no Government and no Executive. It does not appoint a Cabinet. That is not to say that it is not important. It has an important consultative role and some major powers, such as the right to abolish the Commission, to approve the budget and to approve the *enlargement of the European Community.*

**Mr. Quentin Davies** (Stamford and Spalding): Does the right hon. Gentleman regard the United States Congress as not being a proper parliamentary body because it does not appoint an Executive?

**Mr. Taylor:** That is a fair point, but Congress has the right to make laws. The European Parliament has no legislative role. It has powers to abolish the Commission and to approve the budget and the enlargement of the European Community. Beyond that, it is in reality a talking shop, as I know from my 10 years there. It is a useful consultative body where the peoples of Europe at least have a chance to express their views on the Commission's diktats. If we did not have a Parliament in Strasbourg, the Commission would get away with more than it does at present.

**Mrs. Currie:** I hear what the right hon. Gentleman says, but I wonder whether he has read the Maastricht treaty and knows of the additional powers that will be given to the European Parliament. The European Parliament will have one thing that this House does not have and probably will never have, which is a veto over legislation affecting the whole of Europe.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. Before the right hon. Gentleman replies, let me point out that we are not debating the constitutional niceties of the European Parliament. We are considering the number of seats, boring though that may be.

**Mr. Taylor:** I accept your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was talking about the Parliament to which we elect Members. If the hon. Lady had been present for most of the debate she would have heard the additional powers under the Maastricht agreement referred to on numerous occasions. I am well aware of them, having read that agreement dozens of times. Indeed, I am alarmed at them because they transfer further powers from our national Parliament to Strasbourg.

The proposals before the House are alarming because they change the procedure for changing United Kingdom constituency boundaries. In two respects they create concern. First, the Boundary Commission will not play a role. Instead, there will be a boundary committee. Secondly, the public will not have an opportunity at a public inquiry to express their views on the recommended revised constituency boundaries.

In so far as the first concern applies to us in the Ulster Unionist party, we were encouraged by the Secretary of State's speech this afternoon. He made it clear that, to a large extent, the role of the committees would be similar to that of the Boundary Commission and that, in practice, boundary commissioners could well serve on the committees and the committees would apply the same criteria as the Boundary Commission. In that respect, our anxiety has been overcome to a large extent.

Our anxiety remains about the lack of a public contribution to the procedure—the refusal to have public inquiries into the recommendations of these boundary committees. I require the Minister who will reply to spell out more carefully and to persuade us on the Ulster Unionist Benches that there is not enough time between now and the European Parliament election in June 1994 to

*[Mr. Taylor]*

have public inquiries before reaching a decision on the final boundaries of these European constituencies. We need satisfaction on that.

We in the Ulster Unionist party recognise that time is running out. Luckily, the new boundaries for European constituencies in the United Kingdom do not apply to us in Northern Ireland. Therefore, we can prepare for the forthcoming European elections. We have advertised already for our candidates and within a few weeks we shall close the list. I am arranging meetings this autumn in my constituency for the European elections. I assume that other parties in the House also want to get on with the election machinery. They cannot do so until we know what the constituency boundaries are in England and Wales. Therefore, I recognise the Government's case that a sense of urgency is required in deciding these new boundaries.

We certainly subscribe to a uniform electoral system for the European Parliament throughout Europe and certainly here in the United Kingdom. We are moving towards that in stages. The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) referred to the De Gucht report. It implies a gradual movement towards a common electoral system in Europe, yet we do not have one in the United Kingdom. Paragraph 3 of article 138 of the Maastricht agreement states:

"The European Parliament shall draw up proposals for elections by direct universal suffrage in accordance with a uniform procedure in all Member States."

That is what we in the Ulster Unionist party should like to see. How can we debate having a common system with the European Parliament when we do not even have one here in the United Kingdom? We have a gerrymandered system. In one part of the United Kingdom, 500,000 people are required to elect one MEP and in another part, Northern Ireland, only 300,000 people are required to elect an MEP. We have had an explanation. The cat was let out of the bag by the hon. Member for Hendon, South when he said that it was rigged in Northern Ireland for sectarian reasons to ensure that a Catholic was elected. That is an insult to the population of Northern Ireland, but that was the sectarian thinking behind the Conservative party when it decided to give Northern Ireland more seats than it deserved on a numerical basis.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The right hon. Gentleman's memory must have slipped, because it was the Labour Government and Lord Callaghan who brought in the legislation making arrangements for the European elections in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Taylor:** It was certainly a Labour Government who had the full support of the Conservative party, and the Conservative party supports it tonight. I shall give way to the Minister if he wishes to dissociate himself from that. The Minister remains seated and refuses to comment, confirming my point that the Conservative party supports the idea of the sectarian allocation of seats in Northern Ireland rather than a fair allocation throughout the United Kingdom.

That unfair allocation of seats affects the whole of the European Parliament. That point was made by the leader of the Scottish National party. Scotland is under-represented in the European Parliament, though not on the basis of its representation from the United Kingdom, and I do not agree with that. Scotland has fair representation when compared with England and Wales. The Government's new proposals are fair on the basis of numbers for Scotland, Wales and England. But Scotland is unfairly treated when compared with other sovereign nations. It is unfair that Scotland should have only eight seats for 5 million people while Denmark has 16 seats for 5 million people. That is not equity, fair representation or fair play.

When we discuss a uniform electoral system for European elections within the United Kingdom and the European Community, we must ensure that if there is to be an increase in respect for the European Parliament—there is not much respect for it at present—it must be seen to be really democratic. Representation must be fair throughout the European Community. Under the new proposals recommended by the Minister tonight, only 60,000 voters will be required in Luxembourg to elect one MEP, while 800,000 voters in Germany will be required to elect only one MEP. That is neither a democratic forum nor a fair electoral system and it creates a Parliament that is not representative of the people of Europe.

We are creating a Parliament with more powers over this nation and other Parliaments of Europe, but that Parliament is undemocratic.

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): Before my right hon. Friend develops that point, may I ask him whether he accepts that to move to a concept of a list system with proportionate numbers required to elect a person to represent constituencies in this nation would be wrong and undemocratic if that list were so limited that smaller, regional parties could not be elected?

**Mr. Taylor:** Yes, we can have list systems on a national or regional basis. Both types of system apply at present in the European parliamentary elections, depending on the country. For example, Belgium has two regional list systems whereas Denmark has just one national list system, so the systems vary. The United Kingdom would have to ensure that its distinctive regions—Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland especially—had the right to have their own representatives elected.

However, if the United Kingdom has a national list system we shall eventually have Ulster Unionist candidates standing in Glasgow, Birmingham, Liverpool and London because there are at least a million Ulstermen living in Britain. The same could be said for Scottish nationalists. The choice is between regional lists or so-called provincial parties entering the national political scene.

Looking ahead, to give the European Parliament greater respect among the peoples of Europe, the electoral system must be uniform, which means one man, one vote and that one vote must have equal value throughout Europe. It is not right that Luxembourg should have six seats and that 60,000 people should be able to elect one MEP there, whereas it now takes nearly a million people in Germany to elect one MEP.

May I add my support to those who have mentioned the position of Gibraltar? It is outrageous that, although Gibraltar joined the European Community in 1973—long before Spain joined—it still has no voice or representation other than an honorary voluntary group of Members of the European Parliament who look after its interests in that Assembly. In recent years, since Spain joined, there has been a form of discrimination against Gibraltar and it has not been given its full rights. The Government have a

responsibility for Gibraltar and should try to ensure that it has a means of expressing its interest within the elected bodies of Europe and is treated as a full member of the European Community.

The Ulster Unionist party is concerned about the Bill. We hope that the Minister of State, in his reply, will assure us that there is an urgency to get the legislation in operation and the boundaries confirmed quickly. We hope that he will assure us that this is simply a one-off and that never again will a committee decide the boundaries. I hope that we shall return to decisions being made by boundary commissioners with public inquiries.

The point made earlier about future member countries joining the European Parliament was simply kite flying. It should be recalled that, when new members such as Spain, Portugal and Greece joined, there was no question of changing the number of seats allocated to the United Kingdom. Those remained at 81. The new countries were simply given their own seats but the existing countries' seats did not change.

8.27 pm

**Mr. Quentin Davies** (Stamford and Spalding): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor). I agreed with much of what he said, but I was surprised—as were other hon. Members on both sides of the House, to judge from their facial reactions—by his statement that the European Parliament has no legislative powers. My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Currie) rightly picked him up on that and said that it has the power of veto. It now has distinct legislative powers in formulating European directives, which is another word for European laws. Article 189, paragraphs a, b and c, of the Maastricht treaty set out in considerable detail how those procedures will work. The Parliament has always had legislative powers, but it now has very real powers and I hope that it will use them.

Most of the rest of what the right hon. Gentleman said seemed to be sensible. He expressed some concern, which I share, at any change being introduced into the system for deciding on constituency boundaries in this country. We are all proud of being the oldest successful democracy in the world and of the integrity of our system. We are proud that such ills as gerrymandering do not apply in our country.

There is a great deal of public confidence in the impartiality and effectiveness of the Boundary Commission, although some of us may be inconvenienced by its proposals and decisions. I am inconvenienced by its latest proposal, which aims to cut my constituency in half. I do not like that at all. It is rather like an umpire's ruling: one has to decide whether the ruling suits one's temporary convenience or whether it is based on a fair interpretation of the rules.

As the right hon. Member for Strangford said, the Government's proposals follow as closely as possible, in the limited time scale, the system that the Boundary Commission generally uses to determine United Kingdom constituency boundaries. That is reassuring. We have also been assured that this is simply a one-off—the only occasion on which this new system will be implemented—and that thereafter the Boundary Commission will resume its normal role.

There has been much inevitable experiment in the creation of the Community. There have been many constitutional changes, the most recent of which was the Maastricht treaty, and in 12 years the European Parliament has moved from indirect to direct elections. It is not at all scandalous or shocking that there is to be one last anomaly before we move to the new system.

I was pleased that the right hon. Gentleman acknowledged on behalf of his party that the Government proposals are fair for the United Kingdom. There was a desperate try-on by hon. Members who suggested that we should use this opportunity further to enhance the existing bias in favour of Scotland by giving it an extra seat, although Scotland is clearly over-represented in the European Parliament and, indeed, in this Parliament. I am glad that the Government resisted the temptation to make such an irrational move.

I was equally in agreement with the right hon. Gentleman in his strictures that the Community is still insufficiently democratic. One of the impressive features of the Community is that it brings together 12 countries which have in common a genuine and strong commitment to democracy. In many ways, that commitment is more vocal and explicit in those member states which have not been able to take that for granted for as long as we have. Democracy is the fundamental principle of political life that we wish to retain.

There is some irony in the fact that in many ways the Community is a travesty of democracy. An enormous amount of power resides in the Commission, which is not elected and is not in any direct sense democratically accountable. However, I am pleased that in future it will be more subject to the oversight of the European Parliament than it has been in the past. A great deal of power also resides in the Council of Ministers, which is rather like an 18th century cabal, meeting behind closed doors and taking decisions on behalf of people without exposing the arguments which lead to its conclusions.

There has been a significant improvement in the Council's workings, thanks to the British initiative at the Edinburgh summit. It has been decided that in some of its legislative law-making sessions the Council of Ministers will have open public sessions. That is a great improvement.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. Will the hon. Gentleman explain how his remarks are relevant to the Second Reading of the Bill that is before us?

**Mr. Davies:** When discussing how the European Parliament is to be elected, it is important to be clear about what that Parliament is. It has been suggested that that Parliament is not a law-making body.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. That is not in the Bill.

**Mr. Davies:** I think you will agree, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the system for election to the European Parliament must be viable and democratic. In that context, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who in his excellent speech set out a strong case for adopting national lists—an ill which besets some of our Community partners. I hope that we shall not introduce that. My hon. Friend forcefully set out some of the well-known objections to a system of national lists or proportional representation. Such systems greatly increase the power of the party machines. That is undersirable in itself. It also reduces the accountability of elected representatives, who have force only if they are

*[Mr. Davies]*

responsible to a specified body of electors. That is the direct relationship which exists in this country, and long may we preserve it in national and European elections.

A PR and national lists system is profoundly subversive to the sense of responsibility required of those who hold elected office in a democracy. It is no accident that the French national delegation to the European Parliament has an appalling attendance record. I do not wish that to be interpreted as chauvinistic because I am a great admirer and lover of France, but Committees of the European Parliament often find themselves in court because representatives from France and other countries have not turned up.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has got the message. His remarks are not relevant to what we are discussing.

**Mr. Davies:** I acknowledge that, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I am grateful to you for not stopping me earlier. I thought that the points were worth making.

Perhaps I may be permitted to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government on seizing the chance at the Edinburgh summit to negotiate an increase in the number of British seats. It would have been possible for the new German Länder to be accommodated without Britain enjoying an increase in representation. The Government have been extremely effective negotiators throughout the Maastricht process and in other contexts and, as good negotiators sometimes must, they have seized the chance and brought to the House an extremely good deal. I shall be proud to support it in the Lobby.

8.37 pm

**Mr. Geoffrey Hoon** (Ashfield): The Bill is a direct consequence of the reunification of Germany. It became inevitable when East Germany became part of a united Germany that it would expect some representation in the European Parliament. Despite the inevitability of that, it is clear that the increase in German representation has caused difficulty at intergovernmental conferences, and at subsequent meetings of the Council of Ministers. That is because, historically, the larger European Community countries have enjoyed, whatever the size of their population in precise mathematical terms, essentially the same representation in the European Parliament.

For the moment, Germany, Italy, France and the United Kingdom each has 81 members in the European Parliament. Although there is some relationship between a country's population and its representation in that Parliament, it is not based on a precise mathematical formula. Larger countries have more members than smaller countries.

Luxembourg is hugely over-represented. It has been allowed six seats, to provide some political diversity in its representation. Those six MEPs represent a population that is rather smaller than that in a single United Kingdom European constituency. In that context, the argument about Scotland is relevant, because the representation for Luxembourg represents that country's nationhood. Scotland should also be afforded representation according to its sense of nationhood.

Scottish Members of the European Parliament work conscientiously on behalf of their constituents. I know how much they want the boundaries to be redrawn so that there can be an extra seat for Scotland. It is right that those who have urged that should be respected.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Once again, there is no representative here from the Scottish Office. There was an obligation on the Scottish Office to ensure that a representative attended this debate, because it gave clear promises that that would happen. Had it not made that promise, matters might have been different. It made that promise at a time when it wanted to get something else through the House.

**Mr. Hoon:** I am sure that my hon. Friend's point will have been noted by those on the Treasury Bench.

The inevitability of the decision in principle to give Germany additional representation was clear as long ago as 1990, and the decision in practice to implement that was taken as long ago as December, at the Edinburgh summit. Hon. Members on both sides of the House had the clear expectation that, once the decision had been taken, the appropriate Bill would be introduced quickly. Indeed, I remember the Prime Minister answering a question about that at the time. We all expected the debate that we are having today, some six months later, to take place much earlier, possibly before the Christmas recess.

Despite everyone knowing that the changes had to be made before June next year—a limited time scale that has already been referred to—it is now July, less than a year before the next European elections. The Government have sat on their hands for the past six months, and have not taken the position seriously. The Government's rather ineffectual reason for delay has been the pressure of legislation since last December. They will have to come up with a better explanation than that, especially in view of their assertion that, at this late stage, there is no time to put the matter before the boundary commissioners. If that is true, why did they not introduce the Bill much earlier?

Examination of the Bill leaves us sceptical about the Government's real intentions and motivations. The European parliamentary constituency committees will have members appointed by the Home Secretary, on terms and conditions established by the Home Secretary and, where relevant, even paid by the Home Secretary. Any doubt about the potential for Government interference in the work of the committees will be banished after reading the schedule to the Bill.

Earlier in the debate, there was some discussion about the procedure to be adopted by the committees, and we are concerned about what the Government have in mind. The first stage of the procedure set out in the schedule is that the committee should submit a report on the draft boundaries that it recommends. Paragraph 6 requires that the report should contain the name of the suggested constituency. Thereafter, the report must be laid before Parliament, with a draft Order in Council.

At that stage, the Home Secretary has the opportunity to make modifications. We are told that such a provision is included in all Boundary Commission legislation. However, it is unsatisfactory to have it included in this Bill, because, if the Government have their way, there will be no public hearings on the recommendations. Simply because that provision has been included in previous legislation does not mean that on this unique occasion—or so we are told—there is any necessity to afford the Home Secretary the opportunity to make changes without reference back to the committees.

Not only will the Home Secretary have the opportunity to make modifications after receipt of the report, but paragraph 8(1) provides that he can then make further consequential changes—again without reference back to the committees. Thereafter, the report will come before the House, which will also have the opportunity to make changes.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will explain why paragraph 8(6), which prohibits any judicial review of the process, is necessary. The Home Secretary's fingerprints are all over the procedure. Not only are the Government anxious to ensure that they get their own way about how the committees are constituted and how they work, but they are excluding the possibility of a legal challenge to any of the recommendations once they are published. An extraordinary range of powers will be available to the Home Secretary.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** In case I do not reach the hon. Gentleman's speech when I reply, as he is rather far down the list of speakers, I want to tell him that the real reason for not having the judicial review process is that the House will have the last word on whether or not to accept the recommendations.

However, it could be possible—some have intimated as much tonight—that those who do not want the extra seats to be taken up, by this or any other country, will embark on a series of judicial reviews that could take us past the date by which the legislation must be in place if we and other countries are to implement the agreement. It is a protective measure.

**Mr. Hoon:** I am grateful to the Minister for his explanation, but perhaps the Government should have thought of that a little earlier in the process. There have been judicial reviews of previous Boundary Commission decisions. That is the sort of protection that is afforded to citizens in a democratic society, and it is what we expect when we have an independent judicial system.

The Government's explanation would not be wholly convincing to someone looking at the Bill's proposals for the redrawing of boundaries in a democratic society. Without knowing the background and the context, and without the benefit of the Minister's explanation, that person would have some doubts about the integrity of our system for drawing up boundaries.

The purpose of having an independent Boundary Commission—a system that is admired throughout the world—is to ensure that we produce not only boundaries that are fair but, crucially, boundaries that are seen to be fair. I regret that I am not satisfied that the committees will achieve that.

This is the first use of ad hoc arrangements for some considerable time. Boundaries used to be reviewed on an ad hoc basis, but since the second world war we have avoided that. It is unfortunate that the Government are now reverting to the sort of practice that they and every other post-war Governments have abandoned.

A further point is relevant to the shortage of time that has been caused by the Government's delay in introducing the Bill. The consequence of the current boundary review for the United Kingdom Parliament is that there will have to be a further European constituency review. Not only will those boundaries have to be redrawn in time for the 1994 election, but when the boundary review for this House is completed, the Government will then be statutorily required to review the European boundaries again. There will be two sets of changes, one in 1994 and one in the period leading up to 1999. That is unfortunate in terms of the integrity and cohesiveness of the European constituencies.

The real reason for the delay in introducing the Bill is clear from today's Order Paper. There are 25 signatures on the reasoned amendment tabled by the Government's internal opponents, the Maastricht rebels. The Government were not prepared to introduce this Bill during the Committee stage of the Maastricht Bill, because they thought that they would lose. It is interesting that the Government are still concerned that they will lose, and are prepared to make certain concessions because they know that they cannot command their own majority in the House.

It seems to me that the Government have avoided bringing forward legislation on a matter of constitutional significance because they have no confidence in their ability to command a majority of their own party. That is a very poor reason for delaying the progress of the legislation and to prevent the public from being engaged in consultation on the nature of the boundary review. It is a poor reason to put before the country.

8.50 pm

**Mr. Michael Bates** (Langbaurgh): I am grateful for opportunity to speak in tonight's important debate. Before addressing myself to clause 2, which particularly interests me, I shall make a few general comments within the close boundaries that you have set out, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The top point that we need to recognise is that the Bill represents an opportunity for the United Kingdom to have six additional seats and voices in the European Parliament. Most people would accept that as good and worthy. I have not heard it stated at any point in the debate that there is no need to review the structures and allocations of the European parliamentary constituencies.

In the light of these new seats, it is clear that the unification of Germany resulted in a disproportionate number of electors per constituency in Germany compared with other areas of the European Community. We were all in favour of embracing East Germany. The policy goes back two decades or more—ever since Germany was divided—that, when East Germany, with its huge economic and social problems, joined the European Community, we should ensure that those people had representation. That was borne out in the 18 additional seats to be given to Germany.

In the same way, I fervently believe that, when we enlarge the European Community still further, those new member states should have voices in the European Parliament.

It is critical that we have the extra seats, because one of the key elements of the Maastricht treaty is to increase the role and responsibility of the European Parliament. Clearly, if it is to have more power and responsibility, I for one would welcome additional representatives from the United Kingdom to ensure that our case is put strongly.

Anyone who would seek to delay the progress of the Bill still further and ensure that we do not have fair representation in the European Parliament should seriously question his commitment to the democratic process within the European Community.

*[Mr. Michael Bates]*

Another important consideration—this is where I focus on clause 2—is the tight timetable to which we are working. The committees will be established after Second Reading, and will present their initial recommendations in late July and early August, and then there will be a period of consultation during the autumn.

The period of consultation is critical. Although there will not be the traditional public meetings, due to the short time scale, there will be an opportunity for people to make representations. Many hon. Members and political parties and organisations with an interest in this matter will take the opportunity to submit written representations to be considered during the consultation period in the autumn.

The measures have to be in place by next June for the elections to take place. Reference has been made to the progress which has already been made in preparing for the elections. The tight timetable requires a curtailing and condensing of the usual consultation period, while paying due regard to the views and aspirations of the people they are seeking to represent.

**Mr. Andrew Rowe** (Mid-Kent): My hon. Friend is making an important point. Is it not a clear and reassuring example of how the creation of the European Community has made international co-operation and partnership much easier that the Germans have accepted without much demur a much larger electorate for each of their seats than any of the other countries in the Community? At a time when many people are concentrating on the differences of opinion between countries in the European Community, that is a reassuring example of the way in which co-operation is growing among the partners.

**Mr. Bates:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. He is absolutely right. Many people will recognise that one of the great triumphs of the period of the British presidency of the European Community was achieving just that—a period of consultation in which difficult legislation containing difficult proposals which, five, 10 or 15 years ago, would have been the source of great consternation and division within the Community, was decided sensibly and fairly.

It is true that Germany has a population per MEP of nearly 1 million. It is also true that Luxembourg has about 66,000 people per constituency. Those points are clear and accepted. One of the advantages of the additional six seats will be to reduce the average size of the European parliamentary constituency.

**Mrs. Currie:** My hon. Friend is describing accurately some of the imbalances which are causing injustice in the size of the parliamentary constituencies throughout Europe. Will he comment on the imbalance between the electorate of 594,000 in the North Chiltern seat which at the moment is called South Bedfordshire, which I have been asked to fight next June and look forward to doing so very much indeed, with the seat in the highlands and islands, which was referred to earlier in the debate and which has an electorate of 327,000? Does he agree that we have a great deal to consider in Britain before we look at other countries? Does he share my concern that, were the Opposition amendment to be accepted, that imbalance would get worse?

**Mr. Bates:** My hon. Friend is quite right to make that point. I place alongside my hon. Friend's example, as evidence before the House, my own constituency in the European context of Cleveland and Yorkshire, North which has an electorate of 580,297. That begs a comparison with other constituencies. Today we have focused on the representation of Scotland, of Wales and of England. There is a fair point to make about representation.

The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) spoke about the geographical size of some of the Scottish constituencies. However, there are also some fair-sized English constituencies. One example is Cleveland and Yorkshire, North. From Sedburgh in one corner to Loftus in the other corner is a distance of 85 miles. There are some fairly sizeable constituencies which require representation just as much as others do.

I point out that many of us, especially in the north-east of England, which is an area in great need of development although it has benefited from much already, are aware that we do not have a seat at the Cabinet table. Scotland has a seat there. Unlike Wales, we do not have a seat at the Cabinet table. Scotland and Wales have more representation than the regions.

People say that Scotland and Wales are identifiable communities with a strong history. However, the kingdom of Northumbria and the people of Yorkshire point to their history, which we have been considering in the context of the Local Government Commission. The history of Yorkshire goes back at least a millennium. The history of Northumbria goes back even further, to Bede and Cuthbert, the people who brought Christianity, culture and all things that are good to this country. They deserve to be recognised, too.

I believe that, within the time scale available, this Bill is by far the best way forward. I urge all hon. Members who believe that this country should have a strong voice in the European Parliament, which in our heart of hearts we all believe, to realise that to delay matters further would be simply to play into the hands of and give a stronger voice to our European competitors within the Community.

9 pm

**Mr. George Stevenson** (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Despite the Home Secretary's complacent attitude when opening the debate, the Bill is dangerous to the democratic process. Given the situation, no one argues that there is no need to speed up the process, but what cannot be justified, although Conservative Members have tried to justify it today, is an abandonment of the democratic process. That is the decision that the House will be asked to take on Second Reading.

The Bill will bring the whole system into disrepute. We are told that the additional seats must be subject to a committee system and not to the Boundary Commission system. We are also told that the committees may include members of the Boundary Commission. If the Boundary Commission members are so busy, how will they find time to be members of the committees as well? The Minister may deal with that point later.

We are told that we need the committees because of a problem of time scale. That is an important problem, but it is not insuperable. My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) effectively and comprehensively destroyed that argument. The committees will be

Government-appointed. They will be responsible directly to the Home Secretary. If we believe that there will not be many objections, or that the objections will not be complicated and forcefully pursued, we delude ourselves. In the face of those possibilities, we shall rely, according to the Bill, on the Home Secretary's decision. There will be no public inquiry and no public scrutiny.

Various hon. Members have told us, "Don't worry. It is one off. The Government do not intend to use this procedure again." Hon. Members who are satisfied with those assurances may be willing to support the Government in the Lobbies this evening. Given what has happened, and the problems with which we are dealing, I am rather sceptical. We may rue the day that we gave the Government such a comprehensive power.

Why have the Government, for some reason or another, chosen to delay the introduction of the Bill? The European Parliament knew about the six additional seats as long as June 1992, because the change was outlined in reports given to it. Those at the Edinburgh summit knew about the additional seats in December 1992, yet the Bill was not produced until 11 June this year.

I do not accept the argument that that is a reasonable delay. The real reason may be that the Government were preoccupied with the parliamentary Boundary Commission. They may have insisted that it got to work on the parliamentary boundaries because they saw some advantage in revised parliamentary boundaries. Whatever the reasons for that unjustified delay, they have seriously reduced the time scale available to us in which to consider these important matters.

Furthermore, the Prime Minister's statement last December, that the Boundary Commission provisions would apply to these additional seats, has been cynically rejected and is not worth the paper upon which it is written.

The distribution of these seats is critical. When the Bill was published, the Secretary of State was quoted as saying that he had decided that the extra seats would be distributed on the basis of arithmetical fairness. That seems to be neat and tidy.

**Mrs. Currie:** The hon. Gentleman has strong feelings about the delay and wonders whether we should proceed with a system that does not include public inquiries. As he is still a serving Member of the European Parliament, would he in any way be happy about a delay tht prevented us from taking on board these additional six seats? What would happen in the European Parliament to the influence of this country, whichever party held those seats, if we were not to proceed with the Bill?

**Mr. Stevenson:** The hon. Lady has not been here for the whole of the debate. I said at the beginning of my speech that the time scale is important, but my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield comprehensively destroyed that argument and put forward a credible alternative that would avoid the danger to which the hon. Lady referred.

The Secretary of State said that he had decided that the additional seats would be distributed on the basis of arithmetical fairness. That seems to be neat and tidy, but it is a seriously flawed and misconceived basis. The Bill provides for the setting up of the committees, but it also provides that they will be bound by the criteria in the 1978 Act. That Act was based on the Select Committee's second report on direct elections, which was considered by the House in 1976 and adopted in 1978.

The Select Committee report says that the allocation of seats should be proportionate to population, and that allowance should be made in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for rounding up the numbers and also for the size of areas in those parts of the United Kingdom, and the scattered population. The Government seem to have abandoned that principle for Scotland. If the principle was fair then, it is fair now.

The additional seat for Scotland for which we on this side of the House argue would reduce the number of electors in each constituency to about 55,000. That is neither unmanageable nor unacceptable. An additional seat for Scotland would not compromise the principle of fair allocation.

Additional seats for certain European Community countries, including the United Kingdom, are not the result of a comprehensive, detailed, European-wide study of arithmetical fairness throughout the Community. Even those who sit on the Treasury Bench have not argued that that is the case, and it certainly is not the case. It is the result of a political imperative, following the reunification of Germany. It has resulted in 18 additional seats for the Federal Republic of Germany, seats which are well deserved. We could not allow 17 million people to be disfranchised. Germany was right to want those additional seats, and that is what it achieved. However, the representation will be on the basis that all of the areas of Germany are represented effectively.

Although I do not agree with some of the comments about proportional representation that were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), he was right in this regard: if the Secretary of State had based the Bill on an arithmetical exercise, we would have no additional seats whatever. That cannot be the right basis on which to approach this critical issue, and that is another reason why I believe that the Secretary of State's proposals are flawed.

As well as the political imperative, the real objective of the additional seats may be to ensure, understandably, that there is a better balance of voting in the European Parliament, and that we do not allow one member state with additional seats to have an unfair advantage in the European Parliament. At some stage, someone will talk about qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers, although we are not deliberating on that this evening.

The exercise therefore is not about resolving arithmetical anomalies or the size of the constituencies and it never was. Therefore, to use this arithmetical base to exclude Scotland is irrelevant and completely unjustified. If that were the object of the exercise, how could Luxembourg and Denmark be ignored?

I argue strongly that the basis of the Secretary of State's argument is fundamentally flawed. That fundamental mistake permeates the Bill. If the House grants the Bill a Second Reading this evening, it will endorse that fundamental mistake, which the Secretary of State is asking us to endorse.

I believe that the House is faced with simple but very important and critical decisions. We can go along with these unnecessary, unjustified committees, which are answerable to the Secretary of State, abandon vital safeguards to the public interest, simply ignore the tried

*[Mr. Stevenson]*

and tested Boundary Commission system and ensure that there is no power to have consultation and public inquiries. However, Opposition Members have shown that that is not the way forward if there is the political will. That political will is missing on the Government Front Bench.

I hope that enough has been said this evening to ensure that the Government will rethink, even at this late stage. I hope, therefore, that the House will support the reasoned amendment in the name of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

**Mr. Dalyell:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I make not the slightest complaint about the Chair's choice of Opposition Members to speak in the debate. However, may I place on the record the fact that, although the Opposition amendment refers to Scotland, no Scottish Labour Member was called during the debate?

May I also ask formally, through the Chair, whether the Chair will consider the contribution of the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who spoke for 38 minutes, as that was the root cause of the trouble? Some of us think that his contribution had nothing to do with the Bill, but had to do with other things. Could that be looked at in the cold light of day?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** As the hon. Gentleman has been a Member of this House for many years, he will know that there is always a problem in allowing a sufficient number of hon. Members to participate in a debate and in trying to balance all considerations. As to the length of speeches, the hon. Gentleman will also know that there is very little that the Chair can do except in strictly defined circumstances, which do not apply tonight. No doubt the points that he made will be taken on board.

9.15 pm

**Mr. Graham Allen** (Nottingham, North): This has been a unique experience for me. We have today had a genuine debate with genuine exchanges across the Floor of the House, rather than the normal setpiece speeches followed by a routine vote at the end. There has been give and take and cross-party agreement and disagreement.

I hope that the Home Secretary will ponder carefully on what we have achieved and will think of the possibility of the Government being defeated on our amendment, on the Bill on Second Reading, in Committee and even on Third Reading. I hope that the rational and thoughtful discussion that has occurred in the Chamber today—complemented, I understand, by discussions behind the Chair in an equally rational and thoughtful way—will produce a measure on which hon. Members of all parties can agree when, or if, we reach the Committee stage.

We take too many aspects of our democracy for granted, such as the right to contest elections with honest boundaries and even the right of all people to vote. Such rights are recent achievements historically. They have been hard won, wrung from reluctant governments by outside pressures.

A democracy must constantly be vigilant to protect and extend those freedoms. That is particularly true given the all-powerful Executive that we have in Britain's centralised state. The threat is even more serious with an Executive grown fat and arrogant after 14 years of the virtually unchallenged accumulation of power. They think that they can do anything and, in a system without serious democratic checks, they can. The only restraint is self-discipline, and that evaporated a long time ago. That is the background against which the Conservatives have turned the European boundary review into a shambles and an affront to our democratic traditions.

We should today be celebrating the entry into the democratic family of another member. I refer to the present-day unity of Germany, East Germany having joined the community of nations in western Europe. That should be a cause for champagne corks to pop. But what we have in the Bill is a sordid disgrace when compared with the efforts of those people and the liberation and democratisation bid that their society made a couple of years ago.

The Government are seeking to bypass the accepted democratic process of referring matters such as European boundary reviews to the independent and universally respected Boundary Commission. They seek to bypass that process rather than follow a long-standing tradition in this country. If Parliament allows that to happen, we shall be palming off responsibility to the new European parliamentary constituencies committees. It will represent the first use of ad hoc committees for drawing electoral boundaries since legislation was passed in 1944 setting up the Boundary Commissions. The Government are taking democracy back 50 years. It seems that even the institutions of democracy can be tampered with almost to the point of privatisation.

From Labour's point of view, when the time comes it will not be enough merely for us to right that wrong. We shall need to put such central elements of our democracy beyond the whim of this or that Government, whatever their political colour. The Boundary Commissions must be separate and immune from Government interference.

The Home Secretary, perhaps due to inexperience of his Department, may have been led astray a little. Certainly the first job that his Department has given him is to bin a commitment made by the Prime Minister, who said that six extra MEPs would mean fresh boundaries being set across England, Scotland and Wales and that that would be a matter for the Boundary Commissions and not for the Government. That one bites the dust and goes in the bin straightway, in the first week of the new Home Secretary's regime.

The Prime Minister knew what he was doing—at least, in this case. At that time the United Kingdom held the presidency of the Council of Ministers, and the Prime Minister obviously knew that extra seats would be allocated to the United Kingdom. He did not stumble into this; he made a clear commitment that the job would be done by the Boundary Commissions. Then along came the Home Secretary, who tore the commitment up within his first couple of weeks in office.

**Mrs. Currie:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Allen:** I am pleased to give way to the hon. Lady, as she was very kind a few moments ago in not pressing her right to speak.

**Mrs. Currie:** While I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, I should point out that no Member has a right to speak; it is always a privilege.

The hon. Gentleman may have been mistaken when he said a moment ago that this is the first time since 1944 we

shall not have had a proper Boundary Commission procedure. The Library's research paper points out that schedule 2 to the European Parliamentary Elections Act 1978, under which the 1979 constituencies were drawn up,

"laid down a very much curtailed version of the normal Boundary Commission procedures to enable the work to be carried out in time for the first elections."

The paper goes on:

"These were accepted without modification by the then Government, which laid the necessary European Assembly constituency orders approved in December 1978."

If the Library is right, this has happened before. Indeed, it happened under the last Labour Government.

**Mr. Allen:** I shall deal later with the hon. Lady's point, which is similar to that that she made in an intervention earlier. When I get to that stage, she may regret having reminded me of it.

The Home Office press release accompanying the Bill stated that the committees would be impartial and independent. When one looks at the Government's record in similar circumstances, it is hard to be reassured. One thinks of local health authorities and of the new police authorities that were announced yesterday—no doubt, to be presented as paragons of impartiality and independence, but more likely to be ad hoc committees composed of the usual crop of well-trusted Tory party appointees and apparatchiks, and staffed by the politically vetted. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members groan, but I am afraid that the reality of local health authorities is very much along those lines. For the reality of the police authorities and these committees we shall have to wait. The Government have not yet told us who the members of the committees will be. They gave us four assurances today, which, I am glad to say, will be listed in *Hansard*. We shall read them with great interest. Even if some members of the committees are seconded from the Boundary Commission, they will be exposed to additional pressures—no doubt some of it political—which may compromise any recommendations they make. If Boundary Commission people are loaned, and if their functions are to be the same as commission functions, why was the job not given to the Boundary Commission in the first place?

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) mentioned previous occasions. Earlier interventions from Conservative Members drew attention to the 1979 undertaking that this would be a one-off arrangement, that never again would there be no Boundary Commission procedure. I suppose that what we have now might, technically, be referred to as a two-off. If we are to have another one-off, just 13 or 14 years after the last one, why does the Bill not make it clear that in future the Boundary Commission itself will be responsible for any such revisions?

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Clause 2 does just that.

**Mr. Allen:** Is clause 2 a one-off? Perhaps the Minister of State can reassure us.

In our view, the Boundary Commission should do this job, this time and in the future. It is an impartial and well respected body, and it should not be subverted, even for the rather thin reasons being put forward by the Secretary of State.

Today, in our view, the Home Secretary did not at all make the case that the European parliamentary constituency committees will be able to do the job more quickly than the Boundary Commission could.

There is a timetable available and it could be fitted in with the Boundary Commission's own potential for fulfilling the drawing of boundaries. Again, it looks very much as if the Home Secretary, landing fairly new to the Department, has been given some advice—no doubt well meaning advice—that the Boundary Commission could not fulfil the task. I believe that it was bad advice and that the Home Secretary accepted advice which his predecessor may have challenged or even overturned, telling the Department to get on with the job. That may not be the new Secretary of State's way of managing his Department.

The European constituency committees lack not only the widely acknowledged independence, integrity and trust enjoyed by the Boundary Commission but its consultative responsibilities. Vital to any boundary-drawing process is the consultation with those who are most affected by boundary changes—the relevant local electorate. The parliamentary Boundary Commissions publish provisional recommendations as part of their review, which means that procedures then exist for local inquiries in the event of objections from an interested local authority or a body of 500 or more electors before the finalisation of the parliamentary boundaries.

No such statutory responsibilities exist for the European constituency committees. It is essential that the inquiries are restored to the proposals. As has been said by members of all parties, 70 per cent. of the provisional recommendations are changed during the process, but the Government are seeking to remove that possibility and the potential number of changes.

Whatever assurances the Government give about providing adequate opportunity for consultation, we shall not be satisfied until they appear in the Bill. If the Home Secretary believes that consultation is a necessary and vital part of the boundary-drawing process, as the Labour party believes, he should include it in the Bill. Britain's democratic heritage should not rely on the devalued and debased currency of Tory ministerial assurances.

It is vital that the time wasted by the Government is not made up at the expense of adequate and proper public consultation on proposed boundary changes. The public deserve the right to be able to respond in exactly the same way as they do when our Westminster boundaries are changed. We would not accept the new procedure for ourselves, and it is not fair, in the traditions of the House, for us to impose it on other elected representatives.

The Home Secretary complains that there is little or no time to institute such detailed inquiries because the European elections are less than a year away, on 9 June 1994. It is hard to muster any sympathy for him as it is his Government's fault that they cannot manage their business properly. However, the temptation once again to let the Government swing because of their inadequacies and incompetence must be tempered by the fact that it is our constituents—the constituents of Members of the European Parliament—who will suffer unless we get the Bill right.

I am going to suggest to the Minister of State a way forward. I ask him, now or when he replies to the debate, to undertake to appoint someone who will meet a representative appointed by the Labour party—no doubt other parties too will wish to be involved—so that they can

*[Mr. Allen]*

discuss together how the timetable can be amended to accommodate the usual process of public inquiry on boundary redistribution. That is the only satisfactory way to meet the objectives of all parties and ensure that a vital element is not excluded from the procedure. If the Minister wishes to respond to that offer, I shall be pleased to give way to him.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I shall respond now so that the point is not lost in some of the other remarks that I will make. The Government will be pleased to take up the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that a representative of the Opposition and an official of the Home Secretary should meet to consider the timetable proposed—about which I shall say something later—and examine it very carefully. I think that we will find that the timetable is as pressing as we have said, and as the Home Secretary explained.

We would like as much consultation as possible, but I cannot give the hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends any indication that the Government believe that it is possible to speed up the timetable. If the respresentatives of the Opposition can persuade us otherwise, we will be interested in being so persuaded. I hope that the representatives of the Opposition will be equally open-minded.

**Mr. Allen:** If the Minister is putting forward the proposal with an open mind, it is something that we shall be very pleased to take up. I hope that a representative, or several representatives, of the Opposition can make such representations. We believe that there is leeway in the timetable set by the Government, and time for us to insert in it, to the satisfaction of all parties, a period during which a genuine public inquiry procedure could be conducted without compromising that timetable.

**Mrs. Ewing:** For clarification, how many representatives of the Opposition parties will be involved? Different views must be respected, and I would be grateful if he could say whether one representative from the minority parties will be selected, or whether all the minority parties will be represented.

**Mr. Allen:** I hope that the hon. Lady will take it from me on trust that we are attempting to make the Bill better. We are trying to convince the Government that there is provision in their timetable for a full public inquiry. We will consult as widely as possible and, through the usual channels, arrive at a means of ensuring proper contact with the Government. I cannot make up policy on the hoof, but I would be pleased if the hon. Lady and her colleagues considered the matter through the usual channels.

If the Secretary of State and his Ministers are open minded, the Bill can be improved. We can ensure that a public consultation period and a public inquiry procedure is restored to the Bill. If we achieve nothing else, we will have done a serious night's work if the Government are prepared to respond to that proposal—before the Committee stage, I hope.

**Mr. Cash:** The hon. Gentleman knows what is contained in the Bill. This is a Second Reading debate, so will he come clean and tell us how the Opposition will vote tonight? In that way, all the rhetoric and fast bowling to which he is subjecting the Government will be seen in practice in the Lobby.

**Mr. Allen:** I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that I have just opened my innings. I am sure that he will be even more interested in what the Minister says. Having made the sort of speech that he did this evening, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be equally behind any effort to restore the public inquiry to the British democratic tradition, as it applies to the European parliamentary elections.

The Government have had eight long months since the Edinburgh conference to bring forward proposals. We have very little sympathy with the Home Secretary when he bleats about the pressure of time because the first Bill that he has brought forward since he took that office is shoddy and slap-dash. If the Government had introduced the Bill in January, as they should have done, it would have allowed a reasonable period for boundaries to be drawn. The Government appear to have adopted a Rolf Harris approach to drawing boundaries; they have done it in the shortest possible time, in the vague hope that if one stands well back the final product will at least be a little bit recognisable.

We all know why the Government have taken so long to bring forward the proposals. They were afraid of their party within the party—the party represented by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). I am sure that many of his colleagues enjoyed his long speech—it brought back memories of the Maastricht debate for many people.

The Europhobes have their chance to develop beyond esoteric proceduralism tonight and in Committee. They centre their Maastricht case on defending British democracy. Nothing requires a stouter defence than our right to vote on fair boundaries drawn up by an impartial Boundary Commission. In Committee, we will see whether their commitment is to defending our democracy or something else. They must define democracy more widely than simply as the right of a Conservative Government to tell a Conservative Parliament what to do.

We know the reputed views of the Secretary of State on matters European. It was sad to hear him say that he was prepared to veto extra seats for other European nations, especially the new Germany. Everyone in Europe would lose seats if the Secretary of State's suicidal plan went forward along those lines. I am sure that the House will join me in congratulating him on the way in which he managed to talk with apparent enthusiasm for European democracy while simultaneously grinding his teeth. The strength of his performance does not excuse the way in which he and his colleagues are willing to play internal party politics with our electoral process.

In conclusion, when power is prized over democracy, sidestepping the Boundary Commission slips seamlessly into raising funds from dubious sources to fight elections, repaying donors with titles and peerages and recurring allegations of vote stealing from the elderly, the infirm and others, in St. Ives last year and Brighton this year. The difference is that, whereas those sleazy activities took place privately or on a party political basis, Parliament is being asked to authorise and to collaborate with the Conservative abuse of democracy.

The record shows that, for the Conservatives, our democracy is simply a process to be manipulated, distorted and reshaped for the benefit of the Conservative party. The

Parliament that it controls is being drawn into the web. It will drag Parliament further into disrepute and hasten the day that fundamental reform is enacted to return both our Parliament and our democracy to a position worthy of public respect.

9.37 pm

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd):** The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) characteristically talked a great deal of extravagant nonsense about the Bill and a number of other matters. He does that accidentally because he does not understand the debate, as was clearly evinced when he accused my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary of being prepared to veto extra seats for the United Kingdom and others. My right hon. and learned Friend most certainly did not say that. If the hon. Gentleman inspects the record —if he is capable of reading—he will see that that is simply not the case.

The whole purpose of the Bill is to secure extra seats for the United Kingdom and others. From time to time, the hon. Gentleman deviated to make one or two sensible points, to one of which I gave him an answer. I shall come back to the other points later. Before I take up the points made by the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members, I shall set out once again why we have the Bill now and why it has taken the form that it does. Those two simple matters were at times heavily overlaid by the range of issues that were properly raised, and by the vigour with which they were sometimes addressed.

The Bill has been introduced, not as a result of Maastricht or of any changes in the power or scope of the European Parliament, but because Germany has reunited, as the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) and the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) reminded us. It was agreed at the Edinburgh summit under the United Kingdom presidency that Germany should have 18 more seats to acknowledge—sparingly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) intervened to say—the 17 million extra voters that it acquired with East Germany. At the same time, the United Kingdom, France and Italy secured six more seats each, while smaller countries gained fewer or none.

The result is that the distribution of seats between the member countries will reflect a little more accurately the size of their electorates. That point was missed by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) in his interesting speech, and is one from which the right hon. Member for Strangford will take, to judge from his remarks, a morsel of comfort.

We have thought long and carefully about how the United Kingdom's extra seats should be distributed between the countries of the Union. The Home Secretary explained in his opening speech that, at present, the average size of a European Parliament electorate in England is larger than in Scotland and in Northern Ireland, but slightly smaller than in Wales.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Will the Minister explain why that was not thought of before? Scottish Members will have to explain the promise made by the Secretary of State for Scotland in introducing the White Paper "Taking Stock" and repeated in St. Andrews in November 1992. The promise may have been unwise and I was surprised that the Secretary of State made it, but nevertheless it was made. Scottish Members are entitled to an explanation of why it has not been honoured.

**Mr. Lloyd:** The Secretary of State for Scotland must explain his own paper, which I have not read. I have stated that there was a great deal of discussion about the fairest way to distribute the extra seats. We decided that it was to take the average sizes of the electorates in the constituencies of the countries of the United Kingdom and distribute the seats accordingly. That is why there is an extra seat for Wales, the area of the country with the largest average electorate at the moment. It is right that the seat should go to Wales.

**Mr. Dalyell:** All of that was obvious in 1992. I am not challenging what the Minister is saying. I am asking him to help Scottish Members by telling us how we can explain away the extraordinary promises of the Secretary of State. Those promises were made at a time when he wanted to ingratiate himself with Scotland.

**Mr. Lloyd:** I cannot answer for the Secretary of State for Scotland. I did not read that particular paper. I can answer that the Government's decision was to distribute the seats according to the average sizes of electorate in each country.

**Mrs. Ewing:** Does the Minister recall the point that I made earlier? When the original decision was taken that the United Kingdom should be allocated either 81 or 82 seats in advance of the first direct elections, the argument for that number of seats was won on the basis that Scotland should have 10 seats and Wales should have five. Wales has now been brought up to five seats, while Scotland remains with only eight. It seems almost as if negotiations have taken place and arguments have been put forward that now disadvantage the people of Scotland. Those arguments originally advantaged the people of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** That is nonsense. Scotland is not being disadvantaged. Wales was being disadvantaged, which is why the extra seat has gone to Wales. It will result in Wales, such is its small size, switching from being the country with the highest average electorate per Euro constituency to the lowest. With a small population, a difference of one seat takes it from top to bottom.

I understand why the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and other Scottish Members are disappointed that there is no extra seat for Scotland. I understand perfectly why Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen—I was going to say with so many Scottish Members behind them, but Scottish Members are not here—feel obliged to demonstrate their outrage at the absence of a new seat for Scotland, but the arithmetic and simple honesty ought to compel Opposition Members to admit privately to themselves, even if they cannot do so publicly, that another seat for Scotland cannot be justified.

Even with five extra seats, the average English European constituency will still have 4 per cent. more electors than the average Scottish constituency. To give one more seat to Scotland and take one away from England would increase that disparity still further to 16 per cent.

**Mrs. Currie:** Is not at least part of the answer that those of us who represent English constituencies have made a

*[Mrs. Currie]*

fuss about it? We are pleased that the Government have heard. Is it not a matter of fact that, of the 63 English European constituencies, 60 have electorates of more than 500,000, but of the eight Scottish constituencies, half have electorates of fewer than 500,000?

**Mr. Lloyd:** My hon. Friend's statistics are correct, but the first part of her remarks was not. It was not a matter of pressure and making representations. The Government determined what was objectively the fairest way of distributing the seats.

I have listened with care almost all evening and, apart from one argument to which I shall return, I have not heard any convincing reasons why Scotland should be given even more generous representation in the European Parliament than England. The one argument that requires an answer is that Scotland must have an extra seat because one of its constituencies—Highlands and Islands—is extremely large in area. However, although its area is indeed vast, it has one of the smallest European electorates in the United Kingdom. Its electorate is 327,000, compared with the average of 490,000 for Scotland as a whole.

Of course, electoral law makes some allowance for sparseness of population. Highlands and Islands has obviously benefited from that discretion, but I doubt whether, if Scotland had an extra seat, the Boundary Commission or any informal committee operating under the same guidelines would feel able to increase the disparity between the electorates in Highlands and Islands and the rest of the Scottish seats sufficiently to make much difference. The extra seat would surely have to be used mainly to reduce in terms of number of electors the average size of seats in highly populated areas of Scotland.

**Mr. Tom Clarke:** The Minister has been asked to make an apology on behalf of Scottish Ministers, including the Secretary of State for Scotland, who have not even bothered to turn up for the debate. The Secretary of State gave at least two promises—one in his document "Taking Stock" and one in his speech at St. Andrews—that Scotland would achieve better representation. Does the Minister accept that geography has a great deal to do with the matter and that the Highlands and Islands seat is bigger than Belgium? Are we to believe that the Government considered merely figures and not communities, geography or proper representation for Scotland?

**Mr. Lloyd:** According to the rules that we have, the seat would not go to the highlands and islands. The position is different, particularly because Opposition Members have pleaded that we should stick absolutely and completely to the traditional Boundary Commission practices and rules. Highlands and Islands is, indeed, large territorially, but it has a small population. The major determining factor which Boundary Commissions are supposed to take into account is population. That is the reason for the discrepancy. The reason is not whether or not Scotland has an extra seat.

Even if it was right—I do not accept that it is—to distribute the seats in such a way as to give Scotland more than the United Kingdom arithmetic can justify, I do not believe that it would help in resolving anxieties, which I understand, caused by the sheer geographical spread of the Highlands and Islands constituency or the difficulties created for the mother-in-law of the hon. Member for Moray. As the hon. Lady said, her mother-in-law is as capable of managing that seat as any member, but its size gives her added difficulties.

The hon. Lady asked whether we would consider constituencies in Scotland and the rest of the country on a geographical basis. I have some sympathy with that, but I do not know how it can be done. I know that it cannot be done under the present rules. During last year's debates on the parliamentary Boundary Commission changes, I said that after this coming review and the consequent review of European boundaries, we should need to reconsider the rules under which commissions work. By that I did not mean just the Government; I meant that there would be consultation with other parties. As I said before, we can do that only when we come to consider the rules under which boundaries are reviewed. It cannot be done properly and fairly now. Perhaps we could have given an extra seat to Scotland, but it would not have resolved the real problem of the geographical size of that constituency in particular.

**Mr. Rowe:** May I seek reassurance on one other point? Several of my constituents in Kent are anxious because it appears that with the new seats we are likely to be pushed out of Kent and to include part of Sussex. That appears to have a knock-on effect on domestic parliamentary boundaries. Can my hon. Friend assure us that the two are not connected in that way?

**Mr. Lloyd:** There is not a knock-on effect to domestic parliamentary constituency boundaries. Euro-constituencies must be made from the building blocks of domestic parliamentary constituencies. That is why the law requires that after a review of domestic parliamentary boundaries there must be a consequent review of Euro-boundaries to make sure that the latter are still made up of the building blocks of the ordinary parliamentary constituencies.

The call for an extra seat for Scotland on the basis of the highlands and islands difficulty came particularly unconvincingly from Liberal Democrats, especially the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). He and his party want the extra six Members to be elected on the additional list basis. He lambasted the Government for not seizing an opportunity to move to proportional representation. If we did so, that would leave constituency boundaries, not merely in Scotland but everywhere else, exactly as they are at present.

**Mr. Maclennan:** It is uncharacteristic of the Minister, but obviously he did not listen to me. I made it plain that the list would operate in Scotland, Wales and England, if that was how the distribution had to be made.

**Mr. Lloyd:** If that were so for the additional seats, it would leave the existing directly elected constituency boundaries as they are, in which case the hon. Gentleman would not reduce the size of the Highlands and Islands constituency. That is my point to him.

The Government have always made it clear that they see in proportional representation of any variety no improvement on our traditional, well-tried system of first past the post and strong, clear constituency links for every elected Member.

**Mr. Bernard Jenkin** (Colchester, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Lloyd:** I will give way later.

Even if we thought otherwise, which we do not, proceeding to elect six additional Members on the list basis is not, as the Liberal Democrat party thinks, a quick and easily organised alternative. It would require much debate. What kind of list? Would it cover the whole of the United Kingdom or each constituent country, as the nationalists have repeatedly said they would like to see? It is difficult to have additional seats and directly elected constituencies in the small constituent countries of the United Kingdom. Who would draw up the list? As the Home Secretary remarked in his opening speech, if we embark on that route we shall still be arguing the issue on the day the elections are due to be held.

I must bypass the De Gucht report and answer the point raised by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). As I indicated from a sedentary position during the debate, I can give him the four assurances that he asked for. The Opposition will be consulted on the members of the committees. The Boundary Commission members will be appointed, wherever possible, if they are willing and have time to do so. Two have already said that they believe they will have time. The secretariat will be the same, although I cannot say whether it will be temporarily expanded.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether it would be the Boundary Commission in all but name. Yes, that is our objective as far as it is possible in the time. However, it cannot be exactly so and a major issue in this debate has been how far consultation and local inquiries can be held. I do not believe that it is possible to have local inquiries in the traditional manner. The hon. Gentleman said that that was simply assertion and believes that we can. I can only counter his assertion with another, and the right hon. Member for Strangford asked me to spell it out.

The timetable is extremely tight. Political parties and administrators need to know where the new boundaries are to be drawn not later than the end of November. Representatives of the political parties are likely to want discussion meetings with the committees before they start work. None the less, publication of provisional recommendations at the beginning of August remains a possible, though optimistic, target. So far, the timetables of the hon. Member for Sedgefield and the Home Secretary are similar. However, there would be strong criticism if insufficient time were allowed for representation. Many people will be away on holiday in August and it will be difficult for local councils to meet to discuss proposals. In the past, political parties strongly urged the Boundary Commission not to publish proposals in August. That all points to a closing date no earlier than mid September.

The preparation and holding of public inquiries are long processes. Representations must be analysed and briefs prepared for the person presiding over the inquiry. As the hon. Member for Sedgefield said, it could reasonably be expected that up to 10 inquiries may be needed. In preparing his report to the relevant committee, the inquiry chairman would need a verbatim transcript of the proceedings. Reports take some weeks to prepare and submit. The committees would then need to consider the reports and representations, reach final decisions and prepare their own reports. We believe that, at best, that will take six or seven weeks longer than the hon. Gentleman suggested.

As I said to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North, if the hon. Member for Sedgefield wishes to appoint a representative, the Home Secretary will want to appoint an expert to sit down and go through the timetable. We believe that our timetable is realistic and that the timetable of the hon. Member for Sedgefield is unrealistic, but we shall look at it open mindedly because we want as much opportunity for review and representation as possible, as does the hon. Gentleman. If we are shown to be wrong we shall adopt an alternative procedure. Although I do not think that that will be the case, we should be happy to talk it through. *[Interruption.]* If it is feasible, there can be public inquiries. We do not want to rule them out. In 1978-79 the Labour Government, although they had twice as long to prepare for the European elections, had to rule out local inquiries, just as we are doing now.

The Bill is simple and fair. It provides the United Kingdom with six extra seats that are distributed as fairly as possible. It is fair to all parts of the United Kingdom and what Opposition Members suggest would certainly be unfair to England.

*Question put:—*

*The House divided:* Ayes 254, Noes 300.

**Division No. 312]** **[10 pm**

**AYES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Abbott, Ms Diane | Coffey, Ann |
| Adams, Mrs Irene | Cohen, Harry |
| Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)* | Connarty, Michael |
| Allen, Graham | Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)* |
| Alton, David | Cook, Robin *(Livingston)* |
| Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)* | Corbett, Robin |
| Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)* | Corbyn, Jeremy |
| Armstrong, Hilary | Corston, Ms Jean |
| Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy | Cousins, Jim |
| Ashton, Joe | Cryer, Bob |
| Austin-Walker, John | Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)* |
| Barnes, Harry | Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John |
| Barron, Kevin | Dalyell, Tam |
| Battle, John | Darling, Alistair |
| Bayley, Hugh | Davidson, Ian |
| Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret | Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)* |
| Beith, Rt Hon A. J. | Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)* |
| Bell, Stuart | Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)* |
| Benn, Rt Hon Tony | Denham, John |
| Bennett, Andrew F. | Dewar, Donald |
| Benton, Joe | Dixon, Don |
| Bermingham, Gerald | Dobson, Frank |
| Berry, Dr. Roger | Donohoe, Brian H. |
| Betts, Clive | Dowd, Jim |
| Blair, Tony | Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth |
| Blunkett, David | Eagle, Ms Angela |
| Boateng, Paul | Eastham, Ken |
| Boyes, Roland | Enright, Derek |
| Bradley, Keith | Etherington, Bill |
| Bray, Dr Jeremy | Evans, John *(St Helens N)* |
| Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)* | Ewing, Mrs Margaret |
| Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)* | Fatchett, Derek |
| Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)* | Faulds, Andrew |
| Burden, Richard | Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)* |
| Byers, Stephen | Fisher, Mark |
| Caborn, Richard | Flynn, Paul |
| Callaghan, Jim | Foster, Rt Hon Derek |
| Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)* | Foster, Don *(Bath)* |
| Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)* | Foulkes, George |
| Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)* | Fraser, John |
| Campbell-Savours, D. N. | Fyfe, Maria |
| Cann, Jamie | Galbraith, Sam |
| Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)* | Galloway, George |
| Chisholm, Malcolm | Gapes, Mike |
| Clapham, Michael | Garrett, John |
| Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)* | George, Bruce |
| Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)* | Gerrard, Neil |
| Clelland, David | Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John |
| Clwyd, Mrs Ann | Godman, Dr Norman A. |

Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. John Spellar and**
**Mr. Andrew Mackinlay.**

**NOES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*

Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. David Lightbown, and**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading):—*

*The House divided:* Ayes 290, Noes 51.

**Division No. 313]** **[10.18 pm**

**AYES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*

Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman and**
**Mr. Derek Conway.**

**NOES**

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Davidson, Ian
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Gunnell, John
Harvey, Nick
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Maclennan, Robert
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Pickthall, Colin
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Bob Cryer and**
**Mr. Eddie Loyden.**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills),* That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

*Question agreed to.*

*Committee tomorrow.*

## European Parliamentary Elections Bill

### *[Money]*

*Motion made, and Question proposed,*

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the European Parliamentary Elections Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of remuneration and allowances to the members of a European Parliamentary Constituencies Committee established by the Act.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

10.31 pm

**Sir Russell Johnston** (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Am I right in thinking that we may speak to the money resolution?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** That is correct.

**Sir Russell Johnston:** We have witnessed an extraordinary exhibition by Labour Members, who had every opportunity to defeat the Government, but turned it down. Any more from them about how easy it would be to do that—*[Interruption.]*—is unnecessary. Why should we not wish to support the money——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The money resolution is very narrow and is about the remuneration of the members of a committee. It is not about political parties.

**Sir Russell Johnston:** Is it sufficiently narrow for me to say that the money resolution should not be passed? I would not wish to see the House support a motion which would permit a system of election that is transparently unfair and unjust to millions of people in Britain. I listened with astonishment to the Minister's reply. He spent a great deal of time on the details but ignored the plain fact that the European Parliament does not produce a government, as we do, but exists to provide advice within the institutions of the European Community. So the traditional arguments against having a fair electoral——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The right hon. Gentleman is now going very wide of the mark.

10.33 pm

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): I trust that the Minister will reply to this debate because the money resolution is part of the pattern of procedure and it must have the authority of the House. Many hon. Members are anxious to hear the Minister, but if he is not prepared to give an outline of the purpose of the measure, we may decide to call a Division, just to emphasise the point. We want to know what the cost of the commission will be because——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I have explained that the money resolution is very narrow—*[Interruption.]*—and, in any event, it is difficult for me to ascertain what the hon. Member is saying if I cannot hear him. The House must now quieten down.

**Mr. Cryer:** I have questions to ask about the costs of this legislation. The issue of proportional representation has been raised. I would be out of order in discussing that. On the other hand, the Minister will want to make it clear that the cost of the legislation is the absolute minimum and that the introduction of a daft system of proportional representation would have been a great deal more costly. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be able to reply.

10.35 pm

**Mr. James Wallace** (Orkney and Shetland): I understand that the purpose of the money resolution is to authorise payments from public funds for the remuneration and allowances of the members of these specious committees, whose purpose is to create the six new European parliamentary constituencies.

My first objection to the provision of any money whatsoever for this purpose is that the exercise would be unnecessary if there were a system of proportional representation. Such a system would remove any need for the carving up of constituencies. Thus, this is a waste of valuable funds.

**Mr. Ian Taylor** (Esher): Regardless of the cost, has the hon. Gentleman failed to understand that the system he is proposing is being increasingly rejected throughout Europe? It is bogus, as is shown by the fact that it has almost been accepted by the Labour party as a final solution for lost causes.

**Mr. Wallace:** I cannot accept that. I shall be interested to hear to what places the hon. Gentleman is referring. If he is thinking about Italy, let met tell him that the system being proposed there is far more democratic than anything we have in this country.

My second point is that the committees for which we are being asked to approve funds will not be allowed to look at the European constituencies for the nation of Scotland. By no stretch of the imagination could that be regarded as anything but a travesty. It is a total waste of money to set up committees that will ignore a constituent part of the United Kingdom. Why should Scottish taxpayers have to pay for these specious, spurious bodies?

I live in the European constituency of the Highlands and Islands, whose northernmost extremity is further north than the southern tip of Greenland, and whose southernmost extremity—the Mull of Kintyre, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie)—is further south than Berwick-upon-Tweed. It is a massive constituency. If the Bill gave Scotland not only its fair share of Members but also constituencies of a more manageable size, there might be some justification for the committee funds that the House is now being asked to approve. As it is, there is no provision for an examination of Scotland. That is another reason for not asking the taxpayers for this money.

The third point is that we are to have committees rather than boundary commissions. During both Divisions tonight, Labour Members were conspicuous by their absence. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): We are not having that.

**Mr. Wallace:** Not all of them. If they had all taken part, the Bill could have been defeated. One must assume that they are being bought off, that they have been told that these gerrymandering committees will give them something. It is totally contrary to the traditions of this country that such committees should be set up, that we should eschew the normal procedure of reference to a boundary commission, with all the safeguards of proper published reports and proper opportunities for consultation and

*[Mr. Wallace]*

public inquiry. Instead of the inherent independence of a boundary commission, we are moving to more quangos, set up by the Government with the agreement of the Labour party. This is so inconsistent with our democratic conditions that Parliament should not be asked to approve the expenditure of taxpayers' money. This is not the Government's money or our money. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I am glad that hon. Members are catching on. Why should we be asked to approve the expenditure of taxpayers' money to set up gerrymandering committees for the purpose of appeasing members of the Tory and Labour parties?

10.39 pm

**Mr. Simon Hughes** (Southwark and Bermondsey): For years the House has been asked to spend money by passing money resolutions after Bills have gained a Second Reading and often on ideas from the Conservative party which have wasted billions of pounds. One of the latest examples of what the Conservatives called a democratic institution was the poll tax. The relevant legislation received a Second Reading and through the money resolution Conservative Members, who represent a minority of people in the country, spent millions of pounds on a system which was wholly discredited from the beginning and which had to be reversed.

We are now being asked to do something more serious. If the money resolution is passed, we shall be authorising an electoral system that is illegal under European law—[HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] It is not rubbish; it is likely that the system will have to be reversed in due course. It will discredit the United Kingdom in the eyes of our neighbours and partners in the European Community.

If we pass the money resolution, we shall be distorting democracy not only in this country—that is bad enough because we are already a laughing stock to the world's new democracies—*[Interruption.]* When the Government-in-waiting in South Africa travel the world to study democracies on which they could model the constitution of the new South Africa, the one place they do not come to is here. They do not come here because we have a discredited democracy. All other countries, including Italy—I address this in particular to the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor)—have far more representative democracies than we have. The hon. Gentleman's ignorance is such that——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. It might be helpful if the House would quieten down and if the hon. Gentleman returned to money.

**Mr. Hughes:** In many respects and on many other subjects, the hon. Member for Esher is well informed, but his ignorance on this subject is such that he thinks that the money resolution will authorise a system that is more democratic than any in the European Community. I challenge him to get an independent assessment by any professor of electoral law—*[Interruption.]* The Conservatives are unwilling to do so. They are unwilling to test what they call democracy—for which we are paying. The Conservatives are not paying—they are asking the people to pay.

We shall be distorting democracy not only at home but in the whole of Europe. Next year, the European Parliament will not be democratic or representative because we shall have perverted the course of European democracy. Yet we are meant to be the founders of democracy and we call this the mother of Parliaments.

We are talking about my money—the people's money—and I am blowed if I will authorise the expenditure of my money by allowing a distorted, discredited Government, who were elected by a minority of the people, to push this resolution through. I sincerely hope that, with the help of the Labour party—*[Interruption.]* Let me correct myself. Those on the Labour Front Bench and the Labour leadership—but unsupported by some of that party's members—will be far more culpable of keeping the Tories in power than they accused us of being in October in passing the Bill and, as a result, condoning an electoral system for next year which may yet be taken through the courts. Even if that does not happen, and even if the Bill is not defeated in Committee next week or the week after, it will produce a result next year which will ensure that Britain, alone of the 12 member states, is the unrepresentative, undemocratic partner in Europe.

Our reputation in Europe for wasting money and being undemocratic is already bad enough. It is a sad day when the new Home Secretary and all his colleagues are willing to try to make cosy deals with those who are otherwise considered to be their opponents on all policies. The deal would enable the Government to spend money on setting up a quango, all of those members will be unelected appointees of the Secretary of State. They will not represent the spectrum of opinion.

We have not heard from the Minister how much money will be spent. If the Government get authority from Parliament to spend that money, because they manage to push their minority through the Lobby, when will it be paid back? If our electoral system is shown to be unfair and unreasonable, will the Government pay the money back? Oh no—as on previous occasions when the Government have pushed through Bills with money resolutions, the people of Britain will pay. The Government, their Ministers or even the civil servants will not pay it—only the people.

I want to say one last thing—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I could be encouraged to go on for another half an hour. About 20 years ago, I spent one year at the College of Europe with people from 27 other countries. We were trying to build a new democratic Europe. We had difficulty enough then trying to persuade our colleagues that we were serious about that concept. Twenty years later, despite the pretence of the Prime Minister when he said that we are at the centre of Europe, we go on distorting the electoral system and discrediting our country. That behaviour will ensure that the United Kingdom, of all the member states, is the least democratic.

I want to make it clear that it is not the Liberal Democrats who have countenanced the scandal, but the two largest political parties. We shall go on fighting and, sooner rather than later, democracy will come not just to the European Parliament, but to this Parliament—and it will be achieved at a far cheaper price than that set in the money resolution, which will be paid in silver and pounds and is the price of democracy lost and given away by a discredited Government and a deeply discredited official Opposition.

10.47 pm

**Mr. Archy Kirkwood** (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I have been inspired by my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) to ask the Minister some penetrating questions.

The financial memorandum makes it clear that the cost resulting from the Bill will be £250,000 in 1993-94. Discussions have gone on all day in the precincts of the Palace of Westminster about what negotiations have been held between the two Front-Bench teams. I was not privy to them but they must have related, either directly or indirectly, to the costs of the Bill.

We are entitled to ask some questions about the money allocated. If the Government had chosen another means to redistribute the reservoir of six European Parliament seats, that could have been done at no additional cost. A well-established apparatus for that purpose is available to the Government, but they chose to eschew it. As a result, an extra bill of £250,000 has been put on the taxpayer; that is incontrovertible. The Government have incurred that charge and it is up to them to justify it.

The Minister is duty-bound to give us more details about how the money is made up, how the expenses and allowances will be arrived at, what the precedents are for establishing what sums of money are paid and for what specific and detailed purposes and how the Government will select the chairman and members of the parliamentary constituency committees.

**Mr. Wallace:** Has my hon. Friend considered the possibility that, in order to perform the job properly, those who are appointed to this doubtful committee might have to travel extensively throughout England and Wales so that they will know the areas that they are talking about? Does he foresee a substantial amount being incurred in travel expenses and some freebie joy-rides, which would not be needed if we had proportional representation?

**Mr. Kirkwood:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right—that was my next point. The Minister must know how costly such visits will be. Have per diem allowances been made for the chairman and the members of the parliamentary constituency committees? All those matters are vital. I do not think that there are any precedents for such an operation. We are entitled to know the exact amount of the expenses and how they are arrived at.

Part I of the schedule to the Bill says:

"4. The Secretary of State shall pay to the members of a Committee (including the Chairman) such remuneration and allowances as he may, with the approval of the Treasury, determine."

Does that mean that the House will not have the right to say how the expenses of this operation are set up? Are there any statutory instruments and legislation that will bring back to the House, either by a negative or affirmative procedure, the amounts of money that are spent and the way in which they were deployed? It will be a disgrace if that does not happen.

The committees are unnecessary. Today, there have been all sorts of private talks between the two Front Benches. I do not know what accommodations have been reached or how extensive they may have been. How can we possibly scrutinise the results of the negotiations unless negative and affirmative orders are tabled in the House before the money is properly disbursed so that we can make judgments? There is a conspiracy between the two Front Benches. It is unconscionable that we have not been given any more details.

**Mr. David Rendel** (Newbury): As I have not yet been given an office in the House, I should like to know where the accommodation for these committees will be.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** Over the past fortnight, my hon. Friend has been coming to me at half-hour intervals asking for an office in this place. We have not been able to find him one, although we have tried. Somehow, the usual channels have not been able to find him accommodation. I bet that accommodation is found for the chairman and members of these committees to enable them to do their work. Why cannot the Government find an office in the precincts of the Palace of Westminster for my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel)?

There are some legitimate and detailed questions that the Minister must answer. Never mind the high politics about the need for proportional representation and getting a much more democratic and open Europe. All those matters are out of order. I do not want to stray too much into the realms of proportional representation and the need to get a fair system or I will be ruled out of order. However, we need to know why this money, unnecessary as it is, must be spent and why Parliament will not have a chance to scrutinise the details of how it will be deployed.

10.53 pm

**Mr. A. J. Beith** (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I have a question that arises when we take what the Minister said in conjunction with the money resolution. What undertakings have been given to potential members of the committees about the payment of allowances and remuneration to them from the money to be voted in this resolution? In his closing remarks in the main debate, the Minister of State said that contact had been made with several people who are prepared to serve as members of the committee. Some of the boundary commissioners did not have time to serve, but others, miraculously, had the time.

The Minister then said that it was possible that a draft report would be published by 1 August. He was not certain. It appears to me, and it must have occurred to others, because the matter was referred to in one of the amendments to the Second Reading motion, that some undertaking must have been given to the commissioners that if they started work before the Bill had completed its progress, they would nevertheless be paid in due course for the work that they had done from the moneys that are the subject of the money resolution. The Minister nods. He has already given undertakings to people that they will be paid money which we have not yet voted. The Bill on the basis of which they would be paid has not yet passed through Parliament.

The Bill is likely to have a long Committee stage going into many days. The Committee stage may not have finished by 1 August. It may well go into the spill-over session. It is assumed that the commissioners will turn in day after day at some princely per diem allowance on an undertaking which the Minister has given that they will get their money in due course. I have news for them. They may never get their money. That is unless Major-General Wyldbore-Smith or one of those other remarkable characters has pots of gold still undiscovered from which

*[Mr. A. J. Beith]*

they will be paid. We will then know that the project is not a public project but a Tory party project. Indeed, the Labour party may be willing to subscribe.

I hope that neither the Bill nor the money resolution will be passed. If they are not, the commissioners will find that they have spent a great deal of time doing the Government's bidding for no money, unless it is privately subscribed by the two parties who hope to profit politically from the deal. I am amazed that the Minister has made it clear, by nods of his head, that he has given such an undertaking to the people whom he has invited to serve as pseudo-members of a so far non-existent committee.

We had better tell the commissioners that they may never see the colour of this money. They may never see Howard's shilling, which is what it will become. If by any miracle they get Howard's shilling or Blair's florin or whatever it is, they will have discredited themselves by becoming involved in a partisan exercise. I say to the distinguished people who have taken part in the work of the Boundary Commission that they should steer well clear of this. It must be obvious that this is a seedy enterprise from the way in which the money side is being organised, with promises and undertakings such as, "We'll see you all right. We haven't got the Bill through yet but don't worry, we'll see that you get your money."

Any of the distinguished people who previously served Britain well on Boundary Commissions would be ill-advised to have anything to do with the procedures set out in the Bill.

10.58 pm

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): I wish to take up a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). In the first line of the explanatory and financial memorandum, the great city of Edinburgh is mentioned. I want to know what the great city of Edinburgh and, indeed, the great country and nation of Scotland will get out of the £250,000 that we are being asked to vote. It seems to me that Scotland will get nothing.

I also find it odd that the Scottish Conservative party will get nothing out of the £250,000 as it is the only party which might benefit from proportional representation in Scotland—it might secure at least some representation in Scotland under that system.

It is extraordinary that the Conservatives are adamant that they wish to protect the existing system and, indeed, extend it in a rather gerrymandered and corrupt fashion in circumstances in which, given the drift of election swings, the bias to the left is likely to be the main consequence of the Bill being passed.

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): Does the hon. Gentleman recall that the Secretary of State for Scotland said that he was aiming high for Scotland? Does he think that no seats and no money is an example of aiming high?

**Mr. Bruce:** The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. He has aimed high because Scotland will pay but get nothing back. This is a simple contribution—a high bill to Scotland for absolutely no return.

It is extraordinary that Conservative Members show such contempt for the European Parliament, which they prefer to call an "assembly" to show how they downgrade it. They do not care about the political distortions that are brought about by arrangements in the United Kingdom. Ironically, they are likely to work against the Conservative party next year and many Conservative MEPs currently in that Parliament will lose their seats as a consequence of this, and might wish that the Government had taken a slightly broader position.

As this agreement arises out of a meeting held in Edinburgh, as the Prime Minister is on record as saying that he is committed to ensuring that Scotland should benefit and prosper within the United Kingdom, and as the Secretary of State for Scotland has said that he is fighting to improve Scotland's representation within the European Parliament, the people of Scotland should not be expected to pay a penny of the £250,000. Can the Minister assure us that there will be no consequences for the Scottish people and that they will find none of their services cut to pay for it?

Under the heading

"Effect of the Bill on Public Service Manpower"

the Bill says that

"staff will be temporarily assigned to the Committees under paragraph 3 of the Schedule of the Bill".

Which staff will be seconded to the committee? Where will they come from? And what are they doing that is so unimportant that they can now be taken away from it without material consequences?

As my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) asked, will he be further displaced from finding a place to deal assiduously with the substantial amount of work that he has to handle as a result of the Conservative Government who brought him to this House?

Those are serious points. The Conservative party, which is used to wrestling with a deficit of £50 billion, may not regard £250,000 as a matter of any consequence. But spent with the specific intention of ensuring that the Tory and Labour parties do all right, thank you very much, while the rest of the country pays for the consequences, it is not just a waste of money but fundamentally corrupt. It is being spent across all the taxpayers and nations of the United Kingdom in a way designed to secure party political advantage for the Tory and Labour parties and to continue to maintain a distortion which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said, is a shame on this country's reputation.

It is a tragic irony that we still have the image of being the mother of Parliaments, yet we are spending £250,000 to perpetuate that distortion. That is corruption. It is a travesty and a shame and may yet be challenged by the European Court. Since we became signatories of the treaty of Rome and acceded to the European Parliament, we have failed to honour our treaty obligations to agree a common electoral system for the European Parliament. We have not even been prepared, as could have been done under the Bill, at least to start to test how that could be done. We are now asking taxpayers to spend £250,000 to perpetuate a distortion which brings shame to this country.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) made a pertinent point: if a challenge is successful in the European Court, the money voted by this Parliament will have been illegally spent, and more money may have to be spent to put the matter right.

However, I guess that a Government who were prepared to tell lies about £50 billion before the election will hardly worry about a few hundred thousand pounds

here or there on the issue of democracy. It is a matter of no concern to them. But it is a matter of great and growing concern to a wide audience in this country, who will see what has been done in this House and how the Tory and Labour parties corruptly think that they can carve up the system for themselves for ever.

The time is coming when the people of this country will say, "Enough is enough. A plague on both your houses. Drop your Bill and let's have some real democracy."

11.4 pm

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray): We have spent many hours on Second Reading of the European Parliamentary Elections Bill and we are now debating the motion on the money resolution. Not one Scottish Conservative Member or a Minister from the Scottish Office has been present for the debate to explain their attitude to the issue. That is to be deprecated.

Scotland will benefit not one whit from the legislation. At the time of the Edinburgh summit, I said that Scotland was being regarded as a tartan waitress by the people at the top table. The £250,000 that we are debating could be regarded as tips to the waitress. It seems that Scotland's taxpayers are to be asked to give money for which they will receive no benefit whatever. That money will be used to pay part of the cost of the new direct elections.

The European Parliament is becoming increasingly important. I do not share the view of people such as the hon. Members for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who were here earlier, that that Parliament should be denigrated. It has a great deal to contribute to the development of the constituent nations of the United Kingdom. If benefit is to accrue to anybody, it should also accrue to the people of Scotland who are not to be given additional access to a democratically elected institution. We are being asked to contribute a quarter of a million pounds, but we are not to be allowed to increase our representation and our influence, and that is wrong.

Many hon. Members from other parties and the Member of the European Parliament for the Highlands and Islands have joined me in arguing that west Moray, Argyll and Bute, Cumbrae and Arran should be included in the objective 1 status afforded to the highlands and islands. The agriculture committee and the regional committee of the European Parliament have said that that should be agreed, and the European Parliament has cast 277 votes in favour of that.

If we are to influence economic and political developments in the Community institutions, we must have the right to increased representation. It is strange that the House is in danger of saying that Scotland's taxpayers should support increased funding for the Community, but should not have increased influence.

**Mr. Wallace:** I noted my hon. Friend's barbs about the absence of Scottish Conservatives from the Chamber. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), has finally joined us. Perhaps she would acknowledge his presence and comment on it. Perhaps he will tell us why Scotland should stump up for no benefit whatever.

**Mrs. Ewing:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing that to my attention. I should be grateful for an indication of Scottish Office thinking on the matter.

As I have said, it is strange that Scottish taxpayers are being asked to increase their funding but are to receive no benefit in return. It is important for the development of the Community that one of Europe's most ancient nations should have increased access. Denmark has 15 Members of the European Parliament, while Scotland, with the same population, has only eight. It is fundamental for the people of Scotland to see equity applied. I hope that the Minister will comment on that. If he does, it will be the first such comment in the debate.

11.9 pm

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd):** It became clear in the debate that Liberal Democrat Members were extremely upset by the result of the vote. I understand that, because they are committed to proportional representation. They spoke about party interest in the electoral system and it is undoubtedly true that their interest, as they perceive it, is in a system of PR. They are entitled to feel that, but there are many others who believe, on extremely good grounds, that the most effective way to represent the people in a Parliament is through individual constituencies to which an hon. Member is responsible. They do not want some list system, the shortcomings of which have been highlighted in a number of speeches.

**Mr. Salmond:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Lloyd:** No, I will not.

**Mr. Salmond:** Why?

**Mr. Lloyd:** Because I do not have very much time.

**Mr. Skinner** *rose*——

**Hon. Members:** Give way.

**Mr. Lloyd:** All right, I shall give way.

**Mr. Skinner:** In talking about PR and Liberal Democrats Members, why does not the Minister remind them that the ex-leader of the Liberal party went to Italy to stand in one of the tinpot elections under the PR system and was thrashed?

**Mr. Lloyd:** That is a good reminder from the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) appears to be under some misapprehension. There are four Boundary Commissions and if there were also to be changes in the numbers in the other two countries that make up the United Kingdom—Northern Ireland and Scotland—their boundaries would have to be reviewed and the expense would be that much greater.

I assure the hon. Gentleman and his right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that the expenditure is precisely the same as the expenditure that would have been made had the Boundary Commission been doing the reviewing. The hon. Gentleman may be upset to know that, in fact, the process will be rather less expensive because the changes apply to only two of our four countries. He may be disappointed to learn that there will be rather less travelling about the country because, as has been discussed this evening, the possibility of local inquiries being held is constrained by the time scale involved. There will be less travel and less expense.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) spoke about wasting billions of pounds. I do

*[Mr. Lloyd]*

not think that, at that point, he had read the Bill. If he had, he would have known that the expenditure will be £250,000. There is nothing illegal in the process. The Government have authority to pay money out of the contingency fund. When the money resolution is passed this evening, as I am sure it will be, it will be before any expenditure is undertaken.

**Mr. Beith:** The Government have already made the arrangements.

**Mr. Lloyd:** It is true, of course, that we had to check whether members of the Boundary Commission would be willing to serve on the informal body, which will operate in the same way as the Boundary Commission. Obviously, those members expect to serve on the same terms.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) asked, in particular, how the money would be disbursed. The £250,000 allowed for in the money resolution covers all the expenses likely to be incurred by the committees in fulfilling their duties. The probable expenses are the payment of members' remuneration and expenses; the provision of staff to assist them in their duties—they will number about four; we expect them to be found from existing resources and there will be no increase in the gross number of permanent Government staff—the purchase and production of special maps; and the cost to publicising the preliminary recommendations of the committees.

To have a review of England and Wales done quickly, effectively and fairly for £250,000 constitutes reasonable expenditure and I am sure that the majority of hon. Members will endorse that view.

**Mr. Wallace:** I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. May I point out that Northern Ireland already has proportional representation, so adding a seat there would not require a Boundary Commission? From what date does he anticipate the expenses starting to run?

**Mr. Lloyd:** The expenses will start to run as soon as the committees start their work, which we hope will be very shortly indeed.

If the hon. Gentleman had attended the debate this evening—I think that he looked in from time to time—he would know that I agreed with the Labour Front Bench that it was no secret accommodation; it was across the Dispatch Box and the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) will be kept informed—to look closely at the timetable to see whether it can be achieved within the limits that we require and with the maximum amount of consultation. That we will do. There will be consultation; the question is how much and how many times it will be possible to repeat it.

Opposition Members proclaim their allegiance to the idea of Europe and the European Parliament. Unless we proceed with the timetable and keep to it, not merely will the extra seats not be taken up by Britain, but no other country will be able to take them up either.

*Question put:—*

*The House divided:* Ayes 236, Noes 27.

**Division No. 314]** **[11.15 pm**

**AYES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley

Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Andrew MacKay and**
**Mr. James Arbuthnot.**

**NOES**

Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Lewis, Terry
Loyden, Eddie
Maclennan, Robert
Mahon, Alice
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Archy Kirkwood and**
**Mr. Simon Hughes.**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the European Parliamentary Elections Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of remuneration and allowances to the members of a European Parliamentary Constituencies Committee established by the Act.

## WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

*Ordered,*

That, during the proceedings on the Matter of local government in Wales, the Welsh Grand Committee have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it shall meet, and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees), the second such sitting shall not commence before half-past Four o'clock nor continue after the Committee has considered the Matter for two hours at the sitting.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

# Rolling Stock

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

11.28 pm

**Mr. John Gunnell** (Morley and Leeds, South): There is a close relationship between the subject of this Adjournment debate and that chosen by my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) at the close of Monday's business, when he raised the difficulties at Asea Boveri Brown Transportation, York, and the jobs being lost there. I, too, start with the railway engineering industry and the current state of its order books.

In its second report on the future of the railways, the Transport Select Committee reproduced the graph that Steer Davies Gleave published for the Railway Industry Association, showing that, by the end of 1995, the domestic order book of every railway engineering company would be empty.

The Select Committee also learned from Lord Prior, in his role as chairman of GEC Alsthom, that there would be no industry left in three years' time if there are no new orders, and that that would cause massive job losses and a subsequent reliance on imports. As we know, and as the hon. Member for York has said, the first fruits of that occurred earlier this month, with the loss of 900 jobs in York, Derby and elsewhere.

Many observers, including those who support and those who oppose the changes promoted in the Railways Bill, accept that the uncertainty caused by the Bill is a major factor in the decline in investment. On Monday night, the Minister for Public Transport suggested that the recession was the main factor. The recession is a factor, but I believe that the influence of the Railways Bill has been a much greater factor, as it has made people uncertain about investing in the railways because of the high risk attached to the industry at the present time.

The Minister for Public Transport has shown that, to a certain extent, he accepts that thesis. He has been prepared to make adjustments while the Railways Bill has been considered, and those adjustments may engender more confidence in the future of the railways.

I believe that I share common ground with the Minister and with most hon. Members when I refer to the importance of rail services in passenger transport authority areas. They carry about one quarter of British Rail's passengers, and they carry twice as many passengers as InterCity. Their business contributes some £250 million to BR, and they are also notable investors in the system, having spent £690 million in total infrastructure costs over the period of section 20 financing, of which £150 million was spent on rolling stock.

The role of PTAs in procuring rolling stock has been recognised in clause 31 of the Railways Bill. That clause gives PTAs the power

"to let railway locomotives and rolling stock on hire."

The importance of PTAs in addressing the issue of empty order books is obvious and accepted. Therefore, how do we overcome the problems of achieving that investment and purchasing that rolling stock?

My area of West Yorkshire highlights the issue and must be the nursery for a solution. The Leeds-Bradford line is currently being electrified, and £54 million of investment has been sanctioned and in part paid for by central Government. That project will be successful and

*[Mr. John Gunnell]*

the line will be electrified. However, once it is electrified, it would be very unfortunate if the passengers are forced to use 30-year-old rolling stock procured from Network SouthEast. That is what the Select Committee forecast.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that the scheme is going ahead only because of the determination of the PTA? Central Government have been very parsimonious about the money for electrification, which absorbed a good trolley bus scheme which was going to run from Bradford city centre to my constituency. That scheme would have provided a cheap, silent and environmentally friendly system of transport, but it has been sacrificed for electrification because of the Government's meanness.

**Mr. Gunnell:** I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. He underlines the fact that it would be sad if, having electrified the line, we were forced to use Network SouthEast trains which hon. Members who represent Southend have criticised as clapped out. It would be sad if cast-offs from the south come north. Although the line is electrified, we might still have to use diesels if rolling stock is not available.

Those matters were reported to the Transport Select Committee. It noted the passenger transport authority's attempts to finance the leasing of new stock and the response of the financial institutions to the situation brought about by the Railways Bill. That meant, it having been agreed previously that there would be an operating lease, that it fell through when the financiers felt that repayment of the money and security could no longer be guaranteed.

I appreciate that the Minister is working to find a creative solution to the problem. The working party that he set up between his Department and the West Yorkshire PTA is my evidence for that. But that working party has found that two types of obstacles exist, and I shall explore each of them.

First, there is a need in any leasing arrangement to satisfy the lessors that the risk to them is reasonable. When PTAs had direct precepting powers and trains were operated on their behalf by a national railway, as was the case in the past, the lessors felt comfortable. But once the Railways Bill is in operation, neither of those conditions will hold true, which is why the lessors have become uneasy.

Their doubts about the future roles of the PTAs have by now largely been removed by clauses 28 to 31 of the Bill and the assurances that the Minister gave me in Committee. But more problematic has been the role of the franchising director and the status of the operators. On Third Reading, the Minister established a framework within which the franchising director could both protect the security of assets used to provide franchised services and ensure their continuation, and he has subsequently announced the setting up of companies to purchase the rolling stock and become lessors.

But those issues require further probing. Will he, with the Bill now in another place, give the franchising director and the PTA wider powers to promote investment? Will he allow the PTA to insist on new rolling stock or other new equipment or facilities on their services? Will the franchising director be party to agreements with the lessor, with the manufacturer of rolling stock and with the passenger transport authority or the passenger transport executive in the period before the franchises in their areas are to be let? Will he ensure that operating leases will, if the services remain viable, operate for 25 to 30 years, the life of the rolling stock—namely, for four franchises? I hope that the Minister will answer in the affirmative.

The second set of obstacles surrounds local government financial arrangements. With PTAs no longer able to precept for their cash, how can the lessors be wholly confident that they can continue to pay the bill? Before the problems of that payment can be considered, it must be realised that the changes brought about by the Railways Bill, even before inflation, increase substantially the section 20 costs of PTAs nationally, as Steer Davies Gleave showed in their May 1993 paper.

The Minister has given assurances that section 20 payments to district councils will be increased to reflect fully the increased costs. But each council will have to pass over that money, and they may find it hard to justify to members of the public increasing payments to rail, while reducing many services that other people might regard as more essential.

For example, when I was the chair of social services in my authority, I faced reducing budgets. I might find it hard to support a passenger transport budget being substantially increased, which would be necessary through the section 20 system, if, at the same time, I had to tell people in the social services that they would receive less service. That will be a real problem for local authorities.

Payment for rolling stock leases will exacerbate the problem. First, it will require an additional distribution factor in the section 20 formula to reflect leasing costs. Then the Minister may need to use some mechanism to ensure that payments are passed on to the PTA. Take, for example, the Leeds-Bradford line. All five West Yorkshire district councils will have to levy this money and hand it over to pay the lessors. Of course, the Leeds and Bradford councils can easily justify this because the line will run from Leeds to Bradford, but how will Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield justify such payments?

This point is illustrated by the one rolling stock purchase that has taken place so far. I refer to the recent very welcome Strathclyde PTA order from Hunslet TPL in my constituency. Strathclyde is a multi-service authority, so the same council agrees revenue collection and leasing costs. The situation is much more difficult in metropolitan areas, where each of several councils has to make a separate decision.

This issue poses a serious dilemma. I hope that the Minister will seek imaginative solutions, perhaps by an extension of clause 56-type arrangements, or some alternative mechanism, such as the sort of credit system being used to finance electrification. I hope that, when he meets the chair of the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority in the near future, there will be on the table some suggestions as to how it might be made easier for district councils to pass on the money that will be needed to satisfy the lessors.

Before drawing to a close, I must stress the urgency of the situation. Ministers have said that there will be a long lead time of four to 12 years before the provisions of the Bill are fully implemented. So far as the PTA is concerned, legislative changes that are still needed will have to be implemented as soon as possible after Royal Assent, so that the new trains may enter the Leeds-Bradford

electrified service at the earliest possible date. Both ordering and entry into service will be necessary before franchising commences, and that will involve the agreements about which I have spoken.

The rolling stock industry is in a parlous state. One of the forecasters of gloom and doom, and a severe critic of the whole process brought about by the Railways Bill, is *Private Eye's* "Thomas the Privatised Tank Engine". But he is only putting cleverly the worst prognostications of the Opposition, the Select Committee and informed railway users.

The threat is real, but I believe that passenger transport authority services already have a better prospect as a result of certain safeguards in the legislation. This debate aims to further that process. The current situation in west Yorkshire can provide a good test bed for the Government to demonstrate their commitment both to PTA services and to the railway engineering industry. I urge the Minister, who has already shown himself to be a good listener, to respond.

11.43 pm

**Mr. Gary Waller** (Keighley): I am grateful for the opportunity to intervene briefly in this short debate. I should like, first, to pay a genuine tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport, who has shown, not only by his words but also by his actions, that he has a genuine commitment to completion of the project which, in the context of this debate, is obviously centre stage: the electrification of the lines to the north of Leeds and Bradford—in particular, the Airedale and Wharfedale routes, which are so important to many of my constituents.

My right hon. Friend has not only engaged in discussions too numerous to mention, in an effort to resolve a problem that he inherited with his current responsibilities—I remember going to see his predecessor about this issue—but also visited the area on several occasions and incorporated helpful amendments into the Railways Bill.

It is, of course, difficult to exclude political differences from any area of life. Nevertheless, I should like to say that over several years those concerned with public transport in west Yorkshire—I should mention successive PTA chairmen: Councillor Michael Simmonds and Mick Lyons, as well as the hon. Member for Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) himself—have co-operated with members of my party to try to get the best possible deal for local commuters and other public transport users.

It is highly regrettable that my right hon. Friend and everyone who wants a sensible outcome should have had to work so hard to try to secure the provision of modern rolling stock on the lines which are to be electrified shortly following the preparatory works which have already taken place.

The present service, which is so well patronised, is urgently in need of updating and expansion. At peak periods, the trains cannot cope with the demand, and their reliability is unacceptably low. Surely it would be nonsense if the existing stock were to be replaced by 30-year-old trains transferred from elsewhere on the BR network, running in west Yorkshire on newly electrified track, incorporating the most up-to-date signalling equipment.

The scheme meets the rigorous cost-effectiveness criteria laid down by the Treasury. In addition, it is highly beneficial in environmental terms, providing an attractive alternative to some appalling bottlenecks on the A65 and the A650 trunk roads, and orders for new trains would be very welcome to manufacturers in Yorkshire.

Uncertainty has for far too long bedevilled the project and those involved in it. Even if it is not possible tonight finally to blow away the final doubts hanging over it, I very much hope that we are on the last lap towards what we all wish for—a successful outcome.

11.45 pm

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): I shall intervene briefly, as this is a Leeds and Bradford matter. As the Minister knows, it has been debated for many years and he has tried to get through the labyrinthine financial controls without much success so far.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) and the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) said, it is a splendid new project for Leeds, Bradford and Airedale routes. To have second-hand rolling stock would be a let down for the passengers, and also for the engineering workers who build the rolling stock, whether at Hunslet Engineering of Leeds or in York. The manufacture of new rolling stock would help to create and retain jobs and stop wasteful expenditure on the payment of unemployment benefits.

Some of us wonder at the great ease with which the Treasury spends huge sums of money on, for example, the European fighter aircraft, whereas we cannot get a relatively small sum of money promised as the conclusion to the splendid electrification scheme. I hope that the Minister will display a positive attitude.

11.47 pm

**The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman):** I share the aspirations of the hon. Members for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and of my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller). I have 11 minutes, in which I shall try to respond as constructively as possible. I put on record the fact that I share the aspirations expressed by the two hon. Gentlemen and my hon. Friend. I hope that the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South will forgive me if I go straight to the business in hand rather than making more general comments, which I can do at greater length on another occasion.

On the issue of particular interest to the hon. Gentleman, let me assure him that I am determined to do all I can to help to overcome the difficulties being experienced by West Yorkshire passenger transport authority and passenger transport executive in negotiating acceptable leasing terms for new rolling stock to be used on the Leeds-Bradford electrification project.

I should explain that the PTA is seeking to negotiate an operating lease under which the lessor would retain some 10 per cent. to 15 per cent. residual risk at the end of lease period. The hon. Gentleman will know, without my having to draw it specifically to his attention, that these are different terms from those outlined by the Treasury in its publication of late May, in which it sought to define what was a more conventional operating lease for the rest of the railway industry.

My point is that these are very favourable terms according to a local authority definition of an operating lease. A 10 to 15 per cent. residual value would probably

*[Mr. Roger Freeman]*

mean a lease period of 17 to 18 years, depending on the discount rate. The lessor would be looking to that period to reduce the residual value to that modest sum. The PTA would be the lessor, although the trains would be operated by British Rail, pending franchise.

When the services are franchised—it would be our intention to seek to franchise them in due course, but certainly not in 1994 and perhaps not even in 1995—the PTA would sublet the trains to the successful frachisee.

What are the difficulties? As I understand the position, the difficulties centre on the termination provisions of the lease. In a nutshell, the lessors, with whom the PTE was negotiating last year, stipulated that the lease should provide that a lump sum should be paid, equivalent to the value of the remaining payments under the lease, in certain circumstances. Those circumstances were, to put it bluntly, if the PTE was no longer the lessor because the Government proposed, and Parliament passed, legislation abolishing the PTAs and PTEs, and the lessor was not satisfied with the credit standing of the successor body, company or institution, that operated the trains. The lessor would then want the right to accelerate—effectively to terminate the lease.

The PTE does not hold substantial reserves, and at nearly £40 million the deal is a large one in relation to the size of its activity. The PTA is understandably anxious that the PTE could not meet such a call without undue recourse to its constituent local authorities.

Although I understand the difficulties of both parties, I am convinced that they are not insuperable and should be capable of resolution with a little give and take. The Government are prepared to be part of the give. I therefore wrote to Councillor Lyons, the chairman of the West Yorkshire PTA, on 7 June.

I referred in particular to the new clause, to which the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South has already referred, which would enable the franchising director to specify that the trains that the West Yorkshire PTE wish to lease would be used for more than one franchise. The power is explicitly related to the encouragement of investment and it explicitly allows the franchising director to enter into agreements with PTEs. Those new provisions are designed to enable comfort to be given to potential lessors—precisely the problem that we are seeking to address in this case.

I should note that the comfort must stop short of a Government guarantee that the franchisee will make the lease payments. Such a guarantee would result in a substantial transfer of risk to the public sector. That would result in the reclassification of the project, so that the capital cost of the trains would score as public expenditure in the year in which they were acquired. That would reflect the fact that, if Government were to shoulder such a large proportion of the risk, the public sector might as well buy the trains outright.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South asked why the Government are not sanctioning purchase outright. When I gave authorisation for the infrastructure, no money was available for the rolling stock. I am sure that I made the right decision, because there was a prospect of an operating lease, and I am determined that we should seek to write the lease.

The way forward is not found, however, by the Government guaranteeing the lease. On the other hand, I hope that potential lessors will take substantial comfort from the arrangements that we have put in place. At bottom, the Government's interest and those of lessors are very similar: Government want services to operate without interruption, and lessors want lease payments to flow without interruption. We are going to considerable lengths in the Railways Bill to provide safeguards to ensure that continuity of service is maintained.

In particular, we are providing for essential assets to be designated as "franchise assets" and are establishing a special railway administration regime, in the event of financial difficulties. I will not detain the House now with the detail of those arrangements. Suffice it to say that they provide a mechanism to enable quick and effective steps to be taken if a franchisee gets into financial difficulties. They will ensure that the essential assets—including the rolling stock—continue to remain available and can be transferred to a new franchisee in mid-franchise, if the worse comes to the worse.

That does not mean that there is no risk that a franchisee will default on his lease obligations, but the risk is strictly limited. What the private sector is about, as the hon. Member for Bradford, South will know because we have exchanged observations on this in previous debates, is limiting its risk. The arrangements are a practical way in which to do so.

Following my letter to Councillor Lyons, my officials met the West Yorkshire PTE officers to discuss the options. As a result, West Yorkshire PTE is now exploring possibilities with its lessors. I cannot anticipate the outcome of that, but I reiterate my firm commitment to helping to find a way forward on this transaction. I look forward to reviewing progress with Councillor Lyons on 15 July.

I now turn to the four specific questions that the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South asked. I am grateful to him for giving me advance sight of his remarks—it gave me a chance to prepare my thoughts. They are all relevant to what I have said, which I hope is helpful.

The hon. Gentleman asked me whether the PTA would be able to acquire new rolling stock. The answer is yes, because it must be a signatory to a franchise agreement. It will have the right, because it will stipulate the terms and conditions of a contract relating to the PTE area when it co-signs with the franchising director. It is our intention that the franchising director will also be a signatory. Our intention so far as the content of a franchise agreement is concerned is that new rolling stock will be delivered in the future or be used in a specific service.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the franchising director could be a party to the lease agreements. That is what we are talking about—these assurances. While I am not sure that he would be a party directly, I believe that he should be joined in the negotiations, possibly by means of a side agreement or side letter providing directly to the lessor certain guarantees and assurances. That should be practical. It is certainly the assumption on which I have worked.

The franchising director cannot commit himself formally until the Railways Bill receives Royal Assent. Therefore, we may have a particular problem in making as rapid progress as I would like on the West Yorkshire lease transactions. The franchising director cannot enter into such agreements until he has been formally appointed.

However, it does not preclude the franchising director-designate or the franchising advisor to the Secretary of State from entering into discussions now.

The hon. Gentleman also asked whether leases could effectively be as long as 25 to 30 years. The hon. Gentleman said four franchises—it may not be four franchises. Certainly, it is our intention that the franchising director should take powers to fetter his own discretion and require the continued use of leased assets. That is not time-limited. With this sort of lease, we are looking at 17, 18 or possibly even 19 years, so I would not rule that out.

The final and most important issue in the one minute left to me is that of levying and precepting. I can go a little further than the assurance that I gave on the recycling of moneys for the PTEs as a result of, for example, Rail-Track charges rising or other expenses being inevitably passed on to the PTEs as a result of the reforms. I am prepared to look at mechanisms in addition to the normal section 20 payments, so that the money gets more directly into the hands of the PTA and the PTE, to allow them to continue to make their lease payments. I am having discussions with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. I hope that when the matter is debated in another place we will be able to give certain assurances on that score.

I want this lease to be written. I look forward to the meeting with Councillor Lyons and the occasion when the hon. Member for Bradford, South can congratulate me wholeheartedly on a transaction completed.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Twelve midnight.*

# House of Commons

*Thursday 1 July 1993*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

CROYDON TRAMLINK BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

*Orders for Second Reading read.*
*To be read a Second time on Thursday 8 July.*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [8 February],* That the Bill be now read a Second time.
*Debate to be resumed on Thursday 8 July.*

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

*Order for Second Reading read.*
*To be read a Second time on Thursday 8 July.*

## SERIOUS FRAUD OFFICE

*Ordered,*

That there be laid before this House a Return of correspondence between Mr. Attorney-General and the honourable Member for East Hampshire concerning the Serious Fraud Office, and related papers.—*[Mr. Attorney-General.]*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Cross-border Security

1. **Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current position regarding cross-border security co-operation; and if he will make a statement.

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew):** The Government continue to work closely with the Government of the Republic of Ireland to achieve further improvements in cross-border security co-operation. Both Governments recognise the importance of keeping existing measures under review and making further progress whenever possible.

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that what we need now is constitutional certainty? In the light of his answer, does he agree that Labour's recent discussion paper shows too amply to us all their cynicism about our current Northern Ireland talks?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I think that constitutional certainty is very important. It is represented by the Government's guarantee that the constitutional status of Northern Ireland will not change without the consent of the majority of the people living there. That is reflected in article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

It is alarming to find that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) was reported in *The Irish Times* yesterday as confirming a report that Labour's policy on Northern Ireland is moving towards joint sovereignty or shared responsibility. The infamous policy paper "Options for a Labour Government" expressly acknowledges that such a change could not be achieved without imposing it against the will of the majority of Northern Ireland citizens.

**Mr. Maginnis:** During the Prime Minister's recent welcome visit to Northern Ireland, did he advise the right hon. and learned Member that cross-frontier security co-operation is a mere figment of a fertile political imagination and that the continuing unresolved debacle over extradition is a more accurate measure of the perversity and carelessness of the Irish Republic?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** We are disappointed with yesterday's statement that the Irish Government are not able to fulfil their commitment to amend their legislation in this session of the Dail. We will be seeking assurances that the Bill will be introduced early in the next session. Both Governments share a common concern to ensure that terrorists cannot avoid extradition by claiming that the crimes they commit are political, and both Governments wish to close a loophole revealed by an Irish Supreme Court decision in 1991.

I do not share the hon. Gentleman's ultra-critical view of cross-border co-operation, and I have previously in the House commended what the Garda have done recently by way of substantial finds of munitions and weapons.

**Rev. Ian Paisley:** Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the first paragraph of the Anglo-Irish Agreement does not spell out that Northern Ireland is a integral part of the United Kingdom? Does not he also agree that, as long as the south of Ireland insists on its legal claims over Northern Ireland, we will have this question over Northern Ireland's constitutional position?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is correct. One of the reasons why I believe that it would be helpful to have a successor to the Anglo-Irish Agreement is that it would provide an opportunity to express, by agreement, a unambiguous statement of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. I have said previously that I consider that those two articles in the Irish constitution are unhelpful to the process in which all participants in the talks last year were engaged.

I hope that it will be possible for them to be changed in a way that will remove that obstacle.

**Mr. Hume:** Does the Secretary of State agree that the reaction that he has just given, and that which the Prime Minister gave yesterday, to that academic document, which I understand is not a Labour party policy document and which I have never seen—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ooh!] Those words are very clear—which I have never seen.

Does the Secretary of State agree that his overreaction has more to do with the politics of the House than with the politics of Ireland?

The Official Unionist brothers McGimpsey yesterday alleged that there was a plot between the Labour party and myself before the last election to stop the talks, in the hope that there would be a change of Government. The truth —which can be confirmed by the hon. Members for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) and for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley)—was that before the election we requested the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and his former leader to issue a statement saying that if there were a change of Government, the talks would resume on precisely the same basis, and that the hon. Member made that statement.

Does the Secretary of State agree that the Government have signed an international treaty, called the Maastricht treaty, which commits the British and Irish Governments to an ever-closer union, not just of the peoples of both Irelands but of the people of 10 other countries as well, and that that is, in effect, shared sovereignty over a much wider range of issues than Northern Ireland; and that the implication——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. This is Question Time. The hon. Gentleman has done very well with his questions. There are other Members seeking to ask questions.

**Mr. Hume:** Does the Secretary of State agree that the implication of that treaty is that there will be an ever-closer union of the people of Ireland within Europe—from a nationalist point of view—and of the—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman must now resume his seat. This is not a debate; it is Question Time. A number of Members are seeking to come in on this particular question.

**Mr. Hume:** It happens to be a very important question.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. That is why I am seeking cross-party interest in the matter. Will the hon. Gentleman now come to his point?

**Mr. Hume:** Will the Government, instead of acting as a facilitator, be a Government and declare that their objective is to promote agreement—I underline that word —between the people of Ireland, the people of Northern Ireland and the people of Britain and Ireland, and convene talks for that, and tell the hon. Member for Antrim, North——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The Secretary of State.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I did not assert that the hon. Gentleman had seen the document "Options for a Labour Government". If I were him, I should feel that I ought to have seen it. A great many other people felt that they ought to have seen it before the last general election, because the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) is reported as saying that the policy of the Labour party is

"shifting towards joint sovereignty or 'shared responsibility'."

Paragraph 7 of the document says:

"Shared responsibility has been condemned as undemocratic—since it would have to be imposed against the wishes of a majority of Northern Ireland citizens."

That is an anxiety-making statement and we are entitled to know—as is the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume)—whether that is the policy of the Labour party.

As to the Government's policy regarding talks, everyone knows that we wish to resume those talks with all participants present, with a view to securing the agreement that was everyone's objective in April or March 1991.

**Sir James Kilfedder:** Has the Secretary of State brought pressure to bear on the Government in Dublin to take urgent and necessary measures to apprehend IRA snipers who, operating from the safety of the Irish Republic, have killed a number of members of the Northern Ireland security forces? Surely it is time for the Irish Republic to introduce selective internment at the same time as it is introduced in Northern Ireland?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The last part of the hon. Gentleman's question raises profound issues of great difficulty.

There is no evidence of which I am aware that the recent disgraceful killing of a soldier near Newtownhamilton was by a shot fired across the border. There is, however, no question but that the border is one of the greatest assets of terrorists of a republican character—in fact, it is their greatest asset. I make no criticism of the willingness of the Garda to bring all their resources to bear to the detection and arrest of people of that character. It may well be the case that they could do with more resources, but I emphasise that co-operation between the two police forces has never been better than it is at the moment.

**Mr. Alton:** Does the Secretary of State appreciate that many in the House and outside it were disappointed at his overreaction and that of the Prime Minister on Tuesday? They welcome honest intellectual debate about some of the options that might move us away from the certainty— *[Interruption.]*—the certainty that the right hon. and learned Gentleman described today, and which represents sterility because there is no movement at all in the politics of Northern Ireland. If joint sovereignty were one of the options to be explored, surely it is legitimate that it should be on the table for people to discuss—just as much as the retention of Northern Ireland in its present form or even a united Ireland.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman to the extent that if a debate is going on in the Labour party about whether a change in the constitutional state of Northern Ireland should be imposed against the wishes of most people living there, we should all know about it. That is what we want to know.

**Mr. McNamara:** Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware of the document, "The future of Northern Ireland: A paper for discussion", produced by the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr. William Whitelaw? Is the Secretary of State aware that the introduction to that paper states that it is to be seen as "a comprehensive basis for further discussions"?

There follows a whole host of possible options for the future of Northern Ireland including, in paragraph 40,

"a partial or incomplete transfer of sovereignty"—

of parts of Northern Ireland—

"either in geographical terms . . . or in jurisdictional terms";

in paragraph 42(a), the possibility of total integration of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom; in paragraph 42(b), a British Government declaration

"To admit the possibility of change, either towards Irish unity or some form of condominium";

in paragraph 42(c), the Government laying down

"a theoretical path towards closer integration, and possible ultimate unity in Ireland";

and in paragraph 42(e),

"some form of joint machinery, either at inter-parliamentary or inter-governmental level"?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that such discussion documents make a useful and positive contribution to debate on solutions to the Northern Ireland conflict? Will he confirm that his Government have imposed an Anglo-Irish Agreement on an unwilling majority? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that the union of Ireland with Great Britain was imposed, and that not one Irish Member—not even a Northern Ireland Member—voted for the Government of Ireland Act 1920 and for the start of Stormont? Will the Secretary of State therefore repudiate the suggestion that such discussion documents are a recipe for disaster, although the Opposition accept that the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman has put his question.

**Mr. McNamara:** I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that this croppy does not lie down before a pile of Tories behaving like that.

The Opposition accept that the Prime Minister has provided us with a substantial menu from which we can choose a variety of disasters—both à la carte and table d'hôte.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The document that the hon. Gentleman produces, as though it were a killer rabbit out of a hat, was a discussion document published without a contemporary expression of Government policy at that time. The Labour document was not published before the general election, and has not been published. We now have the reported confirmation of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) that the Labour party's policy is shifting towards "shared responsibility". The document asserts that shared responsibility can only be imposed against the wishes of a majority. Despite his lengthy intervention, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North carefully refrained from telling us whether that is his policy. We need to know.

As I am answering a lengthy question, perhaps you, Madam Speaker, will allow me to raise another matter, which is not unapposite, from page 29 of the full document. Having stated that it would be possible fully to reform the economy of Northern Ireland by affirmative action, it goes on to say that that might reduce the differential between Catholic and Protestant emigration rates and that the Catholic-nationalist electorate of Northern Ireland would expand. There then follows a remarkable sentence:

"However, such a transformation would take time and might have the unintended effect of reconciling Catholics to Northern Ireland's present status as part of the UK."

Is that the Labour party's policy towards reconciliation? Will the hon. Gentleman condemn that and disown it or is it the case that reconciliation has to conform to the party's declared policy of unity in Ireland?

**Mr. McNamara** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Another time.

**Mr. Hunter:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, whereas cross-border security co-operation is invaluable, the sort of co-operation envisaged by the secret paper that is causing so much discussion amounts to a callous disregard for the democratically expressed wishes of the majority of Northern Ireland and, therefore, could not possibly be the foundation for a secure and better Northern Ireland?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

**Mr. Cryer:** What about the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The Anglo-Irish Agreement is an agreement on how two sovereign Governments who share a land border should co-operate. Nothing in the Anglo-Irish Agreement derogates from the sovereignty of the British Government. I very much agree with my hon. Friend.

## Law Officers

2. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has for strengthening the powers of Law Officers as they relate to Northern Ireland.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** None at present.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Are not the ideas set out in the discussion document of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), particularly as they relate to future law and order enforcement in Northern Ireland, a breath of fresh air which the British people will welcome, as they want to see British politicians break the logjam in Northern Ireland? To confirm that, I must tell the Secretary of State that we have constituents in the north of England who spend their time patrolling the streets of Northern Ireland. They, more than any others, want the logjam to be broken. Should not all British political parties look constructively on the very good work that has been done by my hon. Friend?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** We do not know—that is the trouble—whether the policy document constitutes fresh air, hot air or the declared policy of the Labour party. I believe that we are entitled to know that. The hon. Gentleman's constituents—*[Interruption.]* If I may attract the hon. Gentleman's attention. I assumed, in his favour, that he might be interested in an answer. The hon. Gentleman's constituents who serve gallantly in the British Army in Northern Ireland will want to know whether it is the policy of the so-called alternative Government that there should be imposed upon Northern Ireland, against the wishes of the majority—a constitutional change which would ensure that the hon. Gentleman's constituents had a much harder task on their hands when they next serve there.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the best thing for the Law Officers and for the paper is for it to be published openly by the Labour party rather than be hidden and for the Leader of the Opposition to say where he stands and where his party stands and whether it is the same as where the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) stands?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** That would be interesting. It would also be interesting to know what connection this topic has with the Law Officers.

**Mr. Molyneaux:** Given that 20-minute display of reconciliation and bipartisanship, and given the requests made by many authoritative institutions in Northern Ireland for a strengthening of the law against terrorism, will the Secretary of State assure us that when the royal commission reports, which will probably be next week, he will take speedy action on those matters, which have been in the pending tray for too long?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The right hon. Gentleman refers to suggestions made recently by the Chief Constable for changes in the law. It is perfectly true that those are under consideration. They are bound, I would guess, to be considered by the Runciman royal commission which is reporting shortly. It would be sensible to see what that report says about those proposed changes. The law must be kept under review and any changes must meet the test of being effective in the control of terrorism and proportionate to the harm that is sought to be redressed. That is a test which would generally apply.

The document has some relevance to the Army because paragraph 13 says:

"Security would initially be the joint responsibility of the Great Britain and Irish nominees to the Executive Joint Authority. Responsibilities for the police force and the army would rotate between them."

That is a good example of joint authority towards which the Labour party's policy is evidently moving.

**Mr. McNamara:** I have a great number of replies to give to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, though I thought that I was asking the questions. The hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) who asked Question 1 left after the reply from the Secretary of State. [HON. MEMBERS: "So what?"] I should have thought that he might at least have waited to hear the supplementary questions.

Let me make the position of the leaked document clear. It was a discussion document. In my party, party policy is not made at the whim of official spokesmen, but by party conferences, after free discussion and properly gathered. The spokesmen have a duty to lead forward discussion —*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I called the hon. Gentleman because he indicated that he wished to put a supplementary question to Question 2. I must ask him to put his question in relation to Question 2.

**Mr. McNamara:** You have put me in a difficult position, Madam Speaker, because—*[Interruption.]* I have had questions put to me by the Secretary of State and I thought that he wanted answers. I have questions to ask. Let me observe, before I put my question, that the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not answer the point that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was imposed and gave the Irish Government the right to ask any question they wanted concerning the affairs of Northern Ireland.

Coming to the question of the Law Officers and of legality, following last year's disturbances in the Lower Ormeau road on 12 July, has the Secretary of State had any discussions this year about re-routing the march from that highly sensitive area? Given that the Secretary of State told reporters on Monday night that the issue of parades had never been discussed at the Anglo-Irish conference meetings, will he confirm that he put his name to the last communiqué of the intergovernmental conference which stated:

"The conference discussed a number of particular issues including . . . parades"?

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman only have a selective memory and should we prefer Sir Hal Miller's?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The hon. Gentleman refers to an answer I gave to journalists on Tuesday. I understood that I had been asked whether there had been a discussion in London at the last IGC meeting about the route to be taken by the parade that took place on Saturday. That was how I was understood by journalists present. That was confirmed, incidentally and interestingly, yesterday in a question put by Eamonn Malley of Downtown Radio when I was in Antrim, who said that, on Tuesday, I had rightly said that there was no discussion of the route taken by that march in Belfast on Saturday. Of course, it is right that the general topic of marches and their effect on public order falls within the ambit of what is properly discussed under intergovernmental policies. That comes under what is agreed in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and the most recent communiqué makes that perfectly clear. If the hon. Gentleman is seeking to get out his muck rake again, he has chosen the wrong heap.

## Northern Ireland Electricity

3. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the privatisation process of Northern Ireland Electricity.

**The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Robert Atkins):** The privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity has been a great success, especially in relation to the Government's objective of seeking to broaden and deepen share ownership. Two thirds of the shares on offer were allocated to the general public; that represents the highest percentage allocated to the public in any electricity privatisation.

**Mr. McGrady:** I thank the Minister for his reply, in which he has lauded the people who want to make a few quick pounds on the transaction. Does he share the concerns of the ordinary householder in Northern Ireland, of those in commerce and of those in industry about the terms of the sell-off? The high-cost, long-term contracts, the £50 million required for gas conversion at Ballylumford, the £100 million required for desulphurisation at Kilroot and many other aspects that were not previously revealed will lead to a very high acceleration of electricity costs in Northern Ireland. Is not the Minister now honour bound to withdraw the remarks and undertakings given by his predecessor, the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), who said that electricity prices in Northern Ireland would not rise beyond inflation before 1997? They have already done so.

**Mr. Atkins:** I am sure that my predecessor, who is now Minister for Trade, will be more than happy to defend his position as and when he chooses to do so. I am sure that he can speak for himself. I reiterate that the privatisation was a major success for the Government and, above all, for the people of Northern Ireland. Many people bought shares. Over 50 per cent. of the shares allocated to the general public were allocated to Northern Ireland people and about 1,800 NIE employees also bought shares. It is worth making the point that registered customers applying for 300 shares or fewer, which represents 44 per cent. of the total, got their full allocation. All in all, this is an excellent

story for Northern Ireland. It will help to ensure that in future, the benefits of competition, of the gas interconnector and the electricity interconnector and of other ways to generate power will contribute to a more efficient way in which to provide electricity to all who wish to use it.

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** Has my hon. Friend noted that although in English, Scottish and Welsh privatisations, the industries concerned have had quite large restructuring costs, the productivity increase and money saved by the reduction in the number of staff and the improved efficiency in using fuel are now coming through and are leading to large decreases in the cost of electricity to consumers? Has my hon. Friend made any judgment about when electricity prices will start to fall in the same way in Northern Ireland?

**Mr. Atkins:** My hon. Friend makes a jolly good point; I wish that I had thought of it myself. We shall look at that point. Although we have problems in Northern Ireland because of the peripherality of the Province, I hope that, in time, the benefits of privatisation will lead to the objective to which my hon. Friend referred.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** In view of the Minister's praise for the flotation of shares in Northern Ireland Electricity, which was overwhelmingly oversubscribed and which attracted the support of hundreds of thousands of Northern Ireland investors, will he reconsider the flotation of shares in the proposed privatisation of the Northern Ireland Airports Authority for private individuals?

**Mr. Atkins:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for making that point. Of course, I share his desire to offer possible shares in the airport to as wide a range of people as possible. The problem is that it is a relatively small flotation. The advice that we have from the specialists is that a flotation would not be the most cost-effective way to carry out the process. None the less, the fact that the right hon. Gentleman has raised the matter will cause me to ask questions as severely as I can. If there is a way in which to carry out such a flotation, I should like to do so.

### Government Housing Initiative

4. **Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many properties were purchased under the Government's housing initiative announced earlier in the current year *(a)* by the Housing Executive and *(b)* by housing associations; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Atkins:** As a result of the housing initiative announced by my right hon. Friend the former Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive was able to purchase 141 properties with its £3 million allocation, while the housing associations—including the Northern Ireland Co-ownership Association—purchased a total of 599 properties with their allocation of £15 million. That represents a total of 740 houses purchased under this initiative, and is, yet again, an excellent good news story.

**Mr. Dowd:** I welcome that statement by the Minister, but is not it patently clear that, while those initiatives have been taking place, the numbers of people on the housing waiting lists and homeless in Northern Ireland have been increasing? Given all the demographic information about the increasing housing need that will occur in the Province in coming years, is not it patently obvious that the actions that the Government are taking are no more capable of meeting the problems of housing need and homelessness in Northern Ireland than they are in the rest of the United Kingdom?

**Mr. Atkins:** I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman knew anything about Northern Ireland, he would know that the Housing Executive is one of the most authoritative and capable bodies, probably, in the western world. It is respected——

**Mr. Dowd:** Not according to the figures.

**Mr. Atkins:** Most certainly; the hon. Gentleman shows his ignorance. He ought to talk to his own Front Benchers, who will confirm the view across the divide in Northern Ireland that it is an entirely respectable and reputable body which does an amazingly good job. The hon. Gentleman ought to consider very carefully before he casts slurs on that body. This announcement, providing more houses for people who would otherwise not have them, shows just how much the Government, whether at national or at Northern Ireland level, care about the problem that the hon. Gentleman is flippant about.

**Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** Is the Minister aware that certain areas of Northern Ireland have lost out in this scheme? It appears that that has happened because of the lack of housing associations in certain areas. In view of what he just said about the Housing Executive, could not a better scheme have been devised, giving people in those areas where there are no housing associations an opportunity to purchase or sell their homes through the Housing Executive? Does not the hon. Gentleman consider that that should have been done?

**Mr. Atkins:** The hon. Gentleman always speaks with great authority on housing matters. I understand his concern about his constituency. Certainly, as part of this exercise, we shall look closely at ways in which we can build on and improve the present position. If the hon. Gentleman would like me to take up particular points over and above what he has suggested today, I should be more than happy to do so.

**Mr. William O'Brien:** Has the Minister had the opportunity to study the report published by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on the tens of thousands of people who are living in substandard accommodation? Has he considered the Rural Housing Association's report on the dirft of people from rural areas into towns and cities because of the lack of housing in rural areas? What is the Minister doing in the way of housing initiatives to stop the substandard houses from falling down around the people and to stop the mass exodus from rural areas because of the shortage of housing?

**Mr. Atkins:** The hon. Gentleman, who normally speaks with great authority on these matters, is painting a picture that does not seem to fit in with the truth. We are in no sense complacent about the need for rehousing, particularly in the case of rural areas, but the Housing Executive's efforts, both in the past and in its plans for the future, are directed specifically towards such areas. Although we are never complacent about what has to be done, I believe that the Housing Executive, with the

resources that the Government are putting its way, is making a pretty good pitch at the problem about which the hon. Gentleman talked.

## Exports

5. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the present level of support provided by the Industrial Development Board and the Local Enterprise Development Unit to Northern Ireland industry for the purpose of promoting exports outside the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Atkins:** Both agencies offer a range of export services to Northern Ireland industry, and in the financial year ended 31 March 1993 business worth in excess of £120 million was generated as a direct result of these activities.

**Mr. Beggs:** I thank the Minister for that reply. Will he join me in congratulating those marketeers who recently have been very successful in winning millions of pounds of export orders for Northern Ireland? Will he seek to ensure that IDB and LEDU make available such assistance as is necessary through export credit guarantees, small firm loans, and so on, and will he undertake to make representations for overseas development aid where that would be helpful?

**Mr. Atkins:** The hon. Gentleman is at the forefront in helping both agencies to attract foreign business and encourage companies in his constituency and other constituencies in Northern Ireland to expand. His point is understood. I am in constant communication with my predecessor in Northern Ireland, my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), who is now the Minister for Trade, with a view to encouraging the sort of things for which the hon. Gentleman asks.

**Mr. Thurnham:** Does my hon. Friend agree that it is most important to build the confidence of business men in Northern Ireland and that the Opposition spokesman, by his performance this afternoon, has shown that nobody would have any confidence in his policies?

**Mr. Atkins:** I could not agree more.

**Mr. Stott:** I am not tempted to follow the Minister down that path; there will be a time to do so.

Notwithstanding the achievements of the two agencies, to which I pay tribute, the Minister will be aware that the Public Accounts Committee recently concluded that perhaps more than half the new jobs established by LEDU may have been created at the unnecessary cost of displacing existing workers. The report also recommended that both LEDU and the Department of Economic Development continue regularly to seek ways to measure and record the extent of dead weight and displacement.

Given the stringent minimum standards that the Government have recently set for the Northern Ireland Co-operative Development Agency, will the Minister tell the House why he is not applying the same tough tests to LEDU's activities?

**Mr. Atkins:** I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's compliments to the agencies; he knows what they achieve. Of course, nothing is perfect in this world, and mistakes were made in the way in which LEDU operated. As a result of the investigation, a number of the changes that were recommended by the Committee have now been implemented. I invite the hon. Gentleman, if he would like to do so, to see for himself exactly what LEDU has been achieving and to learn of the detailed changes that have been made. He can rest assured that the points were well made by the Committee and have been taken into account.

## Security

6. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation on Northern Ireland.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** Since I answered a similar question on 22 April, there have been 10 deaths as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland—eight civilians and two soldiers. The Government remain committed to the defeat of terrorism in Northern Ireland, whichever organisation perpetrates it, through the even-handed and energetic enforcement of the rule of law. For as long as terrorist violence continues, it will be met with a firm and resolute response.

**Mr. Luff:** I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer. I invite him to join me in paying tribute to the security forces, who daily must deal with that tragic situation. Does he feel that their task is made easier or more difficult by the kind of ideas that are being touted around by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), in secret?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** Of course I endorse the tribute that my hon. Friend paid to the security forces. The vast majority are very young men and women. We ask them to make discretionary decisions that carry very heavy sanctions if they get them wrong: if they get them wrong one way, they may be court-martialled; if they get them wrong another way, they may be prosecuted; and if they get them wrong another way, they may be dead. I warmly endorse what my hon. Friend said about the amazingly high standard of their performance.

We have rehearsed the second part of my hon. Friend's question fairly fully this afternoon. I would add only that anything that contributes to any uncertainty about whether the constitutional status of Northern Ireland will change without the consent of the majority of those who live there must make the task of the security forces harder.

**Mr. William Ross:** When the Secretary of State and the Minister of State visited Magherafelt and Coleraine in my constituency last week, they had an opportunity to see the results—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Will the House settle down? It is very difficult to hear the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Ross:** When they visited Magherafelt and Coleraine in my constituency last week, they had an opportunity to see at first hand the results of the IRA's managing to penetrate the security measures that have been taken. Were they both very much impressed, as I was, by the efforts that are being made by local people to repair and replace buildings?

Will the Secretary of State take a careful look at the cost of rebuilding, the question of betterment and all the other problems that revolve around the replacement, refurbishment and repair of damage done by terrorist bombs? We

sometimes feel that good money is being thrown after bad to repair buildings that it would probably be better to knock down and rebuild.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I warmly endorse what the hon. Gentleman said about the qualities of his constituents following those outrageous attacks. I recently visited Coleraine, where I met the hon. Gentleman, for the third time since the bomb in November. I know the scheme about which he is talking. I realise that it is very attractive and that it offers great potential for the town of Coleraine. The hon. Gentleman has already, very fairly, alluded to the importance of maintaining the distinction between repairing and compensation for damage, and betterment of property. It may be enough to say that I fully recognise the strength of feeling that he represented in his question this afternoon.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 July.

**The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major):** This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

**Mr. Paice:** Will my right hon. Friend find time today to assure the people of Ulster that this Government are totally committed to the Union? Will he also point out to them that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) has a plot to ditch them? The leader of the Labour party should either support that betrayal of the people of Ulster or sack his spokesman.

**The Prime Minister:** The Union is vital for all parts of the United Kingdom. It has the democratic approval of the people of Northern Ireland and we in the Conservative and Unionist party stand four-square behind it. I am aware of the opinions that have been attributed to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North. I believe that he has proposed "shared responsibility", which

"would have to be imposed against the wishes of a majority of Northern Ireland's citizens."

Frankly, I think that that is appalling. The hon. Gentleman also complains that progress in Northern Ireland could strengthen the Union, and he certainly appears to regret that. I assume that can mean only that the Labour party has abandoned its manifesto commitment to consensus and that it wants to promote a united Ireland through economic deprivation. If those are the Labour party's policies, they are cynical and shameful and are a betrayal of democracy and of the people of Northern Ireland.

**Mr. John Smith** *rose*——

**Hon. Members:** Answer.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Settle down now.

**Mr. Smith:** Following the revelation that the taxpayer was defrauded—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The House must settle down and listen not only to answers but to questions, too—all of you.

**Mr. Smith:** Following the revelation that the taxpayer was defrauded of £97 million in Britain's biggest ever tax fraud involving Nissan UK and that, during the period in which the fraud was perpetrated, Mr. Octav Botnar gave £1 million to the Conservative party, will the Prime Minister invite the Conservative party to repay that sum to the Inland Revenue?

**The Prime Minister:** I think that the whole House and the whole country will notice what the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not have to say about his party's policies for Northern Ireland. If his fundamental concept is that we should clean up British politics, I agree. We should, for a start, have rules that no donor can buy votes at a party conference, that no donor should buy votes for the selection of party candidates and that no donor should buy votes for the selection of a party's leader. It is that sort of action, not his sort of smears, that demeans British politics.

**Mr. Smith:** The House and the country will have noticed that the Prime Minister did not answer the question.

Does not the Prime Minister accept that, as First Lord of the Treasury, his principal responsibility is to the British taxpayer? Should he not be encouraging action to recover money of which the Revenue has been defrauded? Is not that a more important responsibility than defending the finances of the Conservative party?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, for I have told him before, that where tainted money has been provided to the Conservative party, we will replace it. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will now have the grace to accept that. So far as Mr. Botnar is concerned, no doubt the Inland Revenue will pursue that matter. It is a matter for the Inland Revenue.

**Mr. Smith:** Can the Prime Minister tell us whether the Conservative party received money from Mr. Botnar?

**The Prime Minister:** I have no idea whether the Conservative party received money from Mr. Botnar around 10 years ago. I am not responsible for that.

**Sir Malcolm Thornton:** Has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity today to read the report by Ernst and Young entitled "Inward Investment in the 90s—Maintaining the United Kingdom's Lead"? If so, does he agree with its recommendation that one of our main advantages—the flexibility and cost of our labour force—would be placed in considerable jeopardy if we were to accept the social protocol and that that would further undermine the country's lead in attracting inward investment, which we need to maintain the recovery?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is entirely right about that. Our system for encouraging inward investment is second to none. We have received far more inward investment in this country as a result of the policies followed by this Government and their immediate predecessor than any other country in the European Community. Because of those policies, we remain the preferred location for investment in the Community by

Japan, the United States and many other countries. Policies of excessive social costs and excessive regulation would damage that inward investment and the jobs created by it.

Q2. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 July.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave a few moments ago.

**Mr. Beith:** Will the Prime Minister, recognising the importance to the north-east and to shipbuilding in Britain of the Swan Hunter shipyard, take steps today to make it clear that the frigates that were built by the yard can be completed at the yard? Will he tell the Government of Oman that he has done that, as that would indicate to them that he is confident that the yard can complete the Omani order for which it has tendered and which would otherwise be lost to Britain?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman touches on a very important matter. I very much hope that it will be possible to complete the three type 23 frigates at Swan Hunter. The Ministry of Defence is in negotiation with the receiver. Some more detailed work remains to be done, but I suspect that those discussions will be concluded very shortly indeed. If and when agreement on the terms for completing the type 23s has been reached, I will of course ensure immediately that the Omani authorities are informed of that fact. Once Swan Hunter has found a buyer—that is one of the matters of concern to the Omani Government—and is back on a secure financial footing, there is no reason whatsoever why, among seeking other orders, it should not begin once more to tender for orders from the MOD.

Q3. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 July.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Bates:** Would my right hon. Friend agree that excess bureaucracy and over-regulation stifle initiative and efficiency, not only in British industry but in the police force in its battle against crime and the criminal? Is he aware of the remarks made two weeks ago by the chief constable of Dorset police when he pointed out that, for the most simple arrests, the average police officer is required to complete 23 forms and, in the most complex cases, that figure rises to 47 forms? That takes the average police officer off the beat and puts him behind a desk for half a day on average. Does my right hon. Friend agree that such excessive bureaucracy exists, that the average police officer feels deep frustration about it and that it is a source of bewilderment for the public and a source of delight for the criminal?

**The Prime Minister:** I did see the chief constable's remarks and I am aware of the extent of the bureaucracy facing many officers in the police force. It is partly for that reason that we are seeking to deregulate so substantially. The whole purpose of the series of reforms that my right hon. and learned Friend is now taking forward is to ensure that we have a modern, professional and effective police force with the powers that it needs to deter crime. I share the concerns that are expressed by my hon. Friend and felt by the police force. That is why we are seeking to reform and modernise the police force, so that it can concentrate on the job that it is really there for—catching criminals, not filling in forms.

Q4. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 July.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Chisholm:** Has the Prime Minister seen the report which was published this week by the Day Care Trust, which is funded by the BBC's Children in Need, which analyses the poverty trap faced by a large number of Britain's 1·3 million lone parents and which advocates that income spent on child care should be substantially disregarded in calculating income support or family credit entitlements? Does the Prime Minister support that proposal? Would he prefer to boost the supply of affordable child care, or does he regard child care as one of the byways of politics about which he said on Saturday he would prefer not to be asked?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman should look at the record of the care and the support that have gone into child care over recent years. Expenditure on families with children now totals nearly £13 billion, a rise of three quarters during the period since the Conservative Government came to office in the late 1970s. The hon. Gentleman would be better served offering support for some of those policies rather than misrepresenting other people's reports.

**Mr. Devlin:** As today is the end of the first six months of the single market which this country and the Government did so much to bring about, will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to explain to the people of the north of England the benefits of the single market and re-emphasise the Government's commitment to unfettered markets and free trade?

**The Prime Minister:** There is absolutely no doubt, not just in this country but in countries all around the world, that free trade increases the volume of trade and, with it, the volume and levels of prosperity. We certainly see within the European Community the increasing advantages of the single market. I am delighted that it was concluded during our presidency of the Community, and I hope that the general principles of free trade will win through in the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations that we are currently in the midst of.

Q5. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 July.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Pike:** Will the Prime Minister recognise the widespread concern and anger of people in the north-west, particularly those on low pay—such as nurses and firemen, whose pay was limited to a 1·5 per cent. increase—at pay increases that were announced by the privatised monopoly, North West Water? It increased payments to its chief executive and management by 43 per cent. in the past year and by 506 per cent. during the recession, over the past five years. Of course, they also have their share options. Will the right hon. Gentleman condemn such action by that privatised industry?

**The Prime Minister:** It is not a matter for me to condemn. My responsibility across the public sector is to make sure that we retain proper control of costs, not least to ensure that we provide the services that the public want and not least to ensure that we are able to retain within the public sector the levels of employment that are necessary. The hon. Gentleman should concentrate on that rather than parade yet again his politics of envy.

**Mr. Clappison:** Is my right hon. Friend aware of recent judicial comments and public concern about the absence of a power for the courts to send persistent juvenile offenders into secure accommodation? Does he agree that it is essential for the courts to have such a power? Does he agree further that the Opposition's refusal to support giving such a power to the courts shows that they totally lack commitment to the fight against crime and that, far from being tough on crime, they are tough only on the victims of persistent juvenile offenders—victims whom they would continue to allow to suffer?

**The Prime Minister:** As my hon. Friend clearly knows, one of the sectors in which the greatest increase in criminal statistics can be found is in crimes against property by youngsters, largely between the ages of eight and 18. It is for that reason that we are looking at the method of dealing with offenders and, in particular, finding secure accommodation for them. It is our intention to provide such accommodation.

Q6. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 July.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Bayley:** Is the Prime Minister aware that ABB Transportation Ltd. is the last surviving company manufacturing railway carriage body shells in Britain and that it recently announced 532 redundancies among the employees at its York works and a further 364 at Crewe and Derby? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that that situation has arisen because of a haemorrhaging of orders in the run-up to railway privatisation? Will he do something to stop the next round of job losses, which would mean the closure of the York works and the end of Britain's ability to build railway carriage body shells, which we should be left to import from abroad at yet further expense to our balance of payments? When will we have more orders?

**The Prime Minister:** I find it very strange, on some occasions at the Dispatch Box, to be criticised by Opposition Members for the fact that we appear to have too large a deficit, while on other occasions I am urged to spend more and more money—usually for some particular interest of the hon. Member concerned. I regret very much the job losses at ABB. However, ABB, like every other enterprise in this country, must find its way in the marketplace.

## Business of the House

3.30 pm

**Mrs. Margaret Beckett** (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House please state the business for next week?

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 5 JULY—Opposition Day (16th allotted day). There will be a debate entitled "The continuing closure of coal mines", on an Opposition motion.

Motion relating to the payment of the coal subsidy.

Motion on the Coal Industry (Restructuring Grants) Order.

TUESDAY 6 JULY—European Parliamentary Elections Bill, Committee stage—first day.

Motion on the Special Grant Report (No. 8) (HC 724).

WEDNESDAY 7 JULY—Committee and remaining stages of the European Parliamentary Elections Bill.

Motion on the Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning) Scheme.

THURSDAY 8 JULY—Estimates day (3rd allotted day).

Until 7 o'clock, there will be a debate on occupational pensions and on the Department of Social Security's grants in aid to the Occupational Pensions Advisory Service and to the Maxwell Pensioners' Trust; followed by a debate on the Department for Education's expenditure plans 1992-93 to 1994-95.

Details of the estimates concerned and the relevant Select Committee reports will be given in the *Official Report*.

FRIDAY 9 JULY—Debate on tourism and deregulation, on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 12 JULY—Finance (No. 2) Bill, report stage —first day.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committees will meet on Wednesday 7 July at 10.30 am to consider European Community documents as follows: Committee A, document No. 4146/93 relating to air transport relations with third countries; Committee B, documents Nos. 4077/92, 4527/92, 6497/92, 7632/92 +COR1—I assume that "COR" is Eurospeak for "correction"—and 8679/92 relating to the abolition of frontier controls and the completion of the internal market.

*[Wednesday 7 July:*

*European Standing Committee A—Relevant European Community documents: 4146/93, civil aviation; relevant European Legislation Committee report: HC 79-xxiii.*

*European Standing Committee B—Relevant European Community documents: 4077/92, 7632/92+COR1, and 6497/92, abolition of border controls; 4527/92 and 8679/92, internal market. Relevant European Legislation Committee reports: HC 24-xiv (1991-92), HC 79-i (1992-93); HC 24-xv (1991-92), HC 79-i (1992-93); HC 79-vi (1992-93), HC 79-xiii (1992-93); HC 79-ii (1992-93); HC 79-vii (1992-93).]*

*[Thursday 8 July:*

*Estimates Day*

*1. Class XIII, Vote 4, Department of Social Security: administration and miscellaneous services, in so far as it relates to policy issues concerning occupational pensions and to the Department's grants in aid to the Occupational Pensions Advisory Service and to the Maxwell Pensioners' Trust.*

*The first report from the Social Security Committee of Session 1992-93 on the operation of pension funds: the recovery of assets (HC 189) is relevant.*

*2. Class VII, Vote 8, Revenue support grant, payments of non-domestic rates, Valuation Office services, etc., England; and Class X, Department for Education, in so far as they relate to the Department for Education's expenditure plans 1992-93 to 1994-95.*

*The first report from the Education Committee of Session 1992-93 on the Department for Education's expenditure plans 1992-93 to 1994-95 (HC 305) and the first special report of the Committee, Session 1992-93, containing the Government's observations on the First Report (HC 695) are relevant.]*

**Mrs. Beckett:** I thank the Leader of the House for his statement.

Can he find time in the near future for a debate on the continuing evidence, to be found in the recent report of the citizens advice bureaux, that too many customers still get a raw deal from their banks? He will know that there is continuing concern, especially about the deal that small businesses receive. I expect that hon. Members on both sides of the House would welcome an opportunity to express their concern.

I should also like to remind the Leader of the House that our case for a debate on the Government's public expenditure programme is much strengthened by a view expressed strongly this week at the British Medical Association conference—that Government policy on the national health service is leading to a waste of money on massively increased bureaucracy. This money should be available for patient care—something that may not be unrelated to the fact that there are now 1 million people on hospital waiting lists.

Finally, may I ask the Leader of the House to arrange for a statement on the action that the Government plan to take following the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys report showing that more than 3 million people in this country have lost the right to vote because they are not on the electoral register and that, in some areas, the proportion is as high as 20 per cent. of what should be the eligible population? He will recall that, before the last election, the Government spent £750,000 of taxpayers' money encouraging those people who might have left the United Kingdom 20 years ago to register to vote. They spent substantially less on encouraging people who live here to be on the electoral register. We believe that such a level of under-registration is a serious threat to democracy, and would like to hear that the Government will do something about it.

**Mr. Newton:** On the first question, I have no doubt that many hon. Members on both sides of the House will have looked with interest at the report of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, and will wish to give it their consideration. However, I cannot promise an early opportunity for a debate in quite the terms that the right hon. Lady sought.

On the question of public expenditure, I note what she says. In my statement, I announced some proceedings on the Finance (No. 2) Bill—I hope that the Third Reading

will not be delayed too long—and that may provide some opportunity for the observations of the sort that the right hon. Lady evidently wishes to make.

So far as the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is concerned, I remind her that the Government undertake advertising each year to persuade young people and others who may be less likely to register in some circumstances to register. We are currently conducting a thorough review of electoral registration, and expect to be able to report the findings of our working group to the political parties and local authority associations in the autumn. We will then consider any changes to registration procedures that may be needed and undoubtedly the right hon. Lady's representations—if I may use that neutral word—can be considered in that context.

**Dr. Liam Fox** (Woodspring): Will my right hon. Friend provide a debate on equal opportunities in politics as soon as possible? Surely, at the very least, the Equal Opportunities Commission should be investigating a parliamentary selection procedure that would exclude at least 50 per cent. of the population from applying for a seat in the House.

**Mr. Newton:** Madam Speaker, you may have read with at least as much interest as I the reports of a Labour party proposal to have women-only short lists for parliamentary seats. That does not seem to be a way of encouraging women into politics that will be welcomed even by many women in view of its implications. Clearly, it is a form of positive discrimination of a sort that many people would feel is wrong, whichever sex they may be.

**Mr. Archy Kirkwood** (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Could the Leader of the House tell us whether there is any scope for an early debate on parliamentary procedures? He will know that it is well over a year since the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) brought forward the Select Committee report on reforming the sittings of the House.

Obviously, it would make sense, if we are to change the procedures, that such changes should take effect at the beginning of a new Session, and therefore it is essential that we have an early debate. Can the Leader of the House give an assurance that the recent press reports that the parliamentary Labour party has taken such a proposal will not affect changes to the parliamentary procedures being brought forward at an early stage?

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): Let us hope it is true.

**Mr. Newton:** The hon. Gentleman is in a better position than me to know whether it is true—perhaps he might care to tell us.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) will know of the efforts that I have been making to advance the prospects of those proposals. He has noted what I found to be a discouraging report in *The Independent* last week, that the parliamentary Labour party had effectively voted to block the proposals that were put forward. I am not in a position to confirm precisely that that decision has been taken. It may be that the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) would like to tell us something about it.

**Mr. Bob Dunn** (Dartford): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 2240, concerning the decision of the Kent education authority to adopt a hostile and spiteful attitude to those schools that may wish to consider opting out.

*[That this House notes with concern that one of the first acts of the new Lab-Lib controlled Kent Education Committee at its first meeting on Friday 18th June was to change policy on grant maintained schools, from one of adopting a neutral stance towards schools seeking to opt out of County Council control to vigorously encouraging them to stay within it; further notes that Lab-Lib 'members also voted to object to applications to opt out'; regards this change of policy as an attack upon parental rights and school based democracy; and urges all schools in Kent, whether within or outside LEA control, to be alert to this new hostile policy.]*

Can he arrange for an urgent debate on this subject, so that the House will have a chance to debate and show up those Labour and Liberal-controlled local education authorities that are acting in such a spiteful and vindictive way?

**Mr. Newton:** My hon. Friend will be aware that the Government entirely agree that hostility to grant-maintained status by any local authority is something that we deplore. The whole basis of the policy is that it is for the parents to choose how their children's schools are managed. Therefore, I understand my hon. Friend's concerns.

Although I cannot promise a debate specifically on that matter, he will recall that, a few moments ago, I said that the second half of next Thursday, an estimates day, will be a debate on the expenditure plans of the Department for Education for the next year or two. I do not think that he will have to stretch things too far to get his comments in order in that debate.

**Mr. George Stevenson** (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate, or at least a statement from the Secretary of State for Social Security, on poverty in the United Kingdom? Recent reports have shown that the gap between the haves and the have-nots in Britain is wider than it has been at any time this century. Millions of people are living in abject poverty as a direct result of the Government's policies. Will the Secretary of State come to the House to make a statement on that disgraceful state of affairs?

**Mr. Newton:** I have three points to make in answer to the hon. Gentleman. First, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security will be here to answer questions next Monday. Secondly, my right hon. Friend issued yesterday an extensive press release that provides considerable information about the figures to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Thirdly, I reject the hon. Gentleman's interpretation of the figures, and I speak about the subject from experience. The figures show, of course, a widespread increase in general living standards.

**Mr. John Biffen** (Shropshire, North): Can my hon. Friend recollect any occasion when the reputation of Parliament has been enhanced during the month of July? Does he not think that, in terms of sound political planning, that provides an overwhelming case for an early recess?

**Mr. Newton:** I hesitate, in view of my right hon. Friend's experience in the role that I currently fulfil, to question his implicit judgment that no such month can be

*[Mr. Newton]*

found. I do not think that we did too badly last July, but he may attribute that to the fact that we rose, I believe, on the 15th. I am afraid that I cannot hold out any such prospect this year. I hope that my right hon. Friend will forgive me for wondering aloud whether he may have had a concealed motive for his question.

**Mr. David Trimble** (Upper Bann): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the lengthy exchanges during Northern Ireland questions this afternoon? During those exchanges, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) failed to clarify his position on newspaper reports that Labour party policy was moving towards joint authority for Northern Ireland. In light of that, if the Labour party requests an Opposition Supply day, or a half Supply day, during which the Labour party and its leader could clarify the policy, will the Leader of the House facilitate that request?

**Mr. Newton:** I would be tempted to do so, were such an unlikely request to be made. The hon. Gentleman will know that, as a result of the postponement of a debate last week, there is the prospect of a further debate on Northern Ireland matters before too long.

On the earlier part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I was not present throughout Northern Ireland questions, but I gather that there were extensive exchanges on the matter to which he refers. I was in the Chamber during Prime Minister's questions, when the most conspicuous exchange on the subject amounted to the Leader of the Opposition deciding to leave Northern Ireland aside.

**Mr. James Pawsey** (Rugby and Kenilworth): My right hon. Friend announced a debate on education next week. Could he advise me whether it is in order to make reference during the course of that debate to the activities of the All Souls Group and the impartiality of civil servants? May I draw his attention also to early-day motion 2239 which specifically refers to that group?

*[That this House notes with concern the existence of the All Souls Group, whose members are, and have been, consistently hostile to the Government's educational reforms; notes that a number of senior officials and former officials of the Department for Education and other government departments are members of the All Souls Group; and urges the Cabinet Secretary to investigate the aims, nature and membership of this group to establish whether its activities are consistent with the political independence of civil servants.]*

**Mr. Newton:** I am a little short of being persuaded of the need for an inquiry into the group. I understand that the group has existed with the participation of civil servants for about 50 years, and is a discussion group on educational matters. I am advised that the group takes no position and produces neither reports nor minutes. If my hon. Friend wishes to dispute those propositions, I am sure that he will be in touch with me in other ways.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): Could the House have a debate on the Government's policy on pay, during which they could explain why they are interfering in public sector pay and limiting people—for example, members of the fire service—to 1·5 per cent. wage increases? At the same time, the Government do nothing about other public services, such as the privatised water authorities. Recent pay increases in the Yorkshire water authority have taken the salary of Sir Gordon Jones to over £150,000. If Sir Gordon and all the other board parasites were to go home, it would not affect the functioning and operation of Yorkshire Water. Time should be found to debate the greed, prejudice and self-interest of those pillars of Tory policy.

**Mr. Newton:** It will not surprise the hon. Gentleman to know that I cannot undertake to provide time for the debate that he wishes to have. I will merely observe that the Government's approach to public sector pay has been an important ingredient in the policies that are now manifestly producing economic recovery.

**Mr. Alan Howarth** (Stratford-on-Avon): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the Disabled Persons (Services) Bill is on the Order Paper for tomorrow. Support for independent living is a basic principle of Conservative philosophy. This measure would not entail an additional penny of Treasury expenditure but would offer better value for existing expenditure. The passage of the Bill would be very extensively welcomed by disabled people and by local government. Given that the Bill has all-party support and has been approved in another place, will the Government give it a fair wind to enable it to complete its legislative passage?

**Mr. Newton:** My hon. Friend's interest in these matters is well known and much respected. He will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People has several times set out the Government's approach. We very much share the aim of ending discrimination against disabled people, but see many practical problems in the approach contained in the Bill. We believe that the right approach is a programme of education and persuasion, backed up by more specifically targeted legislation.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray): In view of the recently adopted, although slightly imperfect, concept of openness within the Council of Ministers, will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement next week about the meeting to be held tomorrow in Brussels about aspects of structural funds allocation within the Community? I understand that the Minister for Industry will deputise for the President of the Board of Trade, who will be absent through illness. Does the Minister appreciate how important those negotiations are for areas such as the highlands and islands and Merseyside, which are seeking objective 1, and other areas seeking objective 5(b)?

**Mr. Newton:** A few years ago, I had a brief experience of such matters as a Minister with responsibilities for regional affairs and the structural funds, and I appreciate their importance. I cannot undertake to arrange a specific statement at a specific time, but I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends will keep the House informed in the most appropriate way.

**Mr. Harry Greenway** (Ealing, North): Would my right hon. Friend arrange a debate next week about animal welfare? That would enable the House to discuss the latest report of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which shows that cruelty is increasing at an

alarming rate. We in this country think that we are kind to animals, but we are not. A lot of people should be barred from owning them.

**Mr. Newton:** The House respects my hon. Friend's long-standing interest in animal welfare. Were I to respond favourably to every request that he makes, however, we would probably have a debate on animal welfare once a week. I cannot give him the promise he seeks, but I will bear his request in mind.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): Would it be possible to have another debate, in Government time, on party financing, given the widespread public concern that the Conservative party is in receipt of stolen money and, in another case, money from a very dubious source? Is it not important in a democracy for political parties to make it clear where their money comes from, although I can understand the reluctance of the Conservative party to do so? Can we have a debate as quickly as possible, before the summer recess, because it is a very important subject that should be debated yet again, in view of the latest details to emerge?

**Mr. Newton:** A small opportunity might arise, curiously, during the debate on the estimates next Thursday, when we shall debate, among other things, the action taken by my right hon. Friend to help the Maxwell pensioners. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman or some of his colleagues will tell the House that the Labour party is returning the Maxwell money to help the Maxwell pensioners.

**Mr. Barry Field** (Isle of Wight): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the French and German Governments have slashed their social security payments to such an extent that they are now way below the generous benefits that we pay?

During business questions, my right hon. Friend referred to an EC document on immigration, which we are to debate next week. May we have a full debate on the subject, especially in view of the fact that the French and Germans have considerably tightened their immigration regulations and in view of the very real fear in this country, especially among the elderly, that there will be economic migration within the EC and into this country by people who wish to take advantage of the very generous benefits structure here?

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Newton:** My hon. Friend, who clearly has considerable support from other hon. Friends, will of course know that the House has recently approved new measures on asylum to prevent abuse of our system. My hon. Friend mentioned France. According to reports in yesterday's newspapers, Germany too is taking action to restrain the growth of its social security budget, which it believes cannot be afforded and which could undermine the system as a whole.

**Mrs. Maria Fyfe** (Glasgow, Maryhill): Will the Leader of the House take a look behind him and note that the score this afternoon is approximately men 30, women one? Does he realise that many viewers watching Parliament on television believe that it is high time that all political parties took in hand the gross under-representation of women in Parliament?

**Mr. Newton:** I think that the hon. Lady will acknowledge that all political parties—I think I am right in saying that—have in recent years been concerned to do all that they reasonably can to increase the number of women in Parliament. The issue that was raised earlier was in reference to a particular proposal which has, I understand, been considered by the parliamentary Labour party, but which I think few women would regard as a sensible way to proceed.

**Mr. Peter Thurnham** (Bolton, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early debate on the Local Government Commission and, in particular, on the need for it to restore historic county boundaries? Is he aware that there is a popular demand for Bolton to be moved from the redundant Greater Manchester council and included in Lancashire where it belongs?

**Mr. Newton:** I cannot promise an early debate on that matter, but I welcome the opportunity to stand here as a sort of public conduit for the comments of hon. Members from various parts of the country, which Sir John Banham will no doubt carefully note.

**Mr. Robert N. Wareing** (Liverpool, West Derby): Does the Leader of the House recall that it was 10 years ago yesterday that I was fortunate enough to come second in the private Members' ballot, and that he was the Minister who opposed my Bill to outlaw discrimination against disabled people? Does he also recall that he said that education and persuasion were the only ways to deal with some people's disgraceful attitude towards the disabled?

As that policy has failed, may we have a statement next week on the Government's attitude to discrimination against disabled people, which will give them an opportunity to review the whole issue?

**Mr. Newton:** On the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I can tell him that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, as a Minister at the Department of Social Security, will be answering questions on Monday. The hon. Gentleman may have the opportunity to raise the matter with him.

As for the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I well recall that I was the Minister with responsibility for disabled people on that occasion. I also recall the arguments. I dispute the suggestion that substantial progress has not been made in the intervening 10 years in advancing the cause of disabled people and removing discrimination against them—and, indeed, in greatly improving the benefits available to them, an issue with which I have been very much involved.

**Mr. David Shaw** (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for a further debate on standards in public life, and will he use my early-day motion 2197 as the basis for such a debate?

*[That this House calls upon the Leader of the Opposition to issue an order to his staff not to interfere with the investigations being carried out by the media into the scandal of nepotism and corruption on Monklands District Council; regrets that Mr. Murray Elder, Chief of Staff in the Leader of the Opposition's office, should offer a constituent in Airdrie employment with Labour-controlled Edinburgh Council, paid for out of the public purse, on condition that the constituent would keep quiet and not record his*

*[Mr. David Shaw]*

*complaint on television; and furthermore believes that Mr. Murray Elder should be dismissed for engaging in an attempt at a Watergate-style cover up.]*

Would not such a debate give us the opportunity to disclose more information about the two telephone calls made from the Leader of the Opposition's private office in order to effect a cover-up of Labour's growing scandal on Monklands district council?

**Mr. Newton:** That is one of a number of matters on which we daily await comment either from the right hon. and learned Leader of the Opposition or, on some occasions such as this afternoon, from the right hon. Lady who is the deputy Leader, but we simply go on waiting. Perhaps we can raise our hopes in the light of my hon. Friend's question.

**Mr. Paul Flynn** (Newport, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate on the future of the civil service, because of the Government's avowed intention to reduce it from 500,000 to 10,000? Does he not agree that the British civil service is still a unique institution, the least politicised and the least corrupt in the world? Once it has been undermined, market-tested, privatised, contractorised and effectively destroyed, it can never be rebuilt.

**Mr. Newton:** I do not know on what the hon. Gentleman rests all that. The changes that have been made —for example, in the creation of executive agencies—are widely seen by many civil servants as offering new opportunities for doing exactly what civil servants want to do, which is to deliver efficiently and effectively a first-class service to the public.

**Mr. James Hill** (Southampton, Test): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that we all want the Olympics to come to Manchester. That raises the problems, on which I hope he can find time for a debate, of ticket touting, the printing of false tickets and even of someone going to the extent of taking one person to Wimbledon for £50,000.

This is growing into an industry to which the law is no deterrent, and it is time that it was thoroughly examined. Not only do these people not pay tax, but they put the money into their pockets, they are not part of working society, and none of the money is used for the improvement of our state system. We must crack down on such people before the Olympics come to Manchester.

**Mr. Newton:** I am sure that my hon. Friend's view is widely shared, and I shall draw his representations to the attention of my right hon. Friends. My hon. Friend mentions the Manchester bid. I had the good fortune to be present at the reception given earlier this week by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for members of the International Olympic Committee to try to advance that bid further. My hon. Friend is no doubt aware that the Manchester Olympics bid flag is flying in Downing street.

**Mr. Edward Garnier** (Harborough): Despite the advice of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), will the Leader of the House find time this month for a debate to highlight the need for a bypass around the village of Theddingworth in my constituency? That village is on the A427 from Market Harborough to Lutterworth.

The villagers and residents in and around the village are fed up with lorries going through their garden walls, the vibration of heavy traffic and the filth and dirt that is associated with it. There is a tremendous need for a bypass, which is recognised by everybody except the Liberal-Labour county council. May we have a debate on that at the earliest possible opportunity?

**Mr. Newton:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. I am sure that he will carry not only my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North but all hon. Members with the thought that the House would enhance its reputation by staying on an extra day to debate that bypass.

**Mr. Harold Elletson** (Blackpool, North): Has my right hon. Friend had a chance to study early-day motion 1874 in my name, entitled "Croatian Army Atrocities"?

*[That this House recognises the horrific consequences of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina and condems the perpetration of massacres against civilians by all sides whether they be Serb, Croat or Muslim; is appalled by most recent reports of Croatian Army atrocities against Muslim civilians in Jablenica, Vitez, Jelinak, Armici, Zenica and many surrounding villages which have been witnessed by officers and men of the Cheshire Regiment and calls on Croat authorities to end, forthwith, attacks against local civilians; calls for all regular Croatian Army troops to withdraw from Bosnia-Herzegovina; and simultaneously urges Her Majesty's Government to discusss, with other Members of the Security Council, an appropriate response by the international community.]*

So far, it has received the support of 98 right hon. and hon. Members. In view of today's disturbing news of threats by the Croatian army against the United Nations battalion in Mostar and the decision to withdraw that battalion, will he consider making time available next week to discusss sanctions against the Republic of Croatia?

**Mr. Newton:** I am afraid that I cannot promise to find time for that debate as things stand at present. I think that all hon. Members will understand why my hon. Friend has thought it right to raise that matter. He knows that the whole House shares his condemnation of the continued fighting and the atrocities being committed in Bosnia.

**Mr. Matthew Banks** (Southport): Given Britain's changing and volatile military commitments overseas, will my right hon. Friend try to find time to debate the importance of ending the plans to merge the Gordon Highlanders with the Queen's Own Highlanders and, at a stroke, find a cost-effective solution to the constraints of Army manpower and ensure a future for two of the finest regiments of the British Army?

**Mr. Newton:** My hon. Friend will know that we are expecting shortly the publication of further defence estimates. That will be followed in due course by a further debate, although I cannot promise that it will be before the summer recess. I cannot promise a separate debate in quite the terms my hon. Friend seeks.

**Mr. Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an early debate on the proposals by the BBC to have a reunion for all those who were involved in the great train robbery? The minimum cost of air flights is about £1,000, or £4,000 first class, and heaven knows

what hotel accommodation during the filming would cost. My surgeries are constantly visited by senior citizens who find it difficult to meet the cost of the licence fee. They will see it as a totally outrageous waste of money.

**Mr. Newton:** My hon. Friend well knows that the BBC is independent of Government. It has been a long-standing principle that Ministers do not intervene in matters of programming policy. However, I understand that the BBC's own guidelines for factual programme makers stipulate that criminals should not profit from their crimes, and that would normally preclude the payment of fees or expenses for programmes dealing specifically with crimes for which people have been convicted.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): What date has the Leader of the House pencilled in for our next foray into party political contributions? On that matter, has he ever discussed with any member of the Cabinet the £1 million contribution of Mr. Botnar to the Conservative party?

**Mr. Newton:** The hon. Gentleman cannot seriously expect me to start talking about conversations I had with other members of the Cabinet across the Dispatch Box on the Floor of the House. The first part of his question was a bit uncharitable, in view of the trouble I took to arrange the debate on Members' interests for which he had been pressing me for so long. The first part of his question was just about the ultimate triumph of hope over expectation.



## Student Unions

4.1 pm

**The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten):** I would like to make a statement about the reform of student unions.

As the House knows, we have sharply expanded the number of students in higher education and established a new framework for the sector. We have also established a new further education sector, with a record increase in student numbers. We recently issued our draft charters for further and higher education for consultation. The charters will promote informed choice and a high standard of service in further and higher education. Our student union reforms will similarly reinforce choice.

The Government have already abolished the closed shop in the trade union sector. Our reforms will apply the voluntary principle to student unions throughout Great Britain. We will give students the power to choose for themselves what collective involvement they want. I believe that the whole House will support me in emphasising the voluntary principle for students. Students should have the right to opt in, to decide for themselves.

At the same time, we believe that the taxpayer should not be expected to support, through campus unions, activities which are unaccountable, whether financially or democratically, or which represent essentially political activities on campus. We must protect individual students and their clubs and associations from victimisation.

I therefore propose to bring forward legislation to implement a three-part reform of student unions. First, I plan to limit the purposes for which universities and colleges can pass money received from public sources to their campus unions. All students will retain access, if they wish, to a core of essential campus services, and universities and colleges will be able to support them through their campus unions with public funds if they wish, although they may provide those services directly themselves and not through campus unions. All other campus union activities will be placed on an opt-in, voluntary subscription basis.

Secondly, my general policy will be that the approach which I have outlined will avoid public funds being used for affiliations to organisations such as the National Union of Students or other campaigning organisations. If campus unions wish to affiliate to any such organisations, the fees should be paid from private sources.

Thirdly, student unions should be more accountable and fully representative. We shall therefore provide for institutions to develop and implement codes of practice governing the conduct and behaviour of their campus unions.

In preparing the proposals we have taken careful account of universities' and colleges' concerns about essential student services, and we shall continue to do so. I am minded to identify welfare, catering, sport, and representation of student interests within the institution as core services for which student unions may receive public funding. I intend to ensure that the core services are accessible to all students.

For other activities, it will be up to students to decide what collective involvement they want. Our intention is not to impede students' activities, but to limit the purposes for which student unions can spend public money.

*[Mr. John Patten]*

Through the institutions' codes of practice, I aim to ensure that campus unions follow democratic practices, and to prevent political bias in their allocation of resources. If individual students, or individual student societies, consider that they are being discriminated against or unfairly treated by their campus union, they should be able to seek redress. The codes of practice will therefore provide for a person outside the institution to whom individual students and societies can appeal.

For both core services and codes of practice, my intention is that universities' and colleges' decisions should be based on prior consultations with their students, and fully publicised thereafter, in line with charter principles.

Universities and colleges will be able to retain any savings from reductions in their support for campus unions and will be able to redeploy them for the benefit of students, whether collectively or as individuals. The reforms will not in any way affect the level of public funding available for students.

The new powers that I have described will be exercisable in parallel by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland proposes to consult on similar reforms. In this way we shall be able to allow appropriate variations to suit local circumstances.

The proposals follow an extended period of consultation with students, universities and colleges. We shall begin further discussions shortly with the universities and colleges, and with student representatives. I am issuing today two consultation notes, for response by 1 October, on the detailed implementation of our policy for the core services and the coverage of codes of practice. I shall be looking to all parties to implement the reforms constructively. Those consultation papers, and a factual note setting out the proposals, are being placed in the Vote Office today.

The Government recognise that students are vital to the future well-being of this country. They should be encouraged to exercise their own choices and their own judgments. The reforms that I have outlined today will ensure that they can do so. On that basis, I hope that the proposals will be widely welcomed by the House.

**Mr. Jeff Rooker** (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Well, well, is that not typical of the Government? They prattle on for two to three years about a change of policy. The Secretary of State made a Tory party conference rant last October. Now, on 1 July, the Government make a statement to the House which will affect 1 million students in higher education and 2·5 million students in further education, and ask for comment by 1 October. It is contemptible. Every time the Government seek to consult on education matters, they do so during the summer. It is just not good enough. All student unions would benefit from a clarification of their legal status—there can be no argument about that—and operational procedures, but smashing up the wide range of services that they provide is not the way to go about it.

The Government's survey showed that less than 2 per cent. of total student union incomes were spent on political activities and that 70 per cent. of student unions spent less than 0·5 per cent. of their income on such activities. The Secretary of State is now seeking to waste parliamentary and ministerial time on the matter. How many university vice-chancellors and college principals have complained to the Government about the operation of student unions? The Department's own report made it clear and confirmed in 1989 that many student unions are charitable bodies. Why cannot we make sure that all student unions are charitable bodies and subject to charitable law? What is wrong with the NUS proposal for a register of student unions, to operate in the same way as the certification officer for trade unions?

At a time of financial restraint coupled with expansion, what is being done to ensure that student unions in smaller higher education colleges and in the further education sector are able to provide services of equal value to those of student unions in larger colleges? Why have not the Government followed the Opposition's request for the National Audit Office to prepare a report on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which student unions use public funds? The NAO is Parliament's watchdog for the spending of public money, so why have we not used our own watchdog to produce a report, to allow the Public Accounts Committee to investigate, inquire and report back to the House?

If student unions can propose a conscience clause for individuals opting out, why is that not good enough for the Government? A student union clause for opting out of a local student union is not good enough for Ministers. If student unions can propose secret ballots under independent scrutiny by the Electoral Reform Society, why is this not acceptable to the Government? For many years, the NUS has had no individual members, and is converting itself to charitable status.

Does the Secretary of State's statement and proposals protect the ability of the NUS to provide, for example, bulk purchasing arrangements for the stocking of student union shops so that they can avoid being ripped off by spiv suppliers and can provide economy and value for money for students?

The NUS has asked for ballots on affiliation every three years. Not every student union is affiliated to the NUS. What is wrong with ballots on affiliation every three years? If the NUS is so unrepresentative, why do Ministers bother to consult it? Why do they bother to consult a body that they claim is so unrepresentative?

**Mr. Bob Dunn** (Dartford): Quite.

**Mr. Rooker:** We have heard now from a former Minister at the Department for Education that clearly he does not want to go even that far.

From my experience as a governor of a college of further education for more than 20 years before I became a Member of the House, I know that student unions are the most appropriate and effective means by which student views can be taken into account. The Secretary of State's short statement allows for no effective consultation in July, August and September, and that is unacceptable. I want answers this afternoon to my questions to the Government so that there can be meaningful consultation during a period when, as with the House, colleges and universities will, in the main, be in recess.

Some student unions have campaigned, for example, for wider access for students—only to be told by admission tutors that such campaigns mean unwarranted social engineering. Does that count as political campaigning by

students? We must know the margins of the areas into which the Government are seeking to corral student unions.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals admits that in terms of cost-effectiveness alone but also efficiency, welfare, information, advice and counselling, sports, and support for academic, religious, cultural, artistic and—yes—political and religious groups is best conducted by students unions. If that committee does not see a problem and is not complaining to the Government, calling in the police or cutting off funds, why are the Government taking that upon themselves?

Sheffield student union organises help for 26 local campaigns, such as Crisis at Christmas. Is it political to provide breakfast in the cathedral? It may be nasty party politics to Tory Ministers, but it is what Jesus Christ would have done. That activity is funded by the surplus from the student union's trading activities—activities that are buttressed and supported by about 15 per cent. of its total funds being public funds. It spends the rest of those funds on programmes for women's safety and facilities for international students. Will they be cut by the Government's proposals?

Will student unions that run late-night minibus services and that provide safe transport for women's groups be restricted? The student union in my constituency runs unicare, in co-operation with the police. It is funded by the Home Office and deals with crime and safety. Will universities be prevented from running operations such as that?

Having looked at the cost-effectiveness and the crumbling state of our education funding, Manchester university students union has concluded that it wishes to campaign not for a loan system, but for a graduate tax. Is that political? Will it be prevented from putting its case for a decent funding system for higher education? Will it be corralled by this?

Many of the examples that Conservative Back Benchers will use when I sit down—for convenience I have distributed the brief from which they come to my hon. Friends—relate to activities as far back as 1989. Many others relate to activities around late 1991 and early 1992 when my party, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservative party were campaigning to encourage students to get on the correct electoral register and to ensure that they were registered for the correct proxy and postal votes. Yes, we did target students, as did the Tory party; we make no apology for that. The Government forced students to deregister because of the poll tax, so it was crucial to ensure that they did not lose the right to vote.

I recently visited a university that has been successful. It had provided a safe haven for students and students had been taking food to Bosnia. The vice president, who had been so active in the student union, had just accepted a commission in the Army and the president had just been positively vetted for a job at GCHQ—the Government communications headquarters. That is an example of the student unions in the 1990s. They are professional, employ professional staff and provide professional services.

Why on earth are Ministers seeking to waste parliamentary and ministerial time with this contemptible system of consultation, which cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be meaningful? Student unions are spending their time trying to keep students alive and well fed because of the stress that they are under. It is an absolute disgrace that this statement has been made today.

**Mr. Patten:** What the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) has said puts the capital R into the word "rant". We have probably seen a parliamentary record since the response to the statement was longer than the statement itself. It is one for the "Guinness Book of Records".

The hon. Member for Perry Barr has misinterpreted entirely the fundamental principles underlying the reforms—the freedom of association and the freedom of choice for individuals. It is the sort of thing to which the European convention on human rights correctly refers. It is totally wrong, as a matter of high principle, for people to be forced to join an organisation that they do not wish to join and, through that membership, to be forced to accede to campaigns of which they do not approve.

The statement was short and the consultation period is long. We have a three-month period for consultation, until 1 October, and many of the hon. Gentleman's questions are referred to and answered in the two consultation papers that are in the Vote Office this afternoon.

I welcome one thing—only one thing—that the hon. Gentleman said, and that is his welcome for the fact that we need better codes of practice and greater accountability within our student unions. The hon. Gentleman represents part of a university city, as I do, and we all know that periods of student unrest, demonstrations and troubles on campuses come and go rather like the cycle of spots on the surface of the sun. We must be prepared at any stage for the problems that can arise if there is inadequate supervision of what goes on in student unions.

The hon. Gentleman referred to proposals for opting out, put forward by the NUS and others. Opting out, with a conscience clause, denies those students access to services which should be theirs, as of right, on campus.

The Government's proposals this afternoon protect a core set of services to which all students have access, whether those services are provided through a campus union or directly by the universities themselves. There may be market testing. That is something that we may wish to encourage. Opting out denies access. There is a clear division between what people should reasonably expect institutions to provide and what they should reasonably expect to pay for out of their own pocket.

That leads me to two specific questions asked by the hon. Member for Perry Barr at the end of his lengthy set of questions. I have always believed that charitable work should be funded from the pockets of individuals and should not be funded through taxpayers' contributions.

Although the hon. Gentleman did not name the university to which he referred in his second question, those services provided by some campuses and some student unions—for example, the provision of late-night buses for women and similar services—are well within the core services as set out in the consultation paper.

I shall return to the point with which I began. I believe that it is right that universities, whether through campus unions or direct services, should provide the core of essential services—welfare, student representation, sport and catering—but I do not believe that outside that core it is right that, in a late 20th century democracy, uniquely in this country, young people should be forced, without any redress, to join an organisation.

**Mr. Robert Jackson** (Wantage): My right hon. Friend speaks rightly about high principle. Does he believe in the principle of university autonomy, and does he think that his proposals are consistent with that principle?

**Mr. Patten:** Yes. I know that my hon. Friend speaks with authority as a former Minister with responsibility for higher education. I see no interference whatever with university independence and autonomy. We are setting out proposals so that, in future, there cannot and shall not be flows of public funds towards organisations that are involved in political campaigning, whatever its nature.

**Mr. Don Foster** (Bath): Today's statement is nothing more than a well-gnawed bone thrown to appease the Secretary of State's Back Benchers who are disillusioned by the failure of his other education reforms.

Will the Secretary of State explain to the House how the proposals will improve services to students? How will the proposals raise quality in further and higher education? How does he believe that those proposals will restore his tarnished image? If he is concerned about the alleged misuse of public funds, he would do better to look closer to home at the £35 million that he has wasted on this year's key stage testing.

**Mr. Patten:** The improvement for students in higher and further education is contained in the consultation charters that are out at the moment, to which we are expecting responses from universities, further education colleges and students themselves. In the first instance, that is where we will see a greater improvement in services available to students. It is critical that the consumer voice has as loud a hearing as the producer voice.

**Sir Rhodes Boyson** (Brent, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the political activities of the National Union of Students have damaged the image of students throughout the country? His statement today will be welcomed by thousands of students of no party and even by some in the Labour party.

**Mr. Patten:** The National Union of Students and any other student body of whatever political or non-political sort have a perfect right in a free society to associate together and to campaign, but they cannot and should not be funded by the taxpayer. That is totally wrong in a free society.

I shall repeat to my right hon. Friend what I said earlier. It is totally wrong that anyone, in a free society, should be forced, without redress, to join any organisation whatever.

**Mr. Derek Enright** (Hemsworth): The Secretary of State has criticised the National Union of Students for funding its political activities out of public money. Is it not the case that people who live in glasshouses should not get undressed with the light on? Was it not just last week that the officials' Box was packed with civil servants when we debated political funding? So it is, to put it mildly, two-faced to talk about that.

Secondly, how can the Secretary of State possibly distinguish between what is political and what is of benefit to students? Is it okay to give them Ovaltine for tea, but not for them to campaign against drugs? Where will he draw the line? It is quite impossible.

Furthermore, just as students go down, the Secretary of State provides a consultation which has to be answered before they go up again.

**Mr. Patten:** I recommend the hon. Gentleman to study carefully the proposals in the two consultation papers which are in the Vote Office this afternoon. I also recommend the hon. Gentleman, whose views on education I respect, to reflect very carefully on the way in which public money is used in education. It cannot be right for public money to be used for campaigning for political activities. There have been enough complaints in recent years about activities in the universities of Lancaster and Bradford and in other universities. It cannot be right that those funds should not be isolated quite clearly from the core of public funds which go, equally quite rightly, to funding services which students have a right to expect.

**Mr. James Pawsey** (Rugby and Kenilworth): Will my right hon. Friend accept that his statement will be widely welcomed, because it treats students as adults? A period of 12 weeks in which to make a response to a statement which has been signalled for years is quite reasonable. I commend him for what he says within the statement. Students will be reassured by what he has said about care and welfare services. Will he also take on board the fact that we on this side of the House are reassured by what he has said about public accountability and responsibility?

**Mr. Patten:** This is a very carefully balanced package, as my hon. Friend has pointed out. I believe that public accountability is critical and that it is right that there are proper codes for the election of officers in student unions in campuses in the 800 different higher and further education institutions. I also believe it absolutely right that students or individual organisations who feel disaffected by their treatment, or discriminated against, should have the right to seek redress from someone who comes from outside those institutions—in other words, an ombudsman for individuals or organisations. That is the proposal.

**Mr. Greg Pope** (Hyndburn): I know that the Secretary of State is more interested in ideology than in common sense, but perhaps he would address himself to the practical problem of splitting political activities from the core functions. It might be quite difficult to prevent political activities from creeping into even the core functions that he has defined to the House this afternoon.

For example, a disabled students society might wish to campaign for better access in an academic institution. Is that political? Also, individual student unions have lobbied the Government very successfully over the Railways Bill and privatisation about keeping the students and young persons rail card. Clearly, that is a political activity in that it relates to a Bill that is going through the House. Yet the Secretary of State says that student unions will continue to have representational activities. Is that not political? What safeguards can he give to ensure that students unions will be able to do that?

Is it not a fact that, in the end, the right hon. Gentleman is appealing to his own Back Benchers and their neanderthal right-wing instincts rather than providing students with decent services?

**Mr. Patten:** There is nothing wrong with individual students campaigning, if that is what they wish to do, and providing the funds for campaigning organisations. There is everything wrong, I believe, with political campaigning

being funded by taxpayers. The hon. Gentleman will find set out very clearly in one of the two consultation notes in the Vote Office descriptions of the way in which these differences can be drawn.

**Mr. Michael Alison** (Selby): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that the fire and slaughter that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) poured on his statement this afternoon would suggest that my right hon. Friend was leading the student world into the world of the gulags? In fact, the reverse is true: he is leading the student world into a dimension of freedom, which is entirely appropriate. In the university culture, voluntarism is the principle of freedom, and my right hon. Friend is to be warmly congratulated on this reform and especially on combining with it the continuation of the fundamental welfare benefits for all students. He has pulled off a remarkable double that can only benefit the student world.

**Mr. Patten:** I am glad that my right hon. Friend thinks that we have the balance right and that the principles underlying the balancing act that we have announced are strongly founded.

**Mr. John D. Taylor** (Strangford): Does the Secretary of State understand that his statement will be given a particular welcome by Northern Ireland students at the two universities in the Province? Does he further understand that the situation in Northern Ireland is worse than that elsewhere in the United Kingdom, because not only do our own students attend those universities but a large percentage come from the Republic of Ireland—more than 2,000—whose fees are paid by the British taxpayer? Does he realise that those students from the Republic influence the control of the student unions in both universities, which do not reflect the opinions of Northern Ireland students? Does he understand, therefore, that we in Northern Ireland particularly welcome the idea of voluntary opting into student unions and hope that it will apply equally throughout the United Kingdom and not only Great Britain?

**Mr. Patten:** The right hon. Gentleman will probably have heard me say towards the end of my statement that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will consult separately on arrangements in Northern Ireland. My statement referred to Great Britain. I will certainly draw my right hon. and learned Friend's attention to the right hon. Gentleman's feelings and to the strength of those feelings.

**Mr. Graham Riddick** (Colne Valley): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on introducing proposals that are based on the fundamental right of the freedom of association. Will he confirm that the objectives behind his proposals are to extend freedom of choice to students, to ensure the continuation of the services that are currently provided, to ensure that students have access to those services and to stop student unions from doing and saying some extraordinary and extreme things in the name of all students—be it supporting a gay wedding at Lancaster university, supporting extremist organisations or victimising Conservative societies? This is a long overdue but extremely welcome reform.

**Mr. Patten:** I welcome my hon. Friend's warm welcome and answer, yes, yes, yes and yes to each of his questions.

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): Is not it particularly sad and pathetic to see an Education Minister reduced to pushing around students because he is having so little success in pushing around teachers? Does not the Secretary of State understand that any attempt to curry favour with the neanderthal tendencies in the Tory party will crumble to dust like the rest of his initiatives? Does he understand that, as he is no longer responsible for university funding in Scotland, many of us find it slightly surprising that no Scottish Minister is present to listen to this latest folly?

**Mr. Patten:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is issuing his own strong support for the proposals this afternoon.

**Dr. Keith Hampson** (Leeds, North-West): My right hon. Friend spoke of choice. Is he aware that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals is disturbed that it will have less choice in the nature and quality of student officeholders with which it has to deal because the likelihood is that the sort of students who will have the most incentive to opt in will be those who hold politically extreme views? It is right for my right hon. Friend to seek greater accountability, but will he hesitate before proceeding with some of the reforms, as Sir Keith Joseph did in 1983?

**Mr. Patten:** I hope that students who are actively interested in student welfare, from whatever part of the political spectrum they come, will involve themselves. I hope that the measures that I have announced this afternoon, should they be approved by Parliament, will to a great extent depoliticise much of the activity of past years on too many campuses.

**Ms Glenda Jackson** (Hampstead and Highgate): Is the Minister aware that one of the choices facing an increasing number of students, particularly in London, relates to whether they can afford to finish their courses in view of the particular problems that the capital presents, with high rents and very spread campuses which entail much travelling? Is he also aware that if a union is based solely on volunteers, those very valuable welfare services from which many students, and particularly mature students, have derived great benefit when attempting to balance those harsh economic choices will be diminished?

**Mr. Patten:** We are conducting a review into student hardship at the moment and I fully appreciate what the hon. Lady says about the difficulties of students in high-cost housing areas, be they London, Oxford or other areas on the south coast. However, the hon. Lady should appreciate that, in 1993-94, the combined value of the grant and loan is 40 per cent. higher than it was in 1989-90. There is no evidence whatsoever that access to higher education is being inhibited.

**Mr. Anthony Coombs** (Wyre Forest): I warmly welcome the long-overdue end of the neanderthal system whereby students could be forced to join a union and taxpayers' money could be used for totally irresponsible political campaigning. Will my right hon. Friend assure the vast majority of sensible and moderate students that, by these measures, student unions will not in any way be hindered from carrying out their legitimate activities and, instead, will be made more accountable, more democratic and more effective?

**Mr. Patten:** The word "neanderthal" seems to be flying around the Chamber a lot this afternoon. I can give my hon. Friend exactly the assurance for which he asks. The result of the reforms will be that there will be such codes of practice in the 800 higher and further education institutions in this country so that they will be, to borrow my hon. Friend's words, more accountable and better governed, the auditing procedures will be better and individual students and organisations will have rights of redress to those outside the institutions to rule whether their rights, individually or corporately, have been inhibited.

**Mrs. Anne Campbell** (Cambridge): Many observers outside the House will recognise the proposals for what they are—the culmination of a very nasty and vindictive attack on the National Union of Students. If affiliation fees are to be paid in future from private sources, will the Secretary of State tell the House where those private sources are to come from when he has managed to reduce so many students to a state of total and abject poverty?

**Mr. Patten:** It is surely up to individual students to decide whether to make a contribution from their own pockets to political parties and political campaigning or, indeed, to charitable activities. I have always thought that the basis for charitable activity is giving from one's own pocket, not recycling taxpayers' funds.

**Mr. Bob Dunn** (Dartford): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will know that I fully support the statement that he has made today because it is based on voluntary membership and not coercion. However, can he go a little further and explain to the House what, if any, public funding will be used by students and by student union organisations? There is great concern among my constituents and among many people in the country that taxpayers' money has been used for political purposes in the past and may be used for such purposes in the future.

**Mr. Patten:** There will be a rigid accounting division under the proposals set out in the consultation paper. That will prevent any crossflows of funds between moneys which have been provided by the taxpayer for proper services—and I believe that this will be welcomed by students and parents alike—and money which is being spent on political and other campaigning.

**Mrs. Maria Fyfe** (Glasgow, Maryhill): Will the Secretary of State take note of the fact that students, the parents of students and ex-students throughout the country will note that this is the first Government to be so authoritarian that they cannot tolerate students behaving like students?

If the right hon. Gentleman is so concerned about public accountability, why does he not pay more attention to the fact that the decisions of public companies, in respect of their contributions to the Tory party, affect the whole of Britain? The Government's excessive concern over student unions is grossly disproportionate. They should be announcing today that there will be rigid accounting procedures to examine those contributions to the Tory party. Will not people in Britain think that the proposals announced today are laughably disproportionate?

**Mr. Patten:** Company law is to look after company expenditure and company accounts. We are considering the question of making sure that taxpayers' funds are properly accounted for and are not used for improper political or other campaigning purposes.

**Sir George Gardiner** (Reigate): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, for many years, countless students have been calling for the adult freedom that he is now offering them and that, equally for many years, countless taxpayers have been unable to fathom why they should indirectly be required to subsidise political campaigning? In proceeding with the legislation, will my right hon. Friend keep open the doors of consultation not just with students' unions but with students' associations which, for many years, have been pressing for this long-overdue reform?

**Mr. Patten:** Of course I will do exactly that. I give my hon. Friend that reassurance. My hon. Friend referred to students being treated as adults. One of the remarkable things about the 1980s is the way in which the Government made it possible for many more adults to enter further and higher education, and they themselves have their own clear views about some student union activities.

**Mr. David Alton** (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Does the Secretary of State accept that, for many of us who have been students and members of students' unions in our day, it is as much part and parcel of college and university life to be part of a student union as it is to be part of a library and a students' facility? Instead of encouraging people to opt out, we should be encouraging more people to opt into their responsibilities. Students' unions are organisations in which people can cut their teeth and do much good for local communities as well as for their universities and colleges. In Liverpool university, John Moores university and Liverpool institute of higher education there are many fine examples of student unions providing for the student body and for the people who live in the areas around them.

**Mr. Patten:** It is a very good thing that students should involve themselves in the community around John Moores university and so on and that they should involve themselves not only with money but with their own time in helping other people in the community. However, the proposals that I have put before the House ensure that the core of services that students, be they those who have just left school or adults, can reasonably expect when they go to university or further education institutions are available. What is disbarred is the expenditure of taxpayers' funds on political campaigning. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would agree with that.

**Mr. Gerald Malone** (Winchester): When my right hon. Friend considers the codes of practice that he has referred to, will he try to ensure that student bodies have an obligation to uphold freedom of speech on campuses rather than destroy it, as many of them have done? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is high time that the outrageous scenes that we have seen in the London School of Economics and at Lancaster university, where political meetings were disrupted, were stopped, especially when such occasions are usually moderate? I remember such a meeting that was addressed by our right hon. and noble Friend Lord Tebbit of Chingford.

**Mr. Patten:** Our right hon. and noble Friend knows how to look after himself on such occasions. Not only my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Tebbit but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security was

recently treated with grave discourtesy in a London institution. My hon. Friend puts his finger on the matter. It must be right that speakers can visit universities and colleges of further education and be guaranteed a fair and reasonable hearing. There are provisions in the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 for that to happen. It is very much part of the consultation process that the codes of practice which emerge will ensure that in future such disgraceful scenes are militated against as much as possible.

**Mr. John McFall** (Dumbarton): The Secretary of State might be interested to know that, in my Opposition education role, I have visited almost all Scottish universities in the past year. On no occasion did a vice-chancellor or a university staff member remotely complain about student bodies. Their main concerns are quality in education, increased student numbers and the "pile 'em high, teach 'em cheap" philosophy of the Government. Given that the situation in Scotland is unique in that there is harmony and uniformity of purpose between students and university administrators, will the Secretary of State give an assurance that those unique and special circumstances in Scotland will bear fruit when he discusses them with university vice-chancellors?

**Mr. Patten:** Of course, discussions will take place, through the consultation mechanism, between vice-chancellors of Scottish universities and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. I entirely agree that we want an improved quality of service for students and that the student voice should be heard more. So also should the employers' voice be heard, and that is why we recently published for consultation draft charters for further and higher education. I am pleased to say that the response thus far has been very positive indeed.

**Mr. Harry Greenway** (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that student unions and the National Union of Students to which they have been affiliated have been brought low by constitutions which have been unsatisfactory and undemocratic? For example, at the former Ealing college of further and higher education a quorum of only 50 was required out of a total of 8,000 or 9,000 students. That enabled a small group of students to take enormous decisions in the name of everybody else and to spend everybody else's money, which of course was taxpayers' money. Is not that where it all went wrong? Will future student bodies be charities, properly accountable to charity commissioners? Will core services be run by students or by universities for students?

**Mr. Patten:** Core services can be run either in whole or in part by the universities, by further education colleges or by student unions on an agency basis on behalf of the universities or further education colleges to which substantial sums of money flow. It is critical that elections to campus unions take place by secret ballot, and it is critical that there be a minimum number of people voting to ensure that sabbatical officers and others are properly elected. That is why we are proposing that there should be a quorum of at least 33 per cent., and that is set out in the consultation document.

**Mr. Gary Waller** (Keighley): I too regretted the rant that we heard from the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), because it tended to undermine some hon. Members' genuine and reasonable concerns and reservations about some aspects of the proposals. Will my right hon. Friend take into account the fact that, in recent times, the NUS has gone a long way in cleaning up its act, that it has applied for charitable status which would preclude involvement in political activities, and that most of its work is involved in student welfare issues? Will he assure the House that, during the consultation period, he will listen very closely to concerns which are expressed to him so that the legislation that emerges is for the benefit of all students?

**Mr. Patten:** Of course I will do that, and of course I welcome any efforts on behalf of the National Union of Students to clean up its act, to borrow my hon. Friend's phrase. It is applying for charitable status. That is a matter not for me but for the charity commissioners. However, it is also the duty of the Government to ensure that in future, should there be a resurgence of the activities that have occurred in the past in the National Union of Students, there is a clear legislative framework to prevent such activities from happening again and being funded by the taxpayer. That is why we are making the basic and fundamental change that I propose.

## Royal Assent

**Madam Speaker:** I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1933.

Licensing (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 1993.

Osteopaths Act 1993.

Merchant Shipping (Registration, etc.) Act 1993.

Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993.

London Underground (Jubilee) Act 1993.

Dawat-e-Hadiyah Act 1993.

# Orders of the Day

## Law and Order

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

4.47 pm

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard):** I very much welcome this opportunity for a debate on law and order. Five weeks ago today, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister invited me to become Home Secretary. It is an office which I feel deeply privileged to hold. It is an office which confers the capacity to touch the life of every citizen in our country. The first duty of any Government is to maintain law and order. I want to do all that I can do to fulfil that duty. It is an immense responsibility. There is much to be done.

The day after I took office, I met the Lord Chief Justice. I went on to see representatives from all parts of the system, the courts, prison and probation service as well, of course, as the police. Within my first few working days, I visited New Scotland Yard where I saw the excellent work that the Commissioner was doing to launch Operation Bumblebee across London. I saw for myself in Croydon how the work would be taken forward in a busy police station. I have been out with police officers on patrol in Brixton. I was also able to attend a meeting of the police community liaison group there. These encounters gave me the opportunity to listen to the concerns of those at the sharp end of the fight against crime and to their views about how we as a Government should respond to those concerns. As long as I remain Home Secretary, I intend to continue to listen and to take whatever action is necessary to deal effectively with crime.

**Mr. Alan Howarth** (Stratford-on-Avon): I know that many people will appreciate my right hon. and learned Friend's vigorous programme of getting out to meet people, listening to what they have to say about their concerns, and responding to them. Will he please take the earliest opportunity to visit Warwickshire and address himself to the question of trespass and new age travellers? As he knows, there have been four utterly scandalous episodes in my constituency. Because of deficiencies in the existing law, the authorities do not have power to take the necessary action to deal promptly with these abuses. Will my right hon. and learned Friend please ensure rapid and energetic Government action to remedy the situation?

**Mr. Howard:** I am aware of the concern about the activities to which my hon. Friend refers. These are to be found not only in Warwickshire. We have already published consultation documents setting out proposals to deal with such matters. I am re-examining those proposals to ensure that they go far enough and that there is nothing further that we should include in the package that I intend to bring forward as soon as time permits.

What I have heard so far has reinforced much of what I already knew. People feel that they are faced with a seemingly relentless rise in crime. It is true that, this year, recorded crime may be rising less quickly than in some recent years; it is true that it may have risen virtually year in, year out, in all the decades since the war; it is true that it may be rising across the advanced industralised world. These may be the facts, but we should take little comfort from them. Above all, they offer nothing to the thousands of people up and down this country whose lives are disturbed, and sometimes ruined, by crime.

One of the worst aspects of the remorseless rise in crime is that people start to accept it as inevitable. They feel a sense of helplessness, a belief that nothing can be done about crime. I do not believe that it has to be that way, and, as Home Secretary, I have two very simple and straightforward goals. First, I want to help to create an atmosphere in which it is criminals who are frightened—and not members of the public. Secondly, I want to make local communities feel that we can act together to do something about crime. We will do that by taking a long-term approach to crime, by attacking it from every quarter.

We have to recognise where crime begins. I do not mean that we should listen to woolly-headed theories that society is at fault and criminals are not to blame. Of course not—we can leave that nonsense to others. I mean that we should recognise that we must do more to teach children the difference between right and wrong. We must teach the importance of accepting responsibility for our own actions and of considering the consequences for others. If we do not do so, the services for which I, as Home Secretary, am responsible—police, prisons and probation—will simply be left to pick up the pieces. And picking up the pieces is no substitute for getting things right in the first place.

**Mr. Nick Hawkins** (Blackpool, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that people up and down the land are increasingly concerned about the very high proportion of dwelling house burglaries and crimes of violence committed by offenders who are very young indeed? Will he accept that the Government's decision to provide more secure training places will be widely welcomed? We must crack down hard on juveniles who are convicted of serious crimes.

**Mr. Howard:** I understand the concern that lies behind my hon. Friend's question, and I accept entirely the point that he has made. As he knows, we intend to take action to deal with that problem.

**Sir Anthony Grant** (Cambridgeshire, South-West): While we are thinking about the question of juvenile crime, there is a matter to which I should like my right hon. and learned Friend to address his mind. I am told that one of the ways in which young people get launched into crime is through school truancy. People involved in education in my constituency tell me that the existing law is quite inadequate to enable them to deal with the problem. Will my right hon. and learned Friend, in conjunction with the Secretary of State for Education, look very carefully into the law on this matter? Once young people think that they can get away with absenting themselves from school, they are on the path to crime.

**Mr. Howard:** I agree entirely with my hon. Friend, who has raised an important question which goes right to the heart of the matter. It chimes in exactly with what I have been saying about the influence that can be exerted on children in schools and about the importance of taking the right steps at a very early stage.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd** (Stretford): The Home Secretary may be aware of the fact that, last Friday, people burst into a public house in my constituency and sprayed machine-gun

bullets round the premises. Machine-guns have been used in the constituency on at least two occasions—once in a street and once in a pub. On Tuesday, the body of a young man who had been tortured and then murdered was found. It is highly probable that all these incidents are related to the high level of drugs activity in the constituency.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) made a point about young people. It is with real sincerity and real feelings that I refer to the great importance that the Home Secretary must attach to the link between crime and drugs in areas such as mine. If he is not prepared to look properly into the underlying issues —I refer, for instance, to the massive profits involved in drugs—and take consistent action, he will merely repeat the folly of previous Home Secretaries, who, having said that they intended to deal with the problem, simply allowed the violence to continue to increase.

**Mr. Howard:** I agree that we must look very carefully at the relationship between drugs and serious criminal offences. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has forgotten that one piece of legislation that we brought before the House in recent years, which has resulted in increased sentences for drugs offences, was opposed by his party. Perhaps he ought to consider which way he voted on that occasion.

There is no point in politicians or newspapers or anybody else calling for a return to old-fashioned morality and respect for authority if we do not know how it is going to be achieved. It must start at home, and it must also be taught in our schools and by all who work with and care for children and young people. Above all, it must be taught by example. That must be our goal. But however successful we may be in achieving it, the results will be long-term. Meanwhile, we have a duty to do everything we can to tackle crime. The police know this only too well. They meet this challenge bravely and well. As a society, we depend upon them to do so. We must never take them for granted. I will never take them for granted.

We face a formidable agenda for change for the police service. On Monday, I published my proposals for reorganising the police to establish the foundation for the service into the next century. Yesterday, the Sheehy inquiry published its conclusions on police pay and responsibilities. We are consulting on revised police disciplinary arrangements. We expect the report of the Royal Commission on criminal justice to be published very soon. That, too, will have implications for the police and for the way they go about their work.

The police have been striving to do what we ask of them within a 30-year-old system. It cannot be right that chief officers do not have the freedom to manage, to decide whether to spend money on more manpower or more equipment to enable their forces to perform more effectively. It cannot be right that there is no mechanism for properly rewarding the most outstanding officers. Nor can we be confident that the current legislative framework or the way the criminal justice system operates helps the police to do their job well, rather than frustrating their efforts on our behalf.

The proposals set out in our White Paper earlier this week are intended to make it easier for the police to concentrate their efforts on tackling crime in ways that reinforce the mutual reliance of police and public.

**Mr. David Shaw** (Dover): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that I have been asked by the farmers in the Dover, Deal and Folkestone area to congratulate him on his appointment, express their full support for him on this issue and say that they are concerned that we should have adequate policing in country villages, backed up by tough trespass laws and tougher sentencing?

**Mr. Howard:** I have already expressed my view on the need for tough trespass laws. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to stress the importance of rural crime, which has been overlooked much too often in the past.

As I take forward these changes to lay the foundation for all members of the police force to give their best, they can be sure that I will listen to and act on their concerns. I am particularly determined that our police officers should have the necessary protection from the dangers that they face on our behalf day and night.

I will always be ready to listen to positive proposals on action that we can take to reduce the risk of attack or protect the police from injury. That is why I recently announced that we will test the new expandable side-handled baton. If it protects police officers, particularly women police officers, from attack, they will have it. I have also given the go-ahead for trials of three other types of baton in the Metropolitan police.

Above all, we need a total strategy for dealing with crime. I believe it should have four main strands. First, we must do all that we can to prevent crime; secondly, we must do all that we can to help the police to catch criminals; thirdly, we must ensure that when criminals have been caught, they are tried fairly and speedily; fourthly, we must ensure that, if they are convicted, the courts have all the powers that they need to deal with them appropriately and effectively.

The first strand in our approach is crime prevention. We have already done a great deal to develop crime prevention thinking and practice. We have established the safer cities programme and will build on its success by creating up to 40 new projects. Those new projects will aim to engage all the skills and resources of local communities. I have a good deal of sympathy with those who regard crime statistics with deep scepticism. But such statistics afford a basis for comparison. In the first nine months of security improvements on a housing estate by the Bradford safer cities project, there was a 31 per cent. drop in domestic burglary. In Salford, there was an 80 per cent. fall in domestic burglary in 1,000 homes where security improvements, property marking and crime prevention advice were given.

Of course, still more needs to be done not only in our inner cities but in rural areas, such as that referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), which are suffering increasingly from the attention of highly mobile criminals.

**Mr. Barry Field** (Isle of Wight): My right hon. and learned Friend has rightly mentioned the problem of crime in the inner cities. One of the reasons why Conservative Members are so delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) promoted to Minister of State in the Home Office is his agricultural knowledge. There is a tremendous problem in the countryside with rustling, stealing farm equipment from farm land and the horrible epidemic of attacks on horses in the south of England. I hope that my hon. Friend

*[Mr. Barry Field]*

will bring his knowledge of agriculture to the Home Office, which will be most useful to those of us who represent agricultural communities.

**Mr. Howard:** My hon. Friend is right. My hon. Friend the Minister of State will bring his experience of the countryside and agricultural matters to bear on those problems.

There is a view in some quarters that property crime is not so serious. I believe that that approach is wholly wrong. Burglary is one of the most appalling crimes. To me, it is a crime of violence. It destroys people's sense of security in their own homes. That is why our crime prevention work emphasises the precautions that individuals can take to make the lives of burglars harder. That is why I fully endorse the Metropolitan Commissioner's priority for anti-burglary work through Operation Bumblebee. Operation Bumblebee grew out of a dialogue between the Metropolitan police and the public, who made it clear that burglary was among their prime concerns. I saw that dialogue first hand when I visited Brixton.

Of course, dialogue of itself does not crack crime—action does. As the White Paper on the police emphasises, tackling crime cannot be left only to the police. There needs to be help from the public. The concept of partnership between the public and the police is central to our approach. It is the second strand that I mentioned a moment ago. People must play their part, acting as the eyes and ears of the police, passing information to them and responding to their calls for help. People must also be prepared to give evidence in court.

**Mr. Julian Brazier** (Canterbury): May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to give sympathetic consideration to the point about the disclosure of witnesses to the defence? In the specialist area of organised crime, especially drug-related crime, there is a growing feeling that witnesses are afraid—with good reason—to come forward and give evidence.

**Mr. Howard:** I understand the concern expressed by my hon. Friend. We are trying to make the whole process of giving evidence a less traumatic experience. We will certainly continue to encourage the police to provide protection where it is needed for witnesses who are vulnerable to intimidation.

One obvious way in which people can help is for them to become involved in neighbourhood watch. There are now more than 115,000 of these schemes, covering more than 5 million households. Neighbourhood watch provides a means by which the whole community can become involved in the fight against crime. We shall shortly launch a manual to assist people who want to set up and run these schemes. We are funding pilot work on introducing similar schemes in high crime areas. All too often in those areas, people who face the greatest problems do not have enough support in their own community.

Joining the special constabulary offers the most active way of supporting the police. The name is apt: those volunteers do indeed make a special contribution to maintaining law and order. There are now 19,000 special constables in England and Wales. I want to see that number increased to 30,000. I will soon be launching a new campaign to raise the national profile of the special constabulary and support recruitment.

If the police are to work effectively, and the public are to be motivated to work with them, we must all have confidence in the effectiveness of the criminal justice process. That is the third strand of our approach. The police and the Crown Prosecution Service have crucial roles in bringing offenders to court. They must collect and present the evidence that satisfies the burden of proof and enables the guilty to be convicted. If that is not done well, the system as a whole cannot command confidence.

I want to be satisfied that everything that can be done is being done to bring to justice those who break the law. I am determined to make sure that the criminal justice process works effectively as well as efficiently. It must become less of a game of cat and mouse between prosecution and defence and much more of a way of establishing guilt or innocence.

The Royal Commission on criminal justice was set up to see whether we can do better in meeting those twin objectives while improving efficiency. In acting on its report, I shall be looking for recommendations which will make real improvements. I want speedier justice. I want a greater sense of common purpose towards producing the right results. I want to see confidence restored.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton** (Macclesfield): I entirely endorse exactly what my right hon. and learned Friend is saying and some of the measures that he is introducing to improve law and order in the United Kingdom. Does he accept that, too often, the police can bring criminals to court, but, unfortunately, the courts, especially with regard to persistent juvenile offenders, do not have suitable punishments available to them?

Too many young people, as in the case in Macclesfield that I raised with my right hon. and learned Friend at Question Time last week, are released into the community, cocking a snook at the community and the police in the process, and continue to carry out their offences. What is he prepared to do to give the courts the opportunity to punish those people appropriately?

With regard to car theft in the countryside, my National Farmers Union is furious that Land-Rovers are being pinched by the score and the police do not have either the manpower or the ability to do anything about it.

**Mr. Howard:** My hon. Friend will know that we are taking measures to ensure that the courts have extra powers to deal with persistent young offenders in the way in which he would want them to be dealt with. We hope to take that matter forward in the next Session.

**Mr. Christopher Gill** (Ludlow): My right hon. and learned Friend has instanced how more must be done in our schools to educate young people about the difference between right and wrong. In his response to the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir. A. Grant), he stated that attention must be given to the problem of truancy. Does he accept that no sanction is available to school teachers in schools today and that, while many school teachers never used the cane when it was available in schools, it was always regarded as a deterrent? Our society believes in deterrents, both in defence and in more prosaic matters such as drinking and driving. Is not it right to have a deterrent in schools?

**Mr. Howard:** I have some sympathy with my hon. Friend, but he will know that there are many practical difficulties in meeting that point. The matter has come before the House previously.

The fourth strand of our approach, which my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) has just raised, is to ensure that the courts have all the powers that they need to deal with offenders appropriately and effectively. That is the Government's duty and I take it seriously.

I know how strongly people feel about the restoration of capital punishment. I read the recent speech made in the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans). I understand why he spoke as he did. I understand the rage that people feel when they hear or read about awful crimes. I share those feelings. I set out my position in an article published in March 1991 in the wake of the case of the Birmingham Six. I should like to repeat my position, so the House may know where I stand.

Until 1991, I voted consistently for the return of capital punishment for the murder of police or prison officers, or for murder committed with firearms or explosives. I thought the deterrent effect would be greatest on those categories. I justified that position on the basis that a wide-ranging appeal process in capital cases would effectively eliminate the risk of a miscarriage of justice. Precisely such a procedure was adopted in the case of the Birmingham Six, and failed to identify any irregularities. It failed to do the job that I thought it would, a job which I thought was essential if capital punishment were to be restored. That led me to re-examine my position and to inform my constituents about it more than two years ago.

Few people would argue that it is impossible to deal with offenders effectively without capital punishment. Only the courts can decide what the appropriate sentence is in an individual case. If the courts decide that, in an individual case, the punishment required by justice, fairness and the protection of society is a custodial sentence, the Government's duty is to provide the prison capacity to make it possible for such a sentence to be passed and served.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence** (Burton): There is a fast ball coming up. If my right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied that the Runciman royal commission proposals on the appeal system will deal adequately with the problem that he has identified, will he be prepared to reconsider his decision not to support capital punishment?

**Mr. Howard:** The answer that I give to my hon. and learned Friend, the Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, is that I do not see how it is possible to have a more wide-ranging appeal process than that which I previously favoured and which was used in the case to which I have referred. That is why I came to the conclusion that I did. If I had thought that something in the appeal process in that case had led to my conclusion, that would not have caused me to change my mind on capital punishment, as I did in 1991.

I do not believe that society can put up with a growing, if small, hard core of offenders who commit a disproportionate amount of crime. That is particularly the case, as we have been reminded by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield, when the crimes are perpetrated by young people who have the potential to carry on offending for years to come. Their habit of offending must be broken; and society must be given a break from them. While they are in secure conditions, they must be made to confront their offending behaviour. They must be supervised closely when they return to the community. I attach the highest priority to dealing with that problem, and I shall soon bring before the House the legislation necessary to set up secure training centres. Juveniles who persist in anti-social behaviour must be made to fear being caught and dealt with effectively and severely.

**Mrs. Teresa Gorman** (Billericay): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

**Mr. Howard:** I am afraid that I must get on. Many of my hon. Friends want to speak in the debate. The longer that I take, the less time there will be available for them.

I believe profoundly that attitudes in this country towards crime and criminals are changing. More and more people see combating crime as the biggest challenge that faces us. They recognise increasingly that we must all get involved in the campaign. We are witnessing a sea change in the mood of the country on the matter. People are coming increasingly to appreciate not only that something must be done, but that they can do something. I want to make full use of what they can do. I want to channel the public's energy in a constructive way to build a new, stronger and more effective alliance against crime.

The change of mood has been noticed even by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). On Monday, he called for a crusade against crime and said that the Opposition would lead it. A crusade against crime? Without the powers that the Public Order Act 1986 gave the police to deal with street thugs and hooligans? A crusade against crime? Without the extra penalties for drug trafficking that were contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1988? Without the powers of the Attorney-General to refer lenient sentences to the Court of Appeal? Without the increased sentences for violent and sexual offences that were contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1991? Without the powers of the prevention of terrorism Act?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. We start with order in the Chamber, and strange gestures from the Opposition Front Bench do not make order in my book.

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. Member for Sedgefield was not parachuted into his current responsibilities from the moon. Like me, he has been a Member of Parliament for 10 years. In that period, I have voted for all the legislation that introduced the measures that make it possible to wage a crusade against crime. The hon. Gentleman voted against them. I sometimes think that the hon. Gentleman simply does not realise what an utterly ridiculous figure he cuts when he calls for a crusade against crime.

The Conservative party and the Government take seriously the need to address the concerns of people throughout Britain about rising crime and lawlessness. That is not, as is the case with the hon. Member for Sedgefield, because we see the subject as the flavour of the month. We agree fundamentally with their instincts, principles and feelings about what needs to be done. We are putting our principles into action by raising penalties for drunken drivers who kill, cracking down on bail bandits and dealing severely and effectively with juvenile offenders.

*[Mr. Howard]*

Last weekend, I had reason for the first time to use the powers conferred on me by the prevention of terrorism Act. It was a heavy responsibility. But I knew that in using those powers, I was taking action that could help in the apprehension and conviction of those who use the bomb and the bullet to terrorise our society. If the hon. Member for Sedgefield had been Home Secretary last weekend, he would not have had those powers to exercise. He would have been helpless, and his helplessness would have been entirely self-imposed.

The people of Britain are fed up with helplessness. They do not want a helpless Home Secretary. They want strong and sustained action, and, so long as I have the privilege to hold this office, that is exactly what I shall do my very best to provide.

5.18 pm

**Mr. Tony Blair** (Sedgefield): I thought for about the first half hour of the Home Secretary's speech that we had an entirely new right hon. and learned Gentleman. He was constructive. He made some good points. There was a great deal with which I agreed. But just at the point when we thought that he had been reformed, he suddenly destroyed himself and became recidivist. He went back into his unappealing and unedifying rant about the Labour party.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has spent most of the time since he became Home Secretary attacking me. I take every attack as a compliment. I am delighted when he attacks me, because it shows how desperate the Conservative party is about the issue of law and order. In the past few months—I know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was not Home Secretary then—the Opposition pointed to the reform of the Criminal Justice Bill but the then Home Secretary supported it.

The Opposition raised the issue of juvenile offending when the previous Home Secretary told us that the problem was "happily declining". The Opposition are now campaigning on the breakdown of the criminal justice system. The Home Secretary gave no impression that he understood that breakdown. The breakdown means that fewer cases are coming to court, more prosecutions are being dropped than ever before, and longer court delays are occurring. But crime is rising faster than ever before.

This week, the Opposition tabled amendments on crime prevention and the treatment of victims, some of which even found support on the Conservative Benches. Yet the Whips organised to defeat those amendments. So, if we are to have a tit-for-tat argument about law and order, the Conservative party does not emerge well.

I can do no better than quote the Prime Minister to the Home Secretary. The Prime Minister said with uncharacteristic candour in the *Los Angeles Times*:

> "We have been here for 14 years. There is no one else one can blame for anything that has gone wrong."

Simply trading blame is not constructive in a debate on law and order. We should begin by understanding the scale of the problem that we now confront in Britain.

**Mr. Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley): In his new-found zest for law and order, will the hon. Gentleman support the order which will shortly be introduced in the House to ensure that persistent young offenders who commit crime time and time again can have detention orders served against them?

**Mr. Blair:** I shall deal with that point later, in detail. But I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Opposition first raised the issue of persistent juvenile offending. Of course it is right that the problem should be dealt with and that the courts should have the powers to do so. Our disagreement with the Government is that, instead of waiting two years to build new training centres, which I believe are a mistake for reasons which I shall be happy to adumbrate later, the Government should build on the local authority secure accommodation that is already available.

The Government should fulfil the promise that they gave two years ago to make that secure accommodation available. That is our position, and if the hon. Gentleman reflects on it, he will see that it is rather better thought out than the position that the Government have adopted.

Crime has risen dramatically in the past 10 or 12 years. It has more than doubled. Robberies have more than quadrupled. We have about 5·5 million recorded offences. The true crime rate is infinitely greater.

Several Conservative Members pointed up the problems of rural crime during the Home Secretary's speech. The Prime Minister referred to the issue a few months ago, when he complained that crime was an inner-city phenomenon which was all the fault of socialist Labour councils. But crime has been rising in every part of Britain. There is rural crime just as much as there is crime in our inner cities, as anyone who represents a rural constituency knows.

My constituency consists of old mining villages and several new towns. They are small communities. Even 15 or 20 years ago, they were not scarred by the level of crime that they face today. The problem of crime is nationwide. If we believe that it is simply confined to the inner city, we are wrong.

It is not merely the recorded level of crime to which people object. They object to the hassle, the abuse, the petty vandalism and the destruction of decent standards of community life in a hundred ways which never show up in Government statistics but which have a devastating impact on the quality of life of our constituents.

**Mr. Peter Thurnham** (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Gentleman wants us to take his party seriously, but how can we? Only about eight or nine Labour Members have been present so far for the debate, while three times as many Conservative Members have been present. The Labour party manifesto had more to say on art and leisure than on law and order. Will the hon. Gentleman give a straight yes or no to the question whether he will support the Conservative party in its proposals for secure training centres?

**Mr. Blair:** I have made my position clear on that point. I have stated the point of agreement and the point of disagreement.

What I find curious about this great day of law and order is that, before the debate, some pretty meaningless statement on student unions was scheduled, which delayed the beginning of the debate. That is an odd sense of priorities on the part of the Government business managers.

If the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) can be a little more constructive, I was talking about the problems that people face and the impact on the quality of life of our constituents. For example, the elderly lady living in a council flat is afraid to open the door. Women cannot use public transport at night for fear of attack. Young people go out to enjoy a perfectly law-abiding, peaceful evening and find themselves embroiled in an attack. Black and Asian families are terrorised in certain parts of our inner cities, even in their own homes.

I believe, and I think that the Home Secretary shares my belief, that a society that tolerates such behaviour is a sick society, and that it is time to cure the sickness in our midst. The Opposition have never said that burglary was merely a crime of property, and therefore nothing to worry about. The problem of crime is not merely about crimes of violence. It is the persistent burglaries and car thefts. Car thefts have increased dramatically—doubled or tripled—in many parts of our country.

The problem with the Government's strategy is simply this. First, they do nothing. Then, as public anxiety rises, they talk tough, which is easy. But they still do nothing. Finally, they act, but they do so in a piecemeal and haphazard way, which never properly gets to grips with the problem. Juvenile offending is a perfect example. There is no doubt that a small element of young people are either outside or beyond parental control and have the capacity, young as they are, to make life hell for many people in local communities, and to take up inordinate police time.

We raised the issue of juvenile offending for months, but the Government delayed. They then talked tough. They are now prepared to act. I ask the Home Secretary at least to approach the matter with an open mind.

To set up entirely new borstal training centres—that is what they are—and revisit the old institutions is simply to repeat the mistake of previous wasted experiments. Yet we could act now by fulfilling the promise that the Government made, building on the secure accommodation that is already available in local authorities and combining that with sensible measures to divert young people from irresponsible behaviour.

Perhaps the Home Secretary will confirm, if he wishes to intervene, that the 60 or so secure training places promised more than two years ago have still not been created, and that there is still no undertaking from the Government that they will meet the revenue costs of building the centres.

A good example of the way in which the Government simply attempt to pass responsibility occurred the other day with the problems in Sutton and Cheam.

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. Gentleman talks about passing responsibility. Will he confirm that the essential difference between our proposals and his proposals for dealing with persistent young offenders is that the Government believe that the courts should have the ability to pass a custodial sentence? Under his proposals, all that the courts could do is make a care order. It would be for the local authorities to decide how the young offender should be dealt with.

**Mr. Blair:** The answer to that question is no: that is not the difference between us. We accept that there are circumstances in which the courts lack the proper power, but it is true to say, as I shall show by reference to the case in Sutton, that the problem is not always a lack of powers. It is often a lack of secure accommodation and the facilities that local authorities want.

Before the right hon. and learned Gentleman took up the post of Home Secretary, there was a discussion in some of the newspapers about secure accommodation. The Conservative newspapers were running hard the idea that many local authorities refused as a matter of policy ever to put young people in secure accommodation. When we investigated the stories, we found that many local authorities, including those in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), asked the Government for the funding to deal with the lack of secure accommodation. The Government had refused to provide the funding.

**Mr. Edward Garnier** (Harborough): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Conservative group on Leicestershire council has consistently voted for secure accommodation to be introduced under the present system, but that the Labour and Liberal groups have consistently voted against that proposal?

**Mr. Blair:** I understand that that is not the case. I cannot comment directly on that particular example, but I believe that that was another case in which, on investigation, the facts were different from those reported.

Recent events in Sutton have been reported in the newspapers. Hon. Members will remember that a so-called posse of troublemakers have been roaming around causing many difficulties in the local community. We took the time and trouble to do a little further investigation into that case.

We discovered that the social services had not refused to use secure accommodation, but that, in some instances, the courts said that the criteria under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 were too narrow to allow that accommodation to be used. In other cases, the secure accommodation was simply not available. I was told that in one instance, which was also mentioned in the papers, social services had to fly a 13-year-old to Scotland, and back, to be held in secure accommodation because there was none available any nearer.

The idea that all those problems can be dumped at the door of local authorities or social services is foolish. That is what I mean by saying that it is necessary to combine existing measures relating to secure accommodation with other measures to deal with all the problems associated with juvenile delinquency.

**Mr. Michael Shersby** (Uxbridge): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there are two types of secure accommodation? The first is that required to accommodate juveniles who would otherwise go to prison. In that respect, the Secretary of State for Health has made the necessary provisions. The other type is the more general secure accommodation required for juveniles. The provision of that accommodation is subject to difficulties and shortages.

**Mr. Blair:** The hon. Gentleman is right to draw that distinction. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth will deal with that issue when he replies on behalf of the Opposition. I am not sure, however, whether the first type of secure accommodation is always available.

*[Mr. Blair]*

The Home Secretary has talked hard language, which is always the stock in trade of Conservative Home Secretaries. In the 1979 manifesto, the Conservatives promised:

"we will restore the rule of law."

At the 1982 Conservative party conference, the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, said:

"The time for a counter-attack is long overdue."

When the present Foreign Secretary was Home Secretary, he said:

"It is time to bring the victim back to centre stage."

Successive Conservative Home Secretaries have made the same pledge.

The recurring problem with the way in which the Conservative party has handled the issue is that it refuses to accept that we cannot reduce crime in this country unless we escape from the idea that one chooses between punishment and prevention; between dealing with criminals and tackling the underlying causes of crime.

I know that the Home Secretary uses the word "prevention", but he does so in too limited a sense. Any serious policy on crime must deal with both prevention and punishment. One can see why when one considers the attrition rates—the number of crimes that are cleared up. When I took on the responsibility of shadow Home Secretary, I was startled by those statistics. Just one in 50 crimes ever leads to a conviction, and one in 33 to a caution or a conviction. Two in three crimes are never even recorded.

Once we take on board the significance of those statistics, we then understand that a policy that does not deal with prevention and underlying causes of crime, as well as simply criminal justice, is an incomplete one. That policy is bound to fail. I want to illustrate that by reference to one specific topic, drugs, which has been raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd). It is fundamental to the war against crime, and it is being savagely neglected.

The use of drugs in this country has increased dramatically in the past 10 years. Seizures of heroin and cocaine have virtually trebled. The number of offenders in respect of all types of drugs has also risen dramatically. We may now have better means of registering addicts than in the past, but even making allowances for that, the number of addicts has also risen greatly.

The latest estimate reveals that the market for illegal drugs is worth about £3 billion. The most recent reports also suggest that, with the increasing number of open frontiers in Europe, more and more drugs will enter our country.

What is more worrying than anything else, however, is the rise in drug abuse among young people. The percentage change in convictions of persons found guilty of being in possession of controlled drugs is horrific. Since 1988, the number of persons under the age of 17 who have been found guilty of possession has risen by 269 per cent. Between the ages of 17 and 21, the conviction rate has increased by 113 per cent. Those are horrific statistics.

Earlier this week, on the very day that the Home Secretary published his White Paper on policing, another extremely important document, which has achieved virtually no publicity, as is often the case, was issued by the Home Office. It is entitled, "Drug Education in Schools: the Need for New Impetus". It is a report by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs. It is ironic that it was published on the same day as the White Paper, because the many changes proposed in that White Paper in relation to the Home Secretary's ability to nominate the chairman of police authorities are pretty irrelevant to the fight against crime. The drug education document is, however, deeply relevant to the fight against crime, but it was virtually ignored.

That Government document reveals that, in the north-west of England, it is estimated that 60 per cent. of 14 to 15-year-olds have been offered drugs, and that a third of them have tried drugs. In the 15 to 16-year-old age group, 60 per cent. have tried drugs. Those figures are horrific. In Wales, one in four of 15-year-olds have tried drugs. In Mid Glamorgan, a survey of 13 to 18-year-olds revealed that 10 per cent. had used drugs in the week before being questioned. In Strathclyde, one in four of those aged 12 to 16 years had tried illegal drugs at least once.

The document also revealed that, in 1991, those in the 17-to-21 age group accounted for 85 per cent. of the increase in the number of drug offences. Around 150 young people die every year as a result of substance abuse.

We know that the use of pills such as ecstasy is increasing greatly. They are freely available in many parts of the country, and there is no doubt that their use is linked to crime.

**Mr. Howard:** I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the increasing prevalance of drug use and its clear link with crime. Does he not agree that one of the ways in which effective action can be taken is by increasing the sentences on drug traffickers? Why did he and his party vote against the Criminal Justice Act 1988, which introduced heavier sentences for those traffickers? Does that not illustrate the yawning gulf between what he has said today and the action that he and his party have taken in the past 10 years or more?

**Mr. Blair:** A Bill is going through Parliament now that will increase the penalties for drug trafficking. It has commanded the full and 100 per cent. support of the Opposition. I cannot comment in detail on the debates of 1988, but I am almost certain that the issue of heavier sentences for drug traffickers was not part of our opposition to the 1988 Act.

I agree that we need strong penalties for drug traffickers, but putting legislation through Parliament to do just that is the easy part. The hard part is settling down to ensuring that we prevent drug abuse, increasing drug education and ensure that young people are not being drawn into a life of drugs and then crime.

Last week, I was in Castlemilk in Glasgow, and visited several people involved in drugs projects. In that part of the inner city, there are whole families whose life is geared to crime. The generations of a family can be virtually dependent on drugs and, of course, commit crimes in order to feed their habit. Drug addicts are three times more likely to have criminal convictions than virtually any other part of the population.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on the fact that, unlike the Home Secretary, he pays considerable attention to the link between drugs and crime. In areas such as mine, the police estimate that 70 per cent. of crime is drug-related, which is a staggering statistic in its own right.

The Home Secretary might want to talk tough on sentencing—I am not adverse to tough sentences for those involved in drug trafficking—but he must understand the point that my hon. Friend has just made: if we do not have the necessary education and health programmes, and if we do not have a strategy to deal with drugs across the board—something that the Government have never had—we shall lose not the war on drugs, which is a silly phrase, but a generation.

**Mr. Blair:** My hon. Friend is right, and makes his point very well. A few days ago, the Association of Chief Police Officers gave a presentation at a drugs conference. It was stated that the drug culture in some inner cities may end in guns, but that it often starts with a much lower level of criminal offences.

The Home Office publication to which I referred reveals not only the size and urgency of the problem but the utter inadequacy of the Government's response. It states:

"Prevention is always better than cure, but a deteriorating drug situation must give urgency to a review of what policies can be put in place to strengthen prevention."

It concludes:

"Half-hearted efforts can offer no prospect of success and the inevitably poor outcome will reinforce pessimistic expectations . . . What is needed to back our recommendations is a commitment to making high quality . . . drug education a tangible reality on a national scale."

It is also pointed out that the Government are currently withdrawing funding for the health education advisers whose job it is to go into schools and youth services to advise young people about the problems of drugs. As the Government are withdrawing the funding, local authorities canot afford to continue such services, and many will be left without any service whatsoever.

In addition, under the community care provisions, the money for drug abuse projects and residential drug care is no longer ring-fenced, although the Government promised that it would be. As a result, residential projects are closing all over the country. A recent survey of 48 residential drug and alcohol projects revealed that they would all suffer severe cuts, all in the cause of saving money. However, we are not saving money; we are storing up problems for the future in such a way that, in the end, we pay a much heavier price.

Yes, there are enormous problems in our criminal justice system, which has become incompetent to deal with the country's problems, but, because of a perverted sense of ideology, the Government are denying the need to tackle some of the basic underlying causes.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** The hon. Gentleman has hit on an important point. I share his concern about the closure of residential drugs centres, such as the Priory unit in my constituency. Trendy, liberal do-gooders seem to think that all people can be dealt with in the community, but those of us who have studied the matter for a long time believe that that is fundamentally wrong.

On this issue, the hon. Gentleman has my 100 per cent. support; and I say it in front of my right hon. and learned Friend. I hope that the closure of residential drug and alcohol centres will be stopped, because their work is exceptional and they achieve far greater success than can be achieved by dealing with people in the community.

**Mr. Blair:** The hon. Gentleman has made his point well, and I hope that it is taken into account.

In the few minutes remaining, I shall say why I think the Government are wrong. They pose——

**Mr. James Clappison** (Hertsmere): The hon. Gentleman said that he did not oppose that part of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 which dealt with drug trafficking. I remind him of one of the parts which he voted against and which his party bitterly opposed, which was the part that gave the prosecution the right to seek a review of over-lenient sentences. That measure has been widely welcomed, and the public believe that it has enabled justice to be done in many cases. Does the hon. Gentleman support the prosecution's right to appeal against over-lenient sentences—yes or no?

**Mr. Blair:** As I have made clear, I support it. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has been of great assistance in ensuring that bail legislation has been passed which, had the Government's business managers had their way in another place, might have failed.

I was saying why I believe that the Government are wrong, although it is possible to change their position. In the debate on law and order, a wholly false dilemma is posed between personal and social responsibility. The Home Secretary uses language that implies that, if one talks about social conditions, one is excusing crime. That is the essential message that he and many others of his political persuasion give.

The time has come to move beyond that. No one of a sensible persuasion excuses crime, but nor does one ignore the conditions in which crime can breed. The House need not take my word for that. In his 1991 annual report, the former Metropolitan Commissioner, Sir Peter Imbert, said:

"The crime map fits all too closely over the map of disadvantage."

He later said:

"The continuing growth in crime is a fundamental concern which, in part, I attribute to the marginalisation of some elements in our society. The notion that there is a link between crime and social deprivation is a compelling one".

Similar points have been made by Sir John Woodcock, the Inspector of Constabulary, and even the right hon. and learned Gentleman's predecessor began to accept the idea.

In a statement on youth crime, the deputy Metropolitan Police Commissioner said:

"Physical security measures need to be supplemented by actions addressing the social, economic and physical conditions in which youngsters grow up".

The sensible approach deals with both sides of the problem. Speaking to police officers across the country, I found that they understand that very well. They have no desire to be put in the position of having to keep the lid on the dustbin of society's problems. In many parts of the country, they believe that that is what they are doing.

To say that we must have tough measures to deal with those who commit crimes is in no way inconsistent with saying that we also have to deal with some of the underlying problems. To use the Home Secretary's language, to say that in drawing attention to this we are blurring the distinction betwen right and wrong is so misguided that if we do not rid ourselves of our blindness about this problem, we shall never tackle it properly.

The nature of what is right and wrong does not change. The problem that we face is not in defining right and wrong but in ensuring that the distinction is adhered to. The purpose of connecting improvements in education,

*[Mr. Blair]*

employment, housing and family life with reductions in crime is not to blur the distinction between right and wrong but to give it a realistic prospect of success.

The understanding of right and wrong does not arise by instinct alone but from what is taught in the home, at school and in the community, and by what is seen and set by example. Any sensible person should see that. I hope that, in the coming months, the right hon. and learned Gentleman will find areas of agreement in which we can construct an agenda to give the people of this country a real opportunity to reduce crime and once again to make our cities, towns and villages safer for people to live in.

5.48 pm

**Mr. David Mellor** (Putney): I warmly congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend, first, on achieving the high office of Home Secretary and, secondly, on the manner in which he addressed the House this afternoon. He has been in action since the very first morning of his appointment, but he made an extremely impressive debut in the House in a major debate. It was all the better because his firmness and resolve had no element of instant solutions or easy answers. He set out a sensible strategy for the future, building on both the successes and the disappointments of the past.

I spent more than five years as a Home Office Minister and I am afraid that one does not have to be in the departmental building very long before one discovers the reality of many of the nostrums that are commonly waved at Conservative party conferences or in public bars. One of the tragedies of my right hon. and learned Friend's job as Home Secretary is that every public bar has a great "Home Secretary" who waves his arms and deals with all the complex problems of crime with a few verbal haymakers. Of course, matters do not work out like that.

I hope that my comments about my right hon. and learned Friend's responsibilities will be helpful. I shall try not to aggravate him as I have done from time to time in the past. My association with my right hon. and learned Friend extends over almost a quarter of a century. Long before he necessarily believed it, I profoundly believed that he would one day occupy one of the great offices of state and it gives me great joy to see him in his present job.

When my right hon. and learned Friend was a well-established member of the chambers in which I was a pupil, he sat at an imposing desk and I sat at a rather smaller round table that had been left in our chambers by that most benevolent of socialists, Lord Lever. On one occasion, I so aggravated my right hon. and learned Friend that he fell from his chair, knocked over his desk and upset a cup of coffee over himself. I shall try not to aggravate him quite as much in my speech. No doubt the process of maturation means that he will not be quite so susceptible to such stimuli anyway.

I was a Home Office Minister at the time of the Roskill report and, under the superintendence of the then Home Secretary, introduced to the House the measure that set up the Serious Fraud Office. It was right to do that because nothing could be worse in setting the values for society than that the poor man is run in for a bit of pick-pocketing while the rich man in the City gets away with millions through sophisticated fraud. However, it is idle to pretend that the techniques that are effective against the petty criminal will be effective against serious fraud.

The Roskill committee proposed far more radical solutions than the Government are rightly prepared to contemplate. Roskill wanted to change court room arrangements and jury arrangements. There is a paradox here because, by its nature, serious fraud is enormously sophisticated, but people devoid of business experience, let alone experience of how financial systems can be misapplied, sit in judgment on it. Roskill was right to raise that issue and, literally and metaphorically, the jury is still out on that one.

The Serious Fraud Office was set up so that the investigation of serious fraud could be pursued by all the specialist groups that were needed to make an effective contribution to identifying and clearing up such crimes. That requires not just the police but accountants and lawyers who are brought in not just at the end of the process but are continually involved.

It was not easy to persuade the House that the Serious Fraud Office should have the right to investigate financial crimes and require answers to questions, because the right to silence—with which some people disagree—has been a fundamental entitlement of our citizens for many centuries. It was thought that the nature of fraud and the need to unravel some of its complex mysteries made it appropriate for the powers of the SFO to include the power to require answers.

It should be no surprise to any of those who are currently involved in the Serious Fraud Office that, as Parliament has entrusted them with that special power, it is more incumbent on them than on any other officers involved in law enforcement manifestly to conduct their affairs with integrity.

I do not know the rights and wrongs of what my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) said about the Asil Nadir case. I have here a document that has been thrust into my hands—perhaps other hon. Members have also seen it. It is the filleted, although I hope not too heavily filleted, correspondence of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General with my hon. Friend. No doubt further mysteries will be explained when there is a chance to read through it. It is clear that if confidence is to be maintained in the Serious Fraud Office, ready answers to what my hon. Friend said and to the other points that have been made must be put before us quickly.

I do not associate myself with suggestions that we need some great public inquiry, because that would only undermine the body that we now need more than ever, but it is clear that some causes for concern go beyond anything that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire. I hold no brief for Mr. Kevin Maxwell, know nothing of him and probably do not wish to. When he was arrested at 6 o'clock in the morning, why were many press men mysteriously around the house? No one can tell me that that was a coincidence; those press men were tipped off.

There seems to be an idea that the Serious Fraud Office is not guilty of every charge that is levelled against it. That includes a ludicrous episode of forgery as an April fool joke. I have a sense of humour—I have had to have—but I find that a little puzzling. It is puzzling that it happened but even more puzzling that, apparently, there was no disciplinary action against the person concerned.

It would be helpful if those points were answered and, although they are not my right hon. and learned Friend's responsibility, they do pertain to law and order. If there have been errors, let them be clearly stated. They must not be allowed to fester and it must not appear that people are being unduly defensive. There should be a review, with a small r, of the manner in which the SFO operates, why some cases have ended in the way that they have and why it sometimes appears that the complexities of fraud cases are made even more complex by a mass of charges which mean that a case takes years to come on, years to dispose of, costs millions and does not have a satisfactory outcome.

I pay tribute to the fact that there is a 65 per cent. clear-up rate, according to Mr. Staples's figures. I do not want to do or say anything that would undermine an office at whose creation I was present. Success has many parents but failure is a bastard child. I am happy to claim to be a parent of the Serious Fraud Office. It would be helpful to have a quiet look at the way matters have shaped up over the past few years. If it is admitted that some things should have been done a bit differently, that will strengthen rather than weaken the Serious Fraud Office.

I do not propose to raise any matters pertaining to cases that are before the courts. However, if I were minded to do so, I would not know how to advise myself on whether what I said was in order. In the context of what my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire and Madam Speaker said, it would be helpful, after reflection, to have some guidance on the sub judice rule as it applies in the House. As I understand it, the remarks in the House by my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire could have been uttered outside. It appears from the fact that he was allowed to continue speaking that he could say those things in the House, but that is uncertain because he may have been allowed to go on merely because he was determined to do so, even though Madam Speaker had a right to stop him.

We need to think about that issue. I am not holding my breath until Mr. Nadir returns to this jurisdiction, because I doubt that we shall ever see him again, and answers to some of these questions should not be based on the supposition that he will return. If the sub judice rule precludes Mr. Nadir's case from being discussed in the House and if we assume, as I do, that Mr. Nadir will not come back to our jurisdiction, we are left with the interesting conclusion that it will never be possible to raise his case in the House.

I cannot think that that is what anyone has intended and it would be helpful if that issue, which has emerged in the agony of the moment as such things tend to do, could be reflected upon so that the next time there is such a controversial matter we all know where we stand. It would not be good if people thought, "We had better say what we want to say on the radio. We can get away with it there but cannot say it in the House." The House is the forum of the nation and it must be a place in which we can say what we want to say rather than having to sneak on to the "Today" programme.

**Mr. Andrew Mackinlay** (Thurrock): I support much of what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has said, particularly about our capacity to speak here and the instance to which he referred. Does he share my concern at the fact that the Table Office declined to let me table a question about a report in a Sunday newspaper two weeks ago that the person who stood bail for Mr. Asil Nadir tipped off the Serious Fraud Office?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I do not think that was a very fruitful intervention.

**Mr. Mellor:** I know that the hon. Gentleman's intervention was well meant, but I would not have dreamt of commenting on it. I was not trying to say what was right or wrong, merely that it would be helpful if there were a period of reflection and we knew what the sub judice rule was. Turning to——

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** Law and order?

**Mr. Mellor:** The police. I thought that the Serious Fraud Office was to do with law and order and I am sorry if my hon. and learned Friend thinks differently: certainly the police have to do with law and order—but I shall give way to my hon. and learned Friend, who thinks differently. We can assume that the SFO does, so I shall continue.

The police have been the subject of a great deal of work by the Home Office recently. Let us face it, it must be a great disappointment that the tremendous efforts that have been made to improve police pay and conditions have not led to dramatic improvements in the quality of policing and the morale of the police. That is not a criticism of the tens of thousands of extremely effective, committed officers. I have had the privilege to meet many policemen, almost all of whom I warmly admire for doing a difficult job; never has the task of being a policeman been more difficult.

It is not easy to persuade the police of the case for change, but I would strongly urge my right hon. and learned Friend to persist in the course he has set out in the White Paper. There might even be a case for going further which would be supported from these Conservative Benches. Quite plainly, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that there may be some structural rather than personal reasons why more success has not been achieved and I would strongly urge my right hon. and learned Friend to continue.

My right hon. and learned Friend has been delivered a very potent package by Sir Patrick Sheehy, and rightly so. I do not think that the old Edmund-Davies formula can continue. Although it is painful and it will be difficult for the police, one hopes that the Police Federation will address the issue with maturity rather than in the way in which old style manual trade unions used to address these matters. How the police respond will be an interesting test for them as well as everyone else.

I cannot help feeling that the Sheehy report represents a close look from a management perspective at the best way to ensure that the police service contains highly motivated, well-rewarded and successful people and that there is an ebb and flow in the service whereby people can move up quickly and people who are not up to it can be moved out quickly. That is an inevitable development.

I should make one point about the Metropolitan police. It is right to acknowledge, as my right hon. and learned Friend does, that there is no proper process of accountability for the Metropolitan police. He was right to draw back from the initial interest of his predecessor, whom I warmly admire, but even Homer nods.

The idea of getting local councillors involved in the Metropolitan police simply would not wash in London.

*[Mr. Mellor]*

where the climate has been ruined by all the arguments that emanated from the Labour party before it began to listen to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) when the police became the subject of political coontroversy. No one in his right mind would entrust the police to some of the left-wing councillors who were sounding off about them. Perhaps things have changed, but I do not know whether they have changed as much as the hon. Gentleman asserts. However, it is not my aim to make a party political speech; I wish simply to say that I do not think it is possible that that argument could have survived scrutiny, given the background.

**Mr. Blair:** Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Mellor:** I shall finish this point and then I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman. I wonder whether my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary would like to tell us a little more in due course, or even in the White Paper, about from where he proposes the 16 people who comprise the proposed body should be drawn.

One must be wary of obvious solutions because they are almost always wrong, but here in the House there are nearly 100 London Members of Parliament. It is recognised that there is something special about the Metropolitan police. Given that it is much larger than other police forces, has national functions and rightly falls under the aegis of the Home Secretary, should we not contemplate giving London Members of Parliament some role in this, perhaps through a new committee? I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will reflect on whether that might be an alternative worthy of consideration.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend has not lost for ever his commitment to amalgamate police forces. There is no logic in the present pattern of the police, with some metropolitan forces, some an amalgamation of two or three counties, and others on a single-county basis. I cannot believe that having 43 separate police forces is the most effective way to fight crime. Of course, local feathers will be ruffled and there will be a great deal of nimbyism, but it is worth pushing on.

We all must be deeply distressed every time there is a major terrorist outrage. The IRA will not secure its political aims by bombing and nothing that I say suggests to the contrary. However, we must recognise that just having a stiff upper lip about these outrages and looking like walk-on players in Mrs. Miniver, saying, "Britain can take it", is no more than a starting point in the reconsideration of our anti-terrorist policies.

It is sad but true that, although there is much dedicated police work being done against terrorism, the clear-up rate for major terrorist outrages in Britain over the past 10 years has been lamentably small. If we think back, each right hon. and hon. Member will have his or her own memories of particular outrages. I was appalled by the murder of Ian Gow, for which no one was brought to book; by the slaughter of the bandsmen at Deal barracks, for which no one was brought to book; and by the slaughter of the two young children in Warrington.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** A Member of the House.

**Mr. Mellor:** Ian Gow?

**Mr. Winterton:** No, Robert Bradford.

**Mr. Mellor:** Indeed. Everyone will have his or her own example, and I appreciate that. Let us not argue about what is the right example but draw a conclusion from it.

Although, of course, we want to express our confidence in the manner in which such issues are approached, it is extremely difficult to say that the results have been anything other than inadequate. We have to ask ourselves what we can do about it.

I shall not go into detail, but we have to ask whether, in setting the leadership of the anti-terrorist squad at commander level, we are giving it sufficient significance. I cannot think of a more important aspect of law and order; I am sure that even my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) thinks that it is part of law and order that the anti-terrorist squad should have the best and brightest members of the police force. If it is necessary to expand that squad, let it be done. In relation to intelligence gathering, that responsibility has now been given to the intelligence services.

It was a trip down memory lane for me to hear the hon. Member for Sedgefield talk about drugs policy. One of the more interesting problems when I was dealing with drugs policy was the chafing between the police and customs who were both involved in drugs policy. There was a feeling that one could not tell the other something because it would not be handled properly.

It is not necessarily a matter for public response, but we have to take out into the open the question whether we can be satisfied that the new arrangement with the intelligence services and the police is working well and that they are working together effectively. I am worried about some of the rumours about people hissing behind their hands about this and that.

Is there not a case for a unified anti-terrorist agency giving this issue the profile that it deserves? Surely, with so many intelligence personnel presumably liberated from the duties of monitoring what is happening in the Kremlin now that the Kremlin is run differently, is there not a case for looking seriously at whether, in the light of these outrages, we need more effective action?

We rightly rejected mass action that would drive the minority community in Northern Ireland against us. We elected to follow a highly specific policy of going for particular terrorists and of proving offences against them. Of course, intelligence has worked in thwarting a number of outrages, but not enough people have been brought to book. We must ask ourselves before the next outrage what we are going to do about that.

We need to make absolutely sure also that the Government of the Republic of Ireland do not just say that they are with us on terrorism. It is not edifying that, just a few months ago, a Sunday newspaper was able to publish a picture of a notorious IRA criminal fishing in the Irish Republic while on bail, because he could not be extradited. It is not good enough that co-operation has improved—it must be total. After all, we and the Republic of Ireland are partners in the European Community, and we are being invited to do even more to open our borders and to think of ourselves as one nation. How can we do that if people can escape and claims of non-responsibility can be made by Dublin, when presumably the terrorist must be known?

More must be done if public confidence is to be retained. Although the IRA will never achieve its aim by further outrages, it is clear that there is a limit to public tolerance to outrages—particularly on the scale of those

that occurred in the City of London—before the public lose confidence in the ability of those in power to do anything effective.

I do not want public confidence to be lost, but it will not take many more outrages for the public to be sick in their guts and to realise that nothing has been achieved by way of convictions. My right hon. and learned Friend said that the best way to fight crime is to catch and to convict the criminal. That is not being done enough.

**Mr. David Trimble** (Upper Bann): I agree with much that has been said by the right hon. and learned Gentleman, and I will not quibble with him about the best examples of terrorism. I welcome his concern, even if it could have been displayed years earlier. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has not mentioned one aspect that relates particularly to the City of London. Right hon. and hon. Members will have read newspaper reports of the measures that are being introduced to restrict vehicle access to the City, which I am sure are reasonable and necessary. They may be necessary also in other cities in the United Kingdom.

Does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that such measures should be put on a proper legislative footing? The legal basis for the road blocks and road checks that are currently being seen in London is somewhat uncertain. There is a need for not only a national agency and for the proper co-ordination of intelligence of the kind that the right hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned, but uniform legislation against terrorism throughout the kingdom.

**Mr. Mellor:** The hon. Gentleman's question would be better directed at my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. I admit that the hon. Gentleman's point was not the first that occurred to me. Although I do not like the public being stopped without proper legal powers, it is good news that it will be more difficult for a terrorist to drive a clapped-out old lorry carrying tonnes of exposive into the City of London and park it there for a couple of hours undetected—but we cannot win by a ring of steel. That will not work. The terrorists will simply move on to another target.

I am calling for more effective action in identifying terrorists. We keep hearing that there are only a few hundred of them. It should not be beyond our resources to identify them. If those in authority who are currently responsible cannot do so, it is time that we expanded the operation to ensure that that is done.

I wish my right hon. and learned Friend every success in discharging his duties. I cannot think of a more difficult post than Home Secretary, because so many and varied matters fall within it. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend can make progress, in line with the speech that he made this afternoon.

6.13 pm

**Mrs. Bridget Prentice** (Lewisham, East): It was fascinating to hear the Home Secretary say that he is prepared to crack down on crime—particularly as a member of a Government who have continually denied the evidence of their own eyes that crime in Britain is spiralling out of control and have denied any responsibility for that.

We on the Labour Benches have pointed to increased car crime and home burglaries, and to the 110 per cent. increase in violent crime, since a Conservative Government came to power. Such is the loss of public confidence in the system that the attitude is developing that it is hardly worth chasing the young offender, because nothing much is likely to happen to him anyway. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said, the British crime survey showed that two out of three crimes go unreported. It is no wonder that the police and local communities feel that property and juvenile crime are at an unprecedented level.

The Home Office claims that young offending has fallen across the country and has rejected Labour party proposals to tackle youth crime, which should be at the heart of a national strategy developed through careful research and effective local initiatives. We want action to prevent young people offending in the first place. We will be tough on crime and on the causes of crime. That requires a dynamic partnership between local authorities, police and local communities. It means also—as my hon. Friend emphasised—adequate provision for drug rehabilitation centres, youth clubs and leisure activities for the young, to ensure that they are diverted from crime.

The past three Home Secretaries have consistently and deliberately starved local councils and voluntary organisations of the resources to do the job properly. Despite the Government's antagonism, Labour local authorities in London have established more than 30 community safety groups with the Metropolitan police to control and to prevent crime. Meanwhile, the Government stand idly by.

Last year, the Apex Trust was on the verge of going under, until my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield and hon. Members in all parts of the House spoke up for it to ensure that it could continue its work of rehabilitating offenders and finding them appropriate training and employment. In south London, the Apex Trust is working with South Thames training and enterprise council, and it is also doing excellent work with prisoners at Belmarsh.

It is vital to intervene when a young person begins offending. In many places, the simple caution enjoys a high success rate, but some young people need more than that —a package of support and advice that will steer them away from crime. In the 14 years in which a Conservative Government have had an opportunity to do something about the problem, no Home Secretary—including the present holder of that office—has produced any national information or guidance on using the caution, or advice on the best approach to use in some areas as distinct from others.

There is no check either to ensure that the caution is not used as a means of avoiding paperwork and taking up court time instead of as an effective control measure. There is certainly a fear among police officers to whom I have spoken that the Crown Prosecution Service refers cases back for caution when the police themselves would prefer to prosecute.

There must be prompt intervention also when a youngster offends while on bail. The Home Secretary spoke of speeding up the trial process but failed to give any specific examples. It is extraordinary that cases take many months to come before the courts. We want national bail support and enforcement programmes, with regular reporting on the young offender, school attendance checks and work with the young offender's family to ensure that he does not offend while on bail and that he turns up when his case is to be heard.

The Home Secretary spoke only with an eye on the Tory party conference, so that he could wring his hands

*[Mrs. Bridget Prentice]*

there, promise to stamp out crime and make the usual diatribe against those of us who are concerned not only about present crime levels but about preventing crime in future. One would think that a Government so strapped for cash would take the opportunity to combat crime in an economical and common-sense fashion. It costs about £1,700 to keep a young offender in a secure unit. If the Government concentrated on trying to prevent the youngster from committing crime in the first place, it would be money well spent.

We accept that some youngsters need to be in secure accommodation and we realise that the Government accept that, too. They have said that they will provide secure accommodation for those youngsters. However, in the two years since that promise was made, not one place has been provided by the Government. We need those places if we are to help the young people and ensure that they do not reoffend.

The Government have done no research on why supervision orders with residence requirements are used so rarely by the courts and they have failed to take on board the issues raised by organisations such as the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, which has said that the Government are simply seeking the failed solutions of the past. Research has shown that 78 per cent. of offenders with previous convictions who were given approved school orders were reconvicted within five years; yet we know that those who are put under proper local authority secure supervision are much less likely to offend.

On 23 March, the Home Secretary said:

"The police must respond to the needs of local communities and of the victims of crime".—[*Official Report*, 23 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 765.]

Such utterances fail to reflect the reality of the gaps in the provision for the victims of crime.

Victim Support has made it clear that it will not have the funding to provide sufficient posts to meet the need that it has identified. It knows that the funding that the Government are providing is inadequate. Next year, Victim Support is likely to find its funding position even more difficult. The Home Office figure of £8·6 million shows a shortfall of £2·3 million. By raising the threshold for claims from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board from £550 to £1,000, the Government have denied people the opportunity to have some form of support. Victim Support estimates that one in three victims of violent crime who would previously have received compensation will now be excluded from the scheme. That displays a callous disregard for the needs of victims of crime.

The Home Secretary has stated a desire to respond to local community needs. How can that desire be met in London when, in the face of the views of the Association of London Authorities, the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and the Police Federation as well as those directly involved in preventing crime in London, the Home Secretary has refused to provide a police authority for London?

The Home Secretary is about to appoint a body to act as an advisory board on his behalf on policing strategy in the capital. That is nothing more than an unaccountable quango—yet another example of the Conservative Government placing Conservative people in positions of authority without any recourse to local need, local accountability or what local people want. Londoners will be left without an elected authoritative voice on policing in London. Across the country, the amalgamation of forces will make the police even more distant from the local communities than they are at present.

The proposals paraded by the Government in the White Paper on Monday fail to address the scale of the crime wave that has hit the capital over the past decade. All the evidence of escalating crime and low clear-up rates confirms that the present arrangements, whereby the Home Secretary is the police authority for London, have served the capital badly when compared with the rest of the country, where policing has been overseen by police authorities comprising elected members of the community.

The level of crime in London is massive and it is rising. Almost 1 million notifiable offences were recorded by the Metropolitan police in 1992. The Government have failed to take any responsibility for the escalating crime figures, yet crime in London has almost doubled in the 14 years in which they have been in power. In the operational police review undertaken by the police staff associations, a survey of the public revealed that 64 per cent. considered burglary of people's homes to be a priority. It was second only to assaults on women. However, despite the intensive efforts of the Metropolitan police, the Government have made no serious attempt to support them and the local community in dealing with those crimes.

Nearly 200,000 burglaries were reported in London in 1992. In the same year, almost 38,000 crimes involving violence against the person were reported. Mention was made earlier of the use of guns in crimes. That was a relatively stable figure in London until the last couple of years, but we are becoming more and more concerned about the rise in the use of firearms and the escalating violent drug war that seems to be waging in the capital. We are concerned about whether the Metropolitan police have the resources to cope with that new, heavily violent and internationally mobile criminal set. We heard nothing from the Home Secretary to address that problem.

How can the needs of the local community be met in these times of ever-increasing property and violent crime when a basic lack of resources pervades the system, reducing the number of police? Promises to the police have been broken and their budgets have been cut. Since 1991, the number of offences per police officer in the Metropolitan police has risen by almost 33 per cent. Across the country, the increasing work load is way out of proportion to any increase in staffing and the police have considerable difficulties in coping with that.

Last week, I received a letter from a primary school in my constituency—the Good Shepherd school in Downham. It wrote saying that the school had been subjected to

"petty vandalism, of an ongoing and expensive nature."

The resident schoolkeeper rang for police assistance. During the weekend in question, Catford police station received 17 telephone calls requesting police presence. On that Saturday, the Good Shepherd school could get no response. When the head teacher raised the matter with Catford police station, she was informed that the station was seriously undermanned and that it was 40 personnel down and had been so for nearly two years.

Where is the Government support for Catford police station, the primary schools in my constituency and the others in the area? The Downham area in my constituency has a large number of elderly people who are afraid to go

out in the evening. If they heard an example like that, they would be even more afraid to go out because they know that the police are not available to protect them.

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** Does the hon. Lady agree with the measures that have been taken to civilianise the police, so that more police are on the beat now than in 1979? Does she regret the fact that, when the Labour party left office in 1979, the police were 8,000 under establishment?

**Mrs. Prentice:** I have already said that crime has doubled in the 14 years in which the Conservative party has been in power. The Government have accepted no responsibility for that. The Conservative party can no longer call itself the party of law and order. It is clearly the party of law and disorder.

I assure the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) that we support having police on the beat. We have been asking for that for a considerable time. If the Government spent less time attempting to privatise sections of the police force, perhaps we would see more quickly some response to the call for more police on the beat.

I spent eight hours on Monday with a policewoman from Lee Green police station. I walked around my constituency on the beat with her so that I could find out the sort of problems with which the police have to deal; we did not have to check only on burglaries or the increase in car crime, some of which I witnessed.

Having done that, the policewoman has to return to the station, complete paperwork and deal with matters in the knowledge that, on that very day, the Home Secretary was producing a White Paper that was to give the police little help in ensuring that they could continue to do good work on the beat and visit local schools.

That police officer said that she wanted to go into schools as often as possible, to talk to young children as early as possible so that they understood that the police service was there to serve, help and support. The visits were also to ensure that children would be reminded of their own responsibilities and be steered away from the criminal road. I am quite convinced that the police officers in Lewisham, with whom I have been in regular contact over the past few weeks, will not be assured by the Government statements yesterday and earlier in the week.

The Government's ill-advised and ill-co-ordinated responses to crime in our society have failed on all counts. They have failed to achieve a practical and realistic strategy to fight crime. They have failed to involve the local community in that battle. They have failed to understand and meet the needs of young offenders, who require local community support to stop reoffending. Most of all, they have failed to support the victims of those crimes.

6.32 pm

**Sir Rhodes Boyson** (Brent, North): There are two major problems in our society. The first is the breakdown of law and order all over the country—in cities and in the country—and the second is our current huge financial deficit. In the long run, the most serious of the two is the breakdown of law and order because people will take the law into their own hands, the vigilantes and the rest will move in and there will be a breakdown of society. The problem basically arises because we no longer pass on the accepted values of a civilised society from generation to generation in our schools, churches and homes.

I wish to make nine points. First, religion should not be the substitute for a policeman, but if people believe that they will be responsible for their actions in another life, it acts as a sobering thought. That does not mean that one has to be a Christian or have a religious belief to be moral, but in the society of the 19th century, when 80 or 90 per cent. of the population believed that there was a judgment after death, it was a great help in maintaining law and order. That has gone.

Secondly, untold harm was done in our schools, educationally and morally, by the so-called discovery method. Children go to school to learn what society is about; to realise that they are the heirs of the past and the custodians of the future and that they can stand on the shoulders of people before them only if they are taught learning, mathematics, science and morality at school. Instead of that we have had pretend learning that one can discover something for oneself, and children in schools today grow up believing that they are the masters of creation and that they can do everything. The infant school discovery method has done untold harm in lowering the standards of mathematics, arithmetic and English because it did not peg people into society. People need to be pegged in society to understand what society is. If people think they can do it all for themselves, selfishness becomes the god of their creation.

Thirdly, there has been a decline of school and youth games. That is especially important to boys. I have never been a girl so I cannot comment on that, but a distinguished lady, my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), is present, so perhaps she can talk about that. After 23 years of school mastering, I know that boys are dangerous creatures unless they are regularly worn out. Sport is great for achieving that. If they are not worn out, they will take things into their own hands. When I left Highbury Grove comprehensive almost 20 years ago, the decline of sport was beginning. Wives now expect their husbands to go to the supermarket on Saturday morning and help instead of being at school taking responsibility for a school team.

Then it was said that there must not be any competitive games and that everyone must compete with themselves. That was left-wing nonsense, but I do not blame the Labour party for that. It is difficult to play tennis with oneself. One would be worn out by one serve following the method of jumping the net. A head of department under me became, in a midnight seance, one of those against competition. We need many sports for juveniles. In my constituency, the private sports clubs are setting up such activities and not the schools. Sport is leaving the schools, and that is bad.

Fourthly, we face a similar problem in youth work. We are short of youth leaders. There are more children wanting to be organised than there are people wanting to organise them. That is a responsibility of society.

Fifthly—people will have divided views on this—corporal punishment has been withdrawn from schools. The idea that everybody grows up abiding the law is untrue. People have become law-abiding and have had a sense of civilisation since the advent of the Peelers. We have the best infantry in the world because we are a bloody-minded people. Unless we organise, it is dangerous. We took the right of corporal punishment

*[Sir Rhodes Boyson]*

away from schools and put nothing back. The result is a high crime rate among children at the age of 14 because teachers do not want them in school. The teachers have passed round the cap to get them out because they can teach the other 24 children at the age of 16 if the six who will not behave are not there. Unless we put something back to replace corporal punishment, there will be more juvenile crime at the age of 14 as they become a betrayed generation.

Sixthly, there has been a decline in the instance of apprenticeship. That is a way of pegging one generation to another. Twice as many young people in Germany have apprenticeships than in Britain. A trained journeyman teaches young people the habits of maturity. The youngsters do not run with their own group all the time, but have an adult pattern to follow, with the man who is training them in that job, if not at home. I would like to see the return of apprenticeships, including the boy apprenticeships in the services to train them so that they have the skills and also have that sense of responsibility that a good journeyman brings. There is no substitute in further education for an apprenticeship where a youngster is attached to one person who becomes his friend or guardian, almost for life.

Seventhly, we have suffered from the ending of national service. I am not suggesting that we should bring it back. It took people away from their homes, and, in many cases, gave them a second chance in life. Most European countries still have national service. Our armed services do not want it to return because it takes too long to train somebody. I was in the boy services myself a long time ago and it was a great training ground. We must realise that we lost something when national service ended.

Let me say something that I did not intend to say—I always live an exciting life; I shall listen carefully to myself. It is about firearms. I once spent time in Switzerland where every man has a gun and where there are far fewer murders than in Britain, not because they do not have guns, but because they all have a gun. In this country it is only the criminal fraternity who have guns and only the law-abiding citizens who do not have guns. That should be considered.

Before the introduction of the Peelers, people had guns under their pillows. We read about that in Victorian fiction. Let me return to the rest of my speech; hon. Members cannot have the best beforehand.

**Mr. James Couchman** (Gillingham): I am trying hard to follow my right hon. Friend's logic, especially with regard to the use of firearms and the general ownership of firearms. I should have thought that the example of the United States was not an encouragement to the universal ownership of firearms. Perhaps my right hon. Friend has some remedy for that.

**Sir Rhodes Boyson:** That is an excellent intervention to which I have no answer. However, I shall not change my mind. I shall think about and pray for the answer. Europe may be different from America. As an anti-Maastricht man, I shall not go into that point. I must be careful because I am in dangerous territory and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) did not intend to bring me into dangerous territory. I shall pass on and merely nod in his direction.

Eighthly, there is the question of the police. They are burdened by forms. They do not walk the streets; they fill up pieces of paper. They do not want to get into trouble by arresting someone and then finding that it does not come off. The great thing is for them to look busy as they walk round the streets. When one asks what one should do at the second coming, the answer is, "Look busy. Everyone will pass you by if you look busy." The police are burdened by written reports, and that has not helped us.

My ninth point is this. If there is a diet of sex and violence on television, sex and violence will increase in society; there is no doubt about that. If we say that great art, great literature and great poetry uplift, bad ones will downlift—is that the opposite of uplift?

**Mrs. Gorman:** Downgrade.

**Sir Rhodes Boyson:** Yes, the word is "downgrade". I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman). I do not know whether she was sitting here to help me, but she did help me with a graciousness that is very becoming in the House.

I make no apology for saying that I want more censorship of broadcasting. I am not a libertarian; my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay is more libertarian than I am. I want more censorship of what children see, especially as television is on all the time, even when the parents are not watching.

**Mr. David Nicholson** (Taunton): On the subject of the role of the media, does my right hon. Friend share my concern and the concern of my constituents who contacted me yesterday and today expressing shock and horror at the report on the front page of *The Daily Telegraph* yesterday that the BBC is planning a train robbers' reunion in Rio? Is that not glorification of crime? How can we beat crime if the BBC behaves like that?

**Sir Rhodes Boyson:** I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I read that article yesterday and I was horrified, especially bearing in mind what happened to the driver of the train. However, two letters in *The Daily Telegraph* today suggest that the reunion will not happen. That was my reading of the letters, and I hope that it is right. However, if the BBC goes ahead, the House must make its views perfectly clear, not only on behalf of our constituents, but on behalf of our own moral beliefs.

We face a total breakdown of law and order in Britain because of the weakening of the powers of the schoolmaster, of the police, of the courts and of parents, and because of the collapse of the social cements of religion, of patriotism and of controlled and responsible behaviour among the younger generation. Boys, girls, men and women are not naturally good. They need to be taught the difference between good and evil, and between right and wrong. They also need to be taught about original sin.

I became a Tory—I do not suggest that all Labour party members should do the same—the day I discovered original sin. I realised that man was not perfectible in this life. Even I am not perfectible in this life, although my children may be. I discovered original sin and what it means in moral law. Alas, in recent years, many schools have betrayed their responsibilities and have taught skills without values. The family has been under continual attack and the Church has in many instances ceased to be

a saviour of souls for eternity and has preferred to become a branch of the welfare state. We have forgotten original sin.

Britain is becoming a dangerous society for the young, the old, the handicapped and the vulnerable to live in. Unless drastic action is taken, vigilante groups will arise because frustrated people will take the law into their own hands, as has happened recently, for their protection and for the protection of their neighbours.

That may be a dangerous statement to make with lawyers sitting round me in the House. Moral law is superior to statute or any other law because it gives a moral base to human behaviour. Men and women came into society for their own protection, and they put down their own weapons to be protected by the group, by the locality and by the country. Once those things no longer defend them, they have every right in moral law to take up their weapons again. That is the dangerous situation that we now face. Either our people, via the police and the courts, give full protection, which they do not do now, or society as we have understood it for the past 150 years will break down in Britain.

6.45 pm

**Mr. Robert Maclennan** (Caithness and Sutherland): The Home Secretary began this debate—his first major debate on crime—with a sober and careful speech, to which I listened with great attention and with some respect for his outline of the Government's priorities. The tone of his speech was strikingly less triumphalist than the tone of the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) whom he has replaced, and it was all the more welcome for that. A note of humility from any Home Secretary at the end of 14 years of Conservative government which have seen a doubling of recorded crime rates is certainly not out of place.

I have no doubt that many hon. Members agree with the Home Secretary that the country would be a more tranquil place if we lived in a society in which the criminal and not our neighbour was frightened. It may be Utopian to believe that we can achieve a society in which criminals are automatically frightened. None the less, for a Home Secretary embarking on a difficult role, it must be right to have high objectives.

It was only when the Home Secretary came to the end of his speech and indulged in a little partisan exchange with the Labour party about who was to lead the crusade against crime that I found myself deeply out of sympathy with what he was saying. The country needs a national crusade against crime. If it is to be effective, it cannot be based on a split of perception between political parties about the causes of crime and the proper Government responses to crime.

As a member of a third party in the House, I ask the Home Secretary to remember the wise words of Sir Robert Peel, a Conservative of some distinction in these matters, who said as long ago as 1835:

> "Between the dissenters and the established church there is an enormous ground of infidelity."

Translated into the terms of this debate, there is an enormous ground of people who are not persuaded that Conservative Home Secretaries or Labour Home Secretaries are necessarily the people who will prescribe the cure to an endemic and growing problem.

The Home Secretary spoke of one of the issues to which I attach high importance and in which I want to promote his interest beyond what he said today. I stress the importance of crime prevention in tackling opportunistic crime, especially crime against property, which is a scourge which makes life in many communities insecure and fearful.

I do not believe that the Government have begun to appreciate the value of crime prevention measures or the scale of help that they can deliver in local communities to those who live in fear that their home will be broken into, their car stolen, or their handbag snatched; that they will be mugged in a dark corner, or that their property will be vandalised.

The Government have backed a number of worthwhile, well-publicised schemes of crime prevention—the safer cities scheme, for instance—and I am glad to learn that they have in mind 40 new projects. But let us get this into perspective.

According to the Government's own figures, in 1992, only £16 million was spent by the Home Office on crime prevention, out of a total of nearly £7 billion spent on the criminal justice system. Out of a total of 125,000 police, only 750 are dedicated crime-prevention officers.

The arrangements for training in crime prevention are exiguous. They are conducted from a training centre in Staffordshire which is a mere Portakabin. It can train—if that is what is being done there, and it is a pretty limited amount of work that is done—only 1,000 officers a year.

**Mr. Harold Elletson** (Blackpool, North): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that very few of us on this side of the House have any respect for his concern about crime prevention or for his party's concern about law and order when he is the only representative of his party who can be bothered to turn up and speak in this important debate? There have been no other Liberals on those empty Benches throughout the entire debate. It is an absolute disgrace that the Liberal party treats the whole issue of law and order with such obvious contempt.

**Mr. Maclennan:** The hon. Gentleman will be listened to with respect, if he succeeds in catching your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and addresses any of these issues in a slightly better-tempered manner than he has just displayed. It must be regarded as poverty of argument that leads the hon. Gentleman into personal abuse.

The job of the police is not simply to enforce the law after it has been broken. I believe that, in the minds of the public, it is exceedingly important that they should play an ever-growing part in preventing it from being broken. They cannot do that on their own; they require the co-operation of local communities and local voluntary groups, and I believe that the Government can do a great deal more to promote this.

It is not simply a matter of dedicated schemes, although those are important; it is also a matter of collating the evidence of what is effective. That is something which, with considerably fewer resources than those of a Government Department, the Liberal Democrats have already attempted to do, producing a handbook based upon the experience of local authorities, in which they have played some part, in dedicating schemes to tackling particularly perceived threates to society by criminals.

This is the kind of thing that can best be done and disseminated at local level, but it can be done with even greater authority if the information is collated nationally, and the Home Office is well placed to do this. Even the

*[Mr. Maclennan]*

process of collection of such information would be a stimulus to local authorities and local police forces to come together in this valuable work. I was glad to hear the Home Secretary say that he has it in mind to pick up this idea.

He also spoke of the need for a partnership between the police and the public, and the important part played by individuals in society in combating crime. I am 100 per cent. in agreement with him on that general proposition. A society that turns its back on crime leaves individuals at much greater risk, and we all have a responsibility. It is easy to say that; it is more difficult, when confronted with a criminal act, to respond.

One of the features of the society in which we live that is different from that of our parents is that there are now fewer people in positions of authority below the police who, as in the past, have the capacity to defuse potentially criminal behaviour. We see fewer park attendants, fewer bus conductors, fewer people who have the respect of the community because of their role within it. Those people provided a form of service that perhaps modern technology has made unnecessary, but a gap has been left. I believe that the gap can be filled only by personal respect for the need to participate in the fight against crime.

The Home Secretary also spoke of the need for an effective criminal justice system and a greater concentration of the system on bringing the guilty to justice. It is certainly true that there is widespread concern about the effectiveness of our criminal justice system at this time. There is widespread concern among the police that their efforts to catch criminals do not always lead to prosecutions being pursued effectively. There is widespread concern that perhaps the rules of evidence are not sufficiently adapted to secure convictions.

There has been questioning of some of the fundamentals of our criminal justice system. That, no doubt inspired by evidence of miscarriages of justice of a peculiarly appalling kind, led the Home Secretary, as he told us this afternoon, to change his views entirely about capital punishment.

That widespread concern about the criminal justice system led to the setting up of the royal commission under Lord Runciman. No doubt, when its report is published, we shall wish to debate its recommendations. I do not think, therefore, that it is sensible in this debate to trail the debate that would more naturally follow the publication of that report. But that the new Home Secretary is aware, at least, of these concerns is very much to be welcomed.

I particularly welcome what the right hon. and learned Gentleman had to say about capital punishment, for, by nods and winks, some Conservative leaders sought in the past to suggest that, if only capital punishment were restored—that was something favoured by Conservative leaders—perhaps the whole tenor of our attitude to law and order would be changed. I am quite sure that the Home Secretary's attitude towards that is right. It is good that he made it so clear that capital punishment cannot play a helpful role in strengthening the forces of law and order in our society.

The Home Secretary dealt at some length—in a particularly contentious manner as between himself and the Labour party—with the need to give the courts the powers to deal with offenders effectively. He touched on a matter that will be covered in part by the royal commission, but if he focuses exclusively on amendment of substantive criminal law, he will miss the need to which he in his great office of state can respond better than any other member of the Government—to complement the law with other urgent Government action where such measures are necessary.

The exchange between the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and the Home Secretary at the end of the debate was one of the more profound exchanges about law and order to which we have listened for some years. The dialogue was more genuine than we have heard for some time.

I hope that the Home Secretary will acknowledge that instant criminal law reform to deal with problems that have been headlined by the tabloid press, which no doubt are real—joyriding, dangerous dogs and so on—will not be the test of whether he has succeeded as Home Secretary. The volume of legislation on law and order will not prove his abilities as a great Home Secretary. I draw his attention to the comments of Sir Robert Peel, who, in a debate in the House in 1844, said that there were many matters of morals which he knew to be wrong, but which could not be put right by legislation. That is as true today as it was 150 years ago.

We are having this debate because, I suppose, there is a new Home Secretary, not because there is a coherent package of measures to tackle the problem of expanding crime. We are caught in the middle of a series of proposals for change in respect of policing, some of which are of considerable importance.

We shall return to the subject of law and order in detail in the autumn, when the Government announce their conclusions on the Sheehy report, which was published yesterday and which drew together the different strands after hearing what the police and others had to say. What has been said so far cannot give great pleasure to the Government, whose proposals have been universally condemned from the police forces. None the less, I should like to make a few general points about policing in this country.

We have to take seriously the risk of an over-centralised police force. I have no objection in principle to amalgamation of police forces where the case is made out. My noble Friend Lord Jenkins of Hillhead presided over the largest ever programme of force amalgamation in 1966-67, reducing the number of forces to 155 at the time of the Willink commission to 51 in Great Britain and 43 in England and Wales.

The rules for amalgamation that were laid down in schedule 3 to the Police Act 1964 seem sensible. They were established by Mr. Henry Brooke, the father of the present Secretary of State for National Heritage. They provided that the Home Secretary must publish any plans for amalgamation, and that if there was any objection from the police authority or local council, a public inquiry must be held. The report of the inspectors should then be laid before Parliament, together with a draft statutory instrument for implementation. The procedure ensures that the Executive must justify its plans before an independent panel, and seek the approval of Parliament and of local people.

The White Paper says that the Government will simplify the statutory procedures. It appears that they wish to abolish them. The Secretary of State may have it in mind to force through amalgamations without a public

inquiry. I do not think that that is wise. My reasons for that are established over many years. It is not a partisan point. The procedures exist, are perfectly satisfactory and should be adhered to.

The second strand in the Government's thinking about the police which has been revealed is their wish to establish greater control over local police authorities. It has perhaps over the years been an aim of Home Secretaries to take greater power over the police. The Government's proposals to appoint and pay chairmen of police authorities are misconceived and should be abandoned, as they are causing great anxiety throughout the police service, as are the proposals for political appointees to police authorities.

The view that expenditure on police authorities should be capped by central Government follows the same line of thinking. It is presented as giving greater freedom of expenditure to police authorities, but in reality it is cash-limiting police expenditure, and as such will have a damaging effect on the ability of local police authorities and chief constables to set their own objectives.

The success of the police in working with the public in attacking crime in rural areas, in areas where ethnic minorities predominate and live in fear of racial attack, and in deprived inner cities where drug abuse is endemic and is blighting the lives of our families, depends not on the Home Office setting targets of achievement, which have to be adhered to in a rigid bureaucratic way, and achievement of which will lead to adjustments in the pay of police officers. That system of incentives and promotion cannot be responsive to the local communities that the police serve. It cannot be apt to tackle the disparate circumstances of the heterogeneous societies that make up this country.

Local policing has been the core of policing in this country. Community policing, commended by Lord Scarman and implemented increasingly throughout police forces, is the best hope of reducing the role of the criminal, and we shall wish to look at the Government's proposals for the future of the police with those considerations in mind.

I do not believe that the drastic proposals that the Home Secretary adumbrated in reports published this week will command the support of the police or public when they are properly understood. They seem to import into the management and remuneration of policing concepts that may be familiar and appropriate to business and commerce but are not appropriate to the greatest public service in this country, which depends on the police enjoying the confidence of, and being able to react to, the local community.

The Home Secretary, in embarking on his job, has a number of great assets and difficulties to contend with. He has a splendid Home Office research and planning unit, which has produced some first-class research and advice. The hon. Member for Sedgefield drew heavily on the document on drugs that was published earlier this week, and it is a powerful indictment of the view, if that view persists, that the problem of drugs can be effectively tackled by passing ever more punitive legislation against those who are involved in dealing. We must have severe, condign punishment for those who engage in the drug trade, but let us not believe for one moment that that is enough.

The unit has produced valuable work on juveniles, bail, victim support and the unit fines, which the Government have so cavalierly abandoned. Let the Home Secretary pay great attention to the work that it has produced, digest it and, where it is sound, disseminate it.

The Home Secretary also draws on the asset of the police—the bravery and hard work of officers, and the intelligence and dedication of some of our outstanding chief constables. He has at his disposal a probation service that plays a major role in preventing recidivism and in seeking to protect the public from reoffending. He has an incorruptible judiciary—not something that we should take for granted, even in Europe. He has, I believe, local communities who are, as he said, perhaps in a new mood —ready for change, ready for participation in crime prevention and willing to work with the police to prevent crime as much as possible. I hope that he is successful and, as he embarks on his different role, I wish him well.

7.13 pm

**Sir Ivan Lawrence** (Burton): I hope that the House will forgive me if I do not match the eloquence of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). The public want to hear the House debating this topic, which is probably the most important subject of this Session.

I am delighted that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has made such an immediate impact on the subject by raising the debate and, for example, by giving the police the right to use side-handled batons in trials, which they wanted and which are an important element in the protection of women police officers who, with the silly little truncheons that they have at present, simply cannot defend themselves against men carrying knives. This debate, and my right hon. and learned Friend's actions since taking office, has inspired us.

I am delighted to see the Minister of State in his place; if he fills his office with as much distinction as he filled his previous post he will be a credit to the Conservative law and order team.

I was a little disappointed with the speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). He did not show the confidence that I would have expected——

**Mr. Alun Michael** (Cardiff, South and Penarth): This is petty stuff.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was present for the speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield, who lacked a little confidence in his presentation and did not live up to his previous best performance.

It must be embarrassing for the Opposition to say that they have a policy for tough law and order when they must live down the fact that for so long they have opposed every strong law and order measure that the Government have introduced seriatim over the months and years. The hon. Member for Sedgefield always voted against the Government. It appears that, even now, the Labour party will oppose some of the important law and order measures that are being taken. The proof of the pudding will be in the eating; if the hon. Gentleman supports the Government, we can increase our respect for him in home affairs.

**Mr. Michael:** If the proof of the pudding is in the eating, will the hon. and learned Gentleman comment on the Government presiding complacently over an increase of 121 per cent. in recorded crime?

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** That is the sort of ridiculous statement that one would expect from the Opposition. Such a comment is fallacious and unreasonable. It is fallacious because it is based on the fallacy that there has been a massive increase in the amount of crime committed. But with 16,000 more policemen and another 12,000 policemen on the beat, because civilians have been substituted for police office work, it should not surprise us if more crime is detected.

One hundred thousand neighbourhood watch schemes offer 5 million households some protection and observation of crime, so it should not surprise us if more crime is detected. With 5 million more cars than we had a decade ago, it should not surprise us if more young people are tempted to commit auto-crime. If insurance companies insist on claims being reported first to the police, it should not surprise us if more crime is reported. In addition, the courts, the police service and the judicial system have made themsleves more attractive to women who have been seriously abused, raped or sexually assaulted and encouraged them to complain about attacks, so we should not be surprised if more of this crime is reported. Everybody now has a telephone, which they never used to have, so it is easy to report crime.

It is clear that we are witnessing a massive increase in the proportion of recorded crime, but the British crime survey reveals that the increase in recorded crime is roughly double the rise in actual crime.

**Mr. Michael** *rose*——

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** Is the hon. Gentleman going to keep interrupting my speech?

**Mr. Michael:** I thought that the hon. and learned Gentleman, as Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, would aspire to some objectivity. Perhaps he will tell us whether he thinks that the rise in crime and reduction in reporting, which is perceived in communities up and down the country and which has been reflected in the comments of Labour Members and some Conservative Members, is in the minds of the public?

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** A lot of it is panic engendered by the media and much is concentration on the limited areas where there has undoubtedly been an increase in crime —burglary and auto-crime. However, 94 per cent. of all crime is property crime and only 5 or 6 per cent. is violent crime. It is still much safer to walk the streets of Britain than those of practically every other country in the western world. The chances of being robbed, mugged or violently assaulted are about half of what they are in Australia. The chances of being murdered are half what they are in France. If we consider the number of countries where the crime situation is very much more serious than it is in this country, we put the matter into perspective.

Reference has been made to the success of some crime prevention programmes and, as the Home Affairs Select Committee discovered, it is a fact that there have been substantial improvements in the crime situation in particular areas. That is especially true in areas where the safer cities projects have been reducing crime. There is also a closer relationship between the police and local communities.

Estates in Manchester, Birmingham, Wolverhampton and all over the country have not experienced a mere 5 or 10 per cent. reduction in crime; burglaries have become practically unknown, where there used to be burglaries daily; they now see practically no car crime, when there used to be a lot of it; and they now see hardly any muggings. Those are substantial successes. As in all things, we seem to concentrate on the things that go wrong and do not concentrate so much on the things that go right.

We all use London Transport. London Transport has cleaned up its act massively in recent years. It has had tremendous successes in policing the underground and in making it safe for all to walk around. The hon. Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and for Sedgefield do not do the House much credit by concentrating on the things which do not appear to be going right, while forgetting entirely the successes that have undoubtedly occurred.

When the Select Committee on Home Affairs visited Washington, we asked the law and order authorities there how we could deal with the hard core of 200 or 300 persistent juvenile offenders in this country. They laughed at us and said, "Is that all you've got?" They told us that practically every town and city in the United States has a hard core of 200 or 300 persistent juvenile offenders. They wanted to know what we could teach them.

The Opposition's criticisms are also unreasonable. After all, we could have less violent crime if we brought back capital punishment. The objection to capital punishment is not, on the Conservative Benches at least, that it would not deter. The objection is that it is too risky and that there are too many problems about bringing it back. However, it surely cannot be said that some people would not be deterred from committing murder if they knew that, at the end of the day, they would suffer the death penalty. That is what the overwhelming majority of the British people believe.

We could have much less crime if we had a police state. However, we all agree that that would be totally unreasonable. We do not advance law and order if, whenever we try to introduce restraint, for example, through the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the Public Order Act 1986, through changes in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 or in prevention of terrorism legislation, half the House persistently refuses to agree with us. The attitude of consensus which the hon. Member for Sedgefield shows is not convincing when he does not support the measures to which I have referred in a consensual way.

One of the paradoxes of the present law and order system—and this may be a side effect of the misleading statistics—relates to the police. The police are our main weapon against crime. We have more police. They are better equipped, trained and led. We have given them more powers. However, we still have too high a level of crime, whether or not it is rising, and we have a falling number of arrests and convictions.

What can we do about the police? If we think about it, the conclusion is that there must be something wrong with the organisation and management of the police which can be improved so that their best practices can be more widely spread. That is precisely what the Government have done this week. They have tried to bring more locality to the police.

The Government want to involve local business men with the police. They want to ensure that the local police report to their local people. We want to encourage the local policeman to be there for longer periods. We also want to ensure that the budget is tailored to the local needs

of the local police force. Those are moves towards the improvement of locality, not moves towards Government centralisation.

We will have to study the Sheehy proposals with great care. They are directed towards improving the management and structure of the police with fixed 10-year contracts; by cutting out some of the bureaucracy and some ranks; by introducing performance-related pay and more realistic pay scales. The editor of *Police Review*, Brian Hilliard, is reported in *The Daily Telegraph* today as saying that once the knee-jerk reactions subside and the implications of the report have been studied, it will be seen as an attempt to improve the service. That is what the police service needs. We have given it everything else and the police must now respond by improving their management.

I could show that it is unreasonable to criticise the Government for not having done more to reduce crime in matters apart from the police. We have massively improved crime prevention through neighbourhood watches and drug teams. We have massively improved prison building with £1 billion spent on prisons and 20 new prisons and we have also introduced private-sector management. We have massively improved the range of sentences available to courts.

I could go on, but, as other hon. Members wish to speak, I want to conclude by referring to one area in respect of which the system of law and order is undoubtedly falling down. That area is the crazy situation in relation to cautioning. The hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) referred to a different aspect of that problem.

To give police the power to caution offenders, whether they are juveniles or adults, rather than to charge them must always be a rather dubious policy, because it gives ordinary police officers the power to choose who to charge and whether or not to charge. It leaves wide open the possibility of abuse of power and even corruption. I am not suggesting that there has been widespread abuse of power or corruption. However, such a possibility exists when we talk about not needing to bring people to justice because a police officer has decided not to charge someone. If we have such a system, it must be monitored very closely.

Where cautions are available, there may be frustration about the working of the criminal justice system. As was said earlier, frustration arises when the police work hard to bring someone to court and that person simply receives a pat on the head and tuppence from the poor box or, if that person is a juvenile offender, is released back to his family. That person is then back on the street once more doing his wrong-doing. The frustration about that must be immense.

Combined with cautioning, I am not convinced that that is not a bad system. Indeed, a spokesman for the Police Federation told the Select Committee on Home Affairs that frustration was felt in relation to cautioning. He said that people who should have been brought to justice are not being brought to justice.

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** Does my hon. and learned Friend accept that the public are also very frustrated by what he has described? I received a letter from a constituent recently who told me that his son had become involved in clearing up a crime. The perpetrator pleaded guilty instead of going to court and he received a caution. However, when my constituent's son was caught speeding at 40 mph instead of 30 mph, he immediately received a £40 fine. He thought that it was a great injustice that the person who pleaded guilty received a caution, while he received a fine of £40 on the spot.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but the problem is more widespread than that. Offenders are cautioned, but that does not seem to happen when they drive cars. In those circumstances, they are fined. That is very irritating to law-abiding members of society.

If people think that I am exaggerating, I invite them to enter any Crown court in London and ask whether it is busy. It is quite an eye-opener, when there is such a massive level of crime, whether or not it is increasing, to go into the courts of London and find that only half the courts are sitting because cases are not being brought for trial. If hon. Members go around the chambers in the Temple and see how many barristers are sitting on their backsides doing nothing because the work has dried up, they will realise that the cautioning process has much to answer for.

Our police, unlike those in Germany and the United States, have discretion when they encounter a criminal. The can take no action, give an informal warning which is not recorded, give a formal caution, or charge an offender and begin the process of presenting him to the court. Perhaps there is justification in cautioning a juvenile, because one needs to try one more time to avert a juvenile from the criminal justice system—but an adult? An adult should know the difference between right and wrong. There are not many who offend for the first time and are unlucky enough to appear in court. Many people who appear in court for the first time have been offending for many years.

There is great worry about the policy of cautioning. If we do not punish offenders, there might be more temptation to offend again. Whereas conviction and sentence might be a deterrent, cautioning and freedom from further blame most definitely are not.

Home Office research tells us that more than half the police forces in England and Wales have no policy for the use of informal cautions. Therefore, the use of cautions is hardly standardised. If it is not standardised, it could lead to abuse.

Informal cautions are not even recorded. That almost certainly distorts statistics on the incidence of juvenile crime in particular. Our responses might be wholly inadequate because we have a completely wrong idea of the amount of crime that is going on. Crime is not even recorded because people are not being formally cautioned.

There are reports that even crimes of burglary and violence are resulting in cautions to offenders and a caution is allowed to be given only when there is clear evidence of guilt; it is a requirement of a caution that the offender must acknowledge guilt. Offenders who have undoubtedly committed crimes as serious as burglary and violence are getting off with a pat on the head.

There was evidence before the Select Committee that there are things called multiple cautions—that is, cautioning an adult or juvenile offender not once but twice, three times or four times. One of the Police Federation witnesses told us that on such occasions juveniles actually laugh at them.

If people who should be caught, charged and convicted are not charged and convicted, the whole criminal justice

*[Sir Ivan Lawrence]*

system falls into disrepute. Once the system falls into direpute and people do not respect it, there is a temptation for people to take the law into their own hands, and that is where vigilantes have been coming into the matter. If people who should be charged and convicted are not convicted, their victims, about whom hon. Members are very concerned, can make no claim for compensation for their suffering.

**Mr. Colin Pickthall** (Lancashire, West): I am having difficulty in putting together the two halves of the hon. and learned Gentleman's speech. At the beginning, I understood him to say that the increase in crime was not as large as had been made out because of increased detection. The hon. and learned Gentleman now seems to be saying that the crime wave that is undetected and unprosecuted, because of the caution procedure or whatever, is much greater than we think. He cannot have it both ways.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** If the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) cannot put together two logical sides of an argument, that must be for him to worry about. The point that I am making is that, high as the level of crime is—nobody disputes that it is high—I dispute that it is rising at the rate at which it is portrayed. I am pointing out also that, because of the policy of cautioning, considerable problems must be addressed.

Undoubtedly, there has been a worrying growth in the use of cautions, both formal and informal. Undoubtedly, there is growing concern about the effects of cautioning. My guess is that if people outside this place knew how much cautioning was going on, they would be worried and distressed. Undoubtedly, there is a need for more research to tell us exactly what is happening. If what I think is happening is, in fact, happening, we should certainly stop multiple cautions. When serious offences such as burglary and violence have been committed, cautions should be stopped altogether.

7.34 pm

**Mr. Alan Simpson** (Nottingham, South): I did not expect that I would follow a Conservative Member who, at one stage, seemed to say that there was not exactly a rise in crime and that, if there was, it was really to do with the way in which the police managed their own police officers. I expected that I would follow a different set of arguments which I have heard from Government Members more frequently—that crime must be understood in relation to a crisis of values.

I place that remark in a context that is somewhat wider than that which has emerged tonight. When Conservative Members have talked about a crisis of values, they have not expressed their indignation about that crisis in terms of the Asil Nadirs of this world. They have not risen in indignation about the Ernest Saunders of this world and the way in which large-scale fraud is taking place. They have not vented their spleens on the vast tranche of the criminal classes who fiddle their tax returns or those who find ways in which to conduct illegal and illicit arms deals. Conservative Members have defined crime as being about young people.

One of the saddest aspects that I have encountered since becoming a Member is that, by and large, that is the only context in which young people are referred to. We hear them referred to as a problem. Rarely, if ever, is there reference to, or recognition of, young people as the best and most important assets of society. Invariably, issues to do with law and order are about young people and what we do about them as a problem.

When I listen to Government rantings on the matter, I have to ask myself how many Conservative Members who vent their spleens about young people have contact with any young people who are at the margins of youth crime, let alone those who are actively involved in it. A large part of my life has been spent working with young people who were involved, in one way or another, in crime. I began by working with children who were nicking off school—truants. As the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) said, in many ways their teachers were relieved that they were nicking off school because it made it easier to conduct classes for the pupils who remained.

I spent a very useful period working with youngsters for whom school was an extremely negative experience. They were not stupid kids. They were difficult and they were disruptive—they were kids who often had an awful lot of get-up-and-go about them. However, it taught me a very important lesson—that it is possible to work with that group of young people and to deflect them into far more productive channels that make the most of their talents, rather than to paint them as caricatures of difficult and disruptive people who will be a problem for society all their lives.

I was also fortunate enough to be involved in setting up the Home Office's pilot scheme in relation to non-custodial treatment of offenders. Following that, I was an active worker in delinquency prevention work. Against that strong background, I shall be fairly critical of some of the lines of thinking that have been offered to us in a succession of debates about law and order.

My first point relates to the fact that the Government's successive reruns of policy on law and order will never achieve anything. They cannot combat what they fail to comprehend. There is usually a great hue and cry from Tory Members about punishment. There is much enthusiasm about equipping the police with extra batons —presumably, to be tried out by smashing engraved watches. There is great enthusiasm also for stiffer prison sentences. But all the evidence and all the advice from people in the prison service indicate that, on youth crime, such penalties are not just singularly ineffective but counter-productive and financially wasteful. This simply is not a coherent response to the problems, even as they are perceived by the Government.

Recently, I spent some time talking with prison officers about young people in custodial institutions. I was horrified to hear about the incredible financial cost. Keeping a person in detention in a secure unit costs from about £400 to £1,700 a week. Even in the Government's own terms, the value of that punishment ought to be measured against the cost of intervention schemes, most of which involve expenditure of less than £100 per person per week.

I should like to give an illustration by referring to a project in my constituency. It is called Wheelbase and caters for youngsters of precisely the type about whom many Conservative Members have been talking—those involved in burglary and car crime. Perhaps I ought to notify the Home Secretary that I intend to bring a group of young people taking part in that scheme to Westminster

to give a presentation of the work that they are doing and to present Members of Parliament with a first-hand account of how those involved in car crime perceive the Government's approach. The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) has said that young people laugh at the courts. But they laugh at this House also. They laugh at the policies we offer, which are regarded as irrelevant and absurd.

It would be far more productive to listen to what these young people have to say about initiatives that have made a difference in their lives by deflecting them away from active involvement in car crime and burglary. When I asked one of them to describe his background, he said, "Me—I'm a 25-a-night man." I did not understand what he was saying. I thought that he was perhaps talking about smoking. In fact, he was saying that stealing 25 cars a night had been a norm before he became involved in the Wheelbase project, whose participants build and race their own stock cars, and then go on to take up apprenticeships of the sort mentioned by the right hon. Member for Brent, North. That lad would go from one car to another as it took his fancy. He and his colleagues on the project had been through penal institutions. What had that taught them? It had taught them how to do the jobs better. What persuaded them to do less car theft was an initiative in their own locality that gave them something more constructive to do with their lives.

In my constituency there are similar initiatives to do with preventive work in relation to health and drugs abuse. The irony is that such projects are almost entirely dependent on urban programme funding and will cease to exist when that funding runs out; thus, it is precisely the measures that are working for young people that will be discontinued. It is in that context that we have to measure the seriousness of commitment and the understanding that the Government bring to a debate about law and order.

I should like to give a few comparative figures that I was asked by the project to present in this debate. The average cost of a serious road accident in which juvenile car thieves are involved is £25,000. For every fatality, the cost is about £700,000. The cost of a project like Wheelbase is £50,000 a year. What we are talking about here is the fact that the avoidance of two road accidents a year or one death in every 14 years would make the project cost-effective, and that is before we even begin to address the cost in terms of human suffering and grief. The Government do not pay this bill out of a law and order budget or an urban programme budget. Somehow, the cost is a discrete one that we are not prepared to address, but it is still a cost we end up paying.

I do not want to minimise the problem of the growth of crime in our cities. We in Nottingham have our own difficulties arising from crimes involving serious drugs abuse and, unfortunately, guns. Before I became a Member of Parliament, I was a county councillor in Nottinghamshire. My experience throughout my time in that capacity was of putting in bids for more police officers on the beat but seeing those bids turned down or cut by the Conservative Government.

On the issue of drugs, I have to set against the Government's claims of concern comments in a report issued recently by the National Union of Civil and Public Servants:

"We were astonished to hear the Government's announcement in November 1991 that it would be cutting Her Majesty's Customs and Excise previously agreed funding for the five-year period 1992-96, causing a reduction of 400 customs officers engaged in the war against drugs. These reductions are on top of the job losses already accepted by the Department due to changes brought about by completion of the single market."

Against the background of those cuts, we must ask how serious is the commitment to an assault on the problem of drugs. If one opens the traps, one should not be surprised if the dogs go on the run. We are asking police officers to contain something after it has been let loose on the streets. The big issue is the supply of drugs. Unless the problem is tackled at that level, their distribution will continue to be a nightmare with which we cannot deal.

I should like to refer to the Government lessons that I have learnt from my work on the streets with young people involved in crime of this sort. The first is that prevention is more effective than punishment.

A recent study in the United States concluded that, in terms of mileage per buck, investment in child care for the under-fives produced more value than any other type of preventive intervention. Are the Government of this country committed to increased investment in the under-fives? Certainly not. Secondly, punishment without provision for a way back into responsible society simply creates better criminals. Thirdly, youth gangs involved in crime have a limited number of leaders.

One hon. Member has made the point that in the United Kingdom there is a limited number of seriously disruptive young people involved in crime. I accept that. It is a point that chief police officers around the country make. But if one asks what is to be done about those young people and about those on the periphery of youth gangs, the answer is that people do not have a clue because we do not have a programme.

Some countries have started to do more useful work on that issue. They have accepted the challenge of working with seriously disruptive and alienated young people and those on the periphery of youth crime. Part of that requires a commitment not only to the expansion of the youth service but to a statutory youth service provision.

When I was in local government, one of the saddest realisations was that as successive cuts in government spending were made by this Goverment the areas cut most severely were the ones in which the local authority had discretion to spend. When the local authority had an obligation to spend, it had to shell out the money. When it had discretion to spend, those areas were pruned. Unfortunately, the youth service, which is potentially one of the most important ways of intervening constructively to develop the talents and skills of young people, has been massively under-resourced for more than a decade.

There can be no evasion of the uncomfortable fact that one of the starting points in our response to crime must be the protection of victims. I am not suggesting that all the young people involved in crime can be dealt with in the community in the first instance. I know a number of young people with whom it is impossible to do any remedial work unless they are taken out of the community. However, they must not then be put into a children's home that is already under pressure as a result of having to deal with many children who have been traumatised in different ways. We need different models for working with those seriously disrupted and alienated young people.

In terms of corrective work with the perpetrators, the right hon. Member for Brent, North was right. We need youth apprenticeship schemes and schemes that build links

*[Mr. Alan Simpson]*

across the generations. It may be extremely difficult for those young people to develop links with their parents. From my experience, however, I have found that it is remarkably easy to develop constructive relationships between those young people and other adults in the community. One of the spin-offs from such relationships is mutual recognition and respect that develops between those groups of people.

We have made little progress on the notion of reparation schemes in Britain. I have some reservations about whether reparation should be from the perpetrator directly to the victim. In many ways, it is asking too much of the victim to be in that position. The notion of reparation to the community has more to commend it, partly because it recognises that people have an obligation to society and it gives them a way back. I cannot tell the House the number of occasions, throughout the years in which I worked on the non-custodial treatment of offenders scheme, when people who were required to work in the community after they had finished their sentences continued to do that work because they had recognition and respect for the way in which they were doing it. Building up people into that role is the biggest challenge that we face.

When I ask people in my constituency, especially pensioners, what they would do with young people in crime, the overwhelming answer is, "Give them a job." Young people without work or a place in society will repay society in their own ways. The huge challenge that we face relates not to crime but to how we value young people in society. We will not positively address that question if, for example, we continue to say to those 18 to 25 year-olds who are out of work, "We expect you to live on £4·97 a day without skirting around on the margins of crime." Half a million young people aged 18 and 24 are in precisely that position.

One in every three unemployed people is under 25 and lives on or beyond the margins of poverty, and 100,000 young people aged 16 or 17 live without a job, a training place or any benefit at all. If we ask ourselves how we would live in those circumstances, I am not sure how many of us would say that we would do so always honestly and legally without drawing on the network of opportunities that earning an illicit coin offers people. If we do not want people to live those sorts of lives, we must give them the opportunity to live better, more respectable and more legitimate ones.

I frequently have discussions with young people on my streets. From time to time, some of them were in the habit of taking my car and driving it away—I have never been keen on that—and we have had rather heated exchanges about the virtues of it. We have also had heated discussions about racing cars up and down the street. At one time, I collared a group of them and asked, "What are you doing? These are your brothers and sisters who are wandering across the street. It could be you who kills them. You cannot go round nicking cars, marauding around the streets and leading your lives as criminals."

I was stopped in my tracks when one of the lads said, "I am not a criminal—I am an entrepreneur." I was surprised mainly because I did not think that he would know the word, let alone be able to use it in the right context. I asked him to explain what he meant. He said, "I can deliver. Do you want a radio? I can get you a radio. I can get you a car to go with it, if you like. You look as though you could do with a new jacket. What size are you? Do you have any preference for colour? Why don't you come into town and try a few suits on? Go and have a cup of coffee and we will meet later to sort out a price. I deliver in this estate. People know that I can deliver. You say to me 'I have no say because I have no recognition.' I bloody well do. I will tell you what though—I will do you a deal. I will happily give up this on condition that you do one thing for me. Tell me this—can you give me a job?" The truth is that I could not get him a job. I could not offer him a legitimate way to get into a society of which he wanted to be a part.

I realised that, in many ways, that group of young people understood the message that society was giving them much better than I did. They told me that if they were voters, they would not vote for me. Their model was Mrs. Thatcher. They liked her. They thought that she was tough. She knew what the world was about—looking after No. 1. These were Thatcher's children. They frightened and saddened me because I had known all of them since they were children.

All of them had a little dream. Up until the age of about 12 or 13, I could tell the House what they wanted to be. They wanted to be bus drivers; they wanted to work in Raleigh; they wanted to work in Players; they wanted to be mechanics and they wanted to work in a nursery. It did now matter what it was—it was a simple dream. Somewhere beyond that age, we stripped them of that dream and the belief that society would offer them any reasonable opportunity to fulfil that aspiration.

When we are talking about reparation schemes, the biggest challenge for the House and society is whether we can address the reparation that we owe to a generation of young people from whom we have stolen their hopes. I do not condone the thefts that they perpetrate. However, when I compare them with what I hear from Conservative Members and the Government, I ask: what is the difference? The difference is that these kids are honest thieves. They are not "twoccers" in suits who have stolen access to and ownership of public resources and jobs. They live the life that the Government and society write on the wall for them and tell them is their only prospect.

Until we address the challenge not in a soft namby-pamby, wishy-washy way but by challenging those young people, redirecting their energies and making the most of their talents, we will do nothing.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. There are nine hon. Members hoping to catch my eye in the remaining time available for the debate. If hon. Members give short speeches, most may have a chance of doing so.

8 pm

**Mr. Peter Fry** (Wellingborough): Further to that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall make an observation. We have had speeches lasting half an hour from several colleagues and interventions from people who want to speak in the debate that have taken 40 minutes out of the time available. I hope that those hon. Members will give those of us who have sat quietly and patiently the indulgence of making our speeches without interruption.

I wish to make a point about the speech by the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson), although I will not comment in detail. I was interested that the hon. Gentleman said that funding for youth services should be compulsory. He added that he found that when local authorities could make up their mind whether they wanted to spend on youth services, they tended to cut the funding. The hon. Gentleman would, I hope, make the same speech to his Labour party colleagues in local government. Most urban areas have been under Labour control for many years. I am not trying to make a party political point, but politicians of all parties, to a certain extent, must do something about it.

I shall read a few lines from a previous debate on the subject:

"Crime and dishonesty pay as never before . . . Cheating . . . has become common practice and dishonesty generally has been allowed to pay . . . Is it any wonder that Dr. Trevor Huddleston"—

a leading churchman—

"was quoted as having said . . . 'I think this country's very sick indeed.'"—[*Official Report*, 4 May 1970; Vol. 801, c. 40-41.]

That is not an extract from a speech by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) or by any other Opposition spokesman on home affairs. It is an extract from a speech made by the Member for Wellingborough on 4 May 1970. I am delighted to say that it is the same Member for Wellingborough who addresses the House tonight.

After 23 years, what is new? Crime figures seem to be much worse. Perhaps just as important, and more significant for the future, is the growing loss of confidence among the public that Parliament, the courts and the police are tackling problems in the right way. It is no wonder that some members of the public take the law into their own hands.

There is a great deal of frustration, anger and disgust and that has led some people to take the law into their own hands where they believe that the responsible authority has acted and failed. The danger now is that, despite the enormous amounts that we have spent not just on policing but on education and social work, public confidence is waning. The public are becoming impatient for action, as the letters in any hon. Member's postbag will tell him.

It is no good the Lord Chief Justice, or any other judge, criticising and condemning those who take their own action. It is no good Parliament tut-tutting and talking about the rule of law. It is no good the heads of our police forces saying, "Leave it it us", when far too many of our fellow citizens see crime going unpunished and obviously paying. Those citizens are the victims.

The chairman of one public company was quoted this week as saying that £20 million had been lost in theft from the company's premises, much of it committed by those who are not yet teenagers. It is worth making the point that the crimes that disturb most people are not the major crimes that hit the headlines, although of course they do not worry about those. Most people are worried about the crimes with which they have contact, rather than major murders, bank robberies and sensations in which newspapers delight. They worry about minor burglaries of their homes, the theft of cars from outside their houses, the theft of radios and other items from their cars, the vandalism of their property, and hooliganism in general.

I suggest that hon. Members should go to any local authority housing estate. They would often find a horrendous list of complaints. I was told by one housing association that, in this time of housing shortages, it has houses in one city in the north of England that it cannot let because people would not accept living in that neighbourhood.

The quality of life of so many of our people is undermined by petty crime, but the loss suffered by each person who feels violated and that he or she is a victim is important. Too often these days, that loss tends, in their eyes, to be ignored. One of my constituents reported the loss of his car radio. When, many hours later, a policeman came to take details, my constituent asked why he had taken so long. The policeman replied that he had been taking details of car radio thefts all day. My constituent asked what was to happen. The policeman said that nothing would happen. He would put the theft down on his list and that would be the end of it. No wonder that constituent has little faith in the way in which the law operates.

I go further. That type of crime is not only being ignored; it is being condoned. We have heard how the youth in certain parts of our country who have no job and little or no social security are in such a desperate state that it is understandable that they should become law breakers. I have heard even a senior police officer say something along those lines. That is a tremendous insult to the law-abiding majority of people and also the law-abiding majority of our young people.

People ask themselves, "Why do I obey the law? Why should I teach my children about right and wrong when too many others benefit from crime?" Too many people are making excuses for crime. Even the Government are doing so. When they finally agreed, after representations from colleagues including myself, to provide long-term secure accommodation for juvenile joyriders, an official handout from the Home Office played down the unpleasant aspects of such confinement and stressed that conditions would not be too hard in those facilities. Most people in this country would want to know why on earth not? How many offences do that minority of 12, 13 and 14-year-olds have to commit before they are taken away and stopped from being a nuisance to the rest of society? Do they have to kill by the reckless use of a motor car before effective action is taken?

It may be asked what the response of the courts, Parliament and police has been to the situation that I have been describing. I shall give some examples from the local courts. A grandfather wrote to me saying that his grandson had bought his first motor cycle, which was later stolen. He then discovered that the motor cycle had been sold to somebody else and, being percipient, was able to track down the offender and give the information to the police. He received a letter from the police, thanking him for his action and adding that the offender had been arrested. However, due to official policy, the offender had been let off with a caution. That point was made by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), the Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee.

The House may find interesting what I would describe as two weeks in the life of a magistrates court. One of my constituents was arrested and told to attend court on 25 April. He failed to attend, and a warrant was issued. On 29 April, he was arrested for a new offence. On 30 April, he appeared before the court which promptly bailed him, although residency and reporting conditions were placed

*[Mr. Peter Fry]*

on that bail. On 3 May he failed to report, and on 4 May he was arrested for breach of bail conditions. The court continued the residency and reporting conditions. On 4 May, he failed to report. On 5 May, he was again arrested for breach of bail conditions. On 6 May, the court bailed him and removed the reporting conditions. Is it any wonder that on 8 May he was arrested for several new offences?

My local magistrates court unfortunately has the reputation of being the softest in Northamptonshire and, with a record like that, it is not surprising. It is not a matter of pride to me or to the majority of my constituents, who strongly feel that much sterner and stiffer action is needed. It is not just a local problem; we all know of the ludicrously light sentences that have been handed down by some of the judiciary, even for killing people. Increasingly, too many of those who are guilty of serious crimes seem to get away with a very light sentence, whereas those who commit what might be considered lesser crimes, such as motoring offences, tend to be dealt with severely.

I am full of admiration for the policeman on the beat. He is the one at the sharp end and has to deal with the public. He needs and deserves our support. The reality is, however, that they are called on to be firefighters. They are supposed to deal not with the causes of crime but only with its symptoms. I take the point that the hon. Member for Nottingham, South made in that respect.

The task of the police has become enormous because there is too much bureaucracy and the courts are too weak. The effectiveness of the police has been undermined. As a result, some senior police officers seem to have decided to say, "We cannot cope with everything, so let us cope with what we can."

In my own county, what is called a diversionary policy has been followed for a number of years. Our present chief constable—an excellent man, whom we are very sorry to lose; however, we congratulate him on his promotion to Her Majesty's inspectorate—has recently issued a new version of that policy. It applies to juvenile offenders and is based on the premise that 10 per cent. of youngsters are responsible for 40 per cent. of juvenile crime. The aim is to target the young people who are most likely to reoffend rather than those who might be brought before the courts on one occasion only.

Under this system, when a youngster is caught for his first, second or third offence, he is diverted away from the juvenile court to the juvenile liaison bureau, where he is counselled and cautioned. It is claimed that, as a result, 70 per cent. of such youngsters do not reoffend.

That policy has been backed by local magistrates, youth agencies, the Crown Prosecution Service and, to my surprise, by the local branch of the Police Federation. I understand why the policy has been introduced, but I do not share the enthusiasm for it felt by so many estimable bodies—nor does a very large section of our local population—because 30 per cent. of such youngsters do reoffend. They may receive just a ticking off for as many as six offences. That policy is far from a deterrent; it actually encourages youngsters to commit more crimes because they get away with it very easily.

Some juvenile magistrates have complained that they cannot understand why court sittings have been cancelled when juvenile crime is on the increase. Many individual policemen do not like the policy. I was sent a copy of the revised document and on it was inscribed "The Thugs Charter". It had obviously been surreptitiously sent by someone in the police headquarters in Northampton.

By talking to individual policemen, I have learned that the police do not much like the policy. The public like it even less. It seems to them and to me an admission of failure that we cannot cope with all the crime and all the potential criminals. At the same time, it is sending the wrong message to those young offenders, who are encouraged to offend again. I find it deeply depressing that the police are being forced to use such a flawed system.

What of Parliament and the Government? I welcome the announcement of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary about removing so much of the red tape and bureaucracy that have been endured by our police forces. I am delighted that parts of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 are being reviewed in relation to past offences and income-related fines. I am grateful that offenders who reoffend on bail will receive heavier sentences. I am also pleased that we will now be able to put persistent joyriders and juvenile offenders into more permanent secure accommodation.

Opposition Members will be interested to know that there was a youngster in Wellingborough who was reckoned to have stolen at least 25 cars—that was as many as could be attributed to him. Every time he was arrested and taken to the local authority home, the police believe that he had got out, stolen another car and got home before the police car that had taken him to that home had arrived back in Wellingborough. The whole process had become a total mockery.

I am grateful for everything that the Government have done, but I must say to my hon. Friends that we need to do more. I mean no insult, but the House must pay greater attention to law and order legislation as it is considered by Parliament. We would not have had some of the errors in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 if hon. Members had not left its consideration to the lawyers of the House.

Any hon. Member who does half a job knows that the electorate are worried that not enough is being done and that there is a lack of confidence in law and order. The Government should consider a number of issues. The right to silence needs to be examined. We find that 15 or 16-year-olds are instructed by their lawyers to say nothing to the police, so that it becomes impossible to convict them properly. A refusal to answer a reasonable question should be allowed to raise doubts in the minds of justices and jurors.

We should examine whether the pendulum has not swung too far towards protecting the guilty rather than protecting the victims of crime. We should look again at the age of legal criminal responsibility. A few years ago, a gentleman came to me and said, "The local gipsies are sending their youngsters into our village to steal our produce. They are very clever because they are sending youngsters below the age of criminal responsibility." I asked, "Surely your village has a policeman. Why don't you report it to him?" He said, "I am the village policeman and I cannot do anything about it."

Whatever we do about the Sheehy report, may I suggest to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary that we should be most careful not to do anything to reduce police morale. The police must not feel that they are being got at or that their job has been downgraded.

None of the policies that we have put forward will be successful unless we harness the power and co-operation of public opinion. An area in my constituency suffered from many difficulties, but, with the encouragement of the police and the local authority, we set up a residents association and the amount of crime was vastly reduced. That kind of experiment is a positive way forward. The police cannot do it on their own; they need the public not just to report offences but to be willing to give evidence. Both the police and the public need the support of the courts and we who are the law makers.

If we respond to the challenge, we shall regain public confidence, police morale will rise and the legal system will be held in higher respect. It is an enormous challenge and I do not envy my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Home Department. But it is more than a challenge it is a duty. The happiness and quality of life of so many of our fellow citizens depends upon our success. I do not believe that we can fail them.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, I must point out that the winding-up speeches will commence at 9.30. There are at least six hon. Members who wish to speak, so may I make a request for succinct speeches?

8.18 pm

**Mr. Andrew Mackinlay** (Thurrock): I listened carefully to the Home Secretary's speech to discover whether I would hear anything other than the routine rubric of a new Conservative Home Secretary talking platitudes about what is wrong while ignoring the fact that he and his colleagues have been in office since 1979. He cannot possibly deceive the House nor do I think that he can deceive the people in general by trotting out the speech that has been used by perhaps half a dozen Conservative Home Secretaries two or three times every year in the Chamber and on countless occasions outside.

Conservative Home Secretaries make excuses and deliver many speeches about law and order which are full of platitudes, but they are slow to tackle the causes of crime or to bolster the sagging morale of police officers. The Conservatives must recognise that the hallmark of the Thatcher years was the creation of a selfish society, which has contributed to rising crime and the breakdown of law and order. In brief, they must be charged with contributing —albeit unintentionally—to the breakdown of society and to the increase in crime.

Conservative Members, and especially Home Secretaries, repeatedly imply criticism of the police. It is typical of this Government that they have gone through professional group after professional group, implying that they are failing society and the public but without recognising that they themselves have failed to fund properly many essential public services, including the police service. If Conservative Members think that I am making an unfair charge, I refer them to paragraph 2.2 of the White Paper that was published this week. It states:

"The main job of the police is to catch criminals. In a typical day, however, only 18 per cent. of calls to the police are about crime, and only about 40 per cent. of police officers' time is spent dealing directly with crime."

I do not accept that the most important or exclusive responsibility of a police officer is merely to fight crime; there are the issues of public confidence, mobility and general order as well. When a crime is committed and when society has failed, it is the police who come to the rescue on our behalf. Putting aside that issue, the implication in the White Paper is that too much police time is spent on bureaucracy; but what about the traffic division of the police? It does not combat crime; it ensures mobility and makes certain that traumatic and harrowing accidents are dealt with expeditiously and humanely and that proper reports are made for the victims and the various authorities. It is nonsense to suggest that there is a vast police bureaucracy which merely shifts paper. The Government's repeated charge against these good professional public servants is very unfair. I reject the charge and wish, on his behalf, to defend the average police officer.

The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) said that we must have regard to police morale. I agree that police morale is low, and it is low for a variety of reasons, including underfunding, lack of support from the House and also because of documents such as those which have been published this week.

Police officers are deeply cynical about the Government's intentions. The Government announced a little while ago that they were setting up the Sheehy inquiry into pay and conditions—*[Interruption.]* If the Government Whip will contain himself, he will hear what I have to say. The Sheehy inquiry was to look into the pay and conditions of service of police officers. It was supposed to be independent but, within a short time, the Government announced that they were also publishing a White Paper. The White Paper on the future structure of the police has this week preceded the so-called independent Sheehy report—clearly the Government have pre-empted the Sheehy inquiry.

I believe that the pay, conditions and structure of the police service are indivisible. The White Paper has been published in advance of the Sheehy report. Either the Government decided to pre-empt Sheehy or there has been collusion between that inquiry and the Home Secretary; which would mean that it is not to be an independent inquiry. Police officers have noticed this and they are deeply worried because their service is not being judged fairly or objectively.

There is a Cinderella part of the police service which has not yet been mentioned, or at least not while I have been here, and I should like to remedy that omission. I am referring to the many dedicated police officers who are in what are known, inappropriately, as non-Home Office forces. They do not receive the attention that they deserve. They include the British Transport police, the Ministry of Defence police, the Atomic Energy Authority police and the Royal Parks Constabulary as well as the Northern Ireland Airport police which the Government recklessly and foolishly intend to privatise. That is breathtaking.

When police officers, whether they are in the Home Office or non-Home Office forces, realise that forces can be privatised, they regard it as a great threat to the dignity of their office and their capacity to protect and promote our interests. They know that the Government's secret agenda is to extend the privatisation of police services, as happened with the Port of London police authority which was privatised before the last general election. The Northern Ireland Airport police force is now to be privatised. Many officers fear that these are intended as experimental runs before the hiving-off of many other police functions.

*[Mr. Andrew Mackinlay]*

At the same time as the Edmund-Davies report which, like the Sheehy report, dealt with Home Office forces, the Government of the day commissioned what became known as the Wright report. This looked into the pay, conditions of service and structure of non-Home Office forces. I hope that the Minister will give an assurance to those police officers in the non-Home Office forces that their service will on this occasion have a matching inquiry and report into their pay and conditions of service, comparable to the Wright report of 1979.

If the Government get around to legislating, I hope that they will think it appropriate to define carefully what a police constable is and what his or her basic training should be. It may concern hon. Members to know that the Government have no knowledge about how many police constables there are or where they are. They know where the Home Office constables are but they do not know the number or location of many officers from a variety of small constabularies; although they are also sworn constables. It is not fair to those constables and it is bad public policy not to know exactly who and where they are.

I think that all hon. Members will agree that it is important that every constable should be of a common professional standard. He should not be sworn in at an obscure magistrates court, given a surplus police uniform and told that he is a constable. However, that is what happens at the moment in some cases. The London borough of Wandsworth and the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea have their own police officers in their parks. Those officers do a superb job, and I do not knock them, but central Government do not know who they are or how many there are, and they certainly do not oversee their training. The same is true of constabularies elsewhere. It is bad for police officers generally, and a proper standard should be applied.

I am also worried that non-Home Office forces are not subject to the same rules of inspection as Home Office forces. I recently tabled some parliamentary questions and learnt that forces, from the largest to the smallest, from the British Transport police down to the Wandsworth park police, are not automatically subject to inspection by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary. They should be; that is in the interests of the officers. Their federations and professional associations would welcome it.

It is an important fact that when inspections are made by Her Majesty's inspectorate, the federations do not automatically have an independent meeting with the inspector; in some cases, rather unhealthily, I believe, management or senior officers are present.

I should like an assurance that the federations, professional associations and police trade unions will be able to have independent meetings with Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary.

The Sheehy report seems to contain a threat to the ability of police officers to be represented to the fullest possible extent by the Police Federation. Page 109 of the report contains an ominous paragraph which states:

"Police Federation and other staff association representatives should be paid . . . when attending joint meetings with management or preparing for them but not for attending meetings concerned solely with staff association business;".

That is worrying because it is subjective about what is meant by preparing for joint meetings and what is meant by "solely . . . staff association business". Common sense should prevail. I had assumed that it always did prevail, but the introduction of such a paragraph is deeply disturbing because it threatens the Police Federation and its officers.

Page 134 of the Sheehy report contains a definition of "in the execution of duty".

London contains not just the Metropolitan police and the City police but the Royal Parks Constabulary, which plays an increasing role in security in the Westminster area as well as the British Transport police in the tube and British Rail stations. On many occasions those officers are inhibited from spontaneously executing their duty because the law is unclear about when and where they have the right to act as police officers. Those officers should have co-jurisdiction in central London and similarly such co-jurisdiction should also apply to uniformed officers serving with the Atomic Energy police and the Ministry of Defence police, and so on. Their powers are unclear, and that is unfair to police officers who have to make split-second judgments that could subsequently embarrass them or their force. I hope that that matter will be examined.

Our police do a good job and I am proud to have this opportunity to say that in the House. They are the meat in the sandwich of rising crime and public demands for a change in the law and order climate. They are overstretched and underfunded. The proposals in the White Paper and in the Sheehy report do nothing to improve their morale; they will do the reverse. These documents will not halt the rise in crime.

The Government must reassure police officers that they have the confidence of the House and that they will be properly funded. Special constables are good public servants who volunteer their time. Increasing their numbers should not be seen as a way of getting policing on the cheap. They should be increased but not at the expense of providing the requisite number of properly paid police officers. Not only the House but the people we represent expect the Government to provide such a professional force.

8.33 pm

**Mr. Harold Elletson** (Blackpool, North): I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on their appointments to office. Many Conservative Members are nothing less than overjoyed at their appointments because we know about their commitment to solving some of the many law and order problems that give rise to such great concern. There was a Liberal Democrat spokesman in the House earlier, but the Benches of that party are now empty. The Liberal Democrats often make an issue of law and order and cynically whine about crime figures and issue "Focus" newsletters on the subject, but it is disgraceful that they cannot take the time to listen to this debate. Much of their rhetoric is humbug, and we shall tell our constituents that when the chips were down and the House had the opportunity to discuss law and order the Liberal Democrats did not even bother to turn up.

In many ways, law and order is the most important issue facing the country and it concerns ordinary people far more than anything else. They are especially worried about property-related crime. Most hon. Members who are fortunate enough not to have been burgled, robbed or attacked will certainly know someone who has been.

The scale of the problem was clearly brought home to me a few days ago when I was at a football match in

Blackpool. I spoke about the issue to a Liberal councillor. Some Liberal councillors appear to be concerned about such issues, even though their parliamentary party is not. He told me that he had recently been burgled and I told him that my wife had had her handbag stolen. While we were discussing those two incidents, a friend entered the room and announced that his car had just been stolen from outside the football ground.

Those three property-related incidents were reported to the police, but many similar incidents are not. The official statistics for such crime are bad enough, but they probably do not reflect the real scale of the problem. Some 94 per cent. of all recorded crime last year was against property, and in Blackpool alone there were 5,224 recorded offences of burglary. Many offences, even if they are recorded, are not registered in the book because the police often simply urge victims to put in an insurance claim. Property crimes have a relatively low clear-up rate. Only 31 per cent. of last year's burglaries in Blackpool have so far been cleared up.

As the Home Secretary rightly said, the Government understand and are concerned about the importance of tackling property-related crime. I was delighted to hear the Home Secretary stress that, and I am sure that he will stick to it. The Government's efforts on such crime appear to have made some difference to the official figures. A greater emphasis on community policing and the establishment of more than 11,500 neighbourhood watch schemes have undoubtedly contributed to slowing the high rate of increase of recorded property crime. But much more needs to be done.

Property-related crime must be taken seriously, not only by the Government but by the police and the judiciary. It must be understood from the victim's point of view and our response should be determined from that perspective. Sentencing policies must properly reflect the hardship and suffering of victims of such crime. Few people who have not experienced a burglary or a break-in can possibly understand the emotional and psychological scars and the long-term fear caused by such an occurrence. We must tell the judges to take account of that in their sentencing.

The police must also take property-related crime much more seriously. I understand that the Metropolitan police have now made it their top priority and I hope that Lancashire constabulary will do the same. It should take priority over some of the other issues which appear to concern the police, such as bullying motorists. What does it matter if they have to divert resources from bullying motorists if it means that they can catch more real criminals? We have to make sure of two things: first, that property-related crime does not pay, for the criminal, the fence or the parent, guardian or anyone else with a degree of responsibility. We must teach criminals that society condemns them and that our response will be swift, harsh and unrelenting.

Secondly, we must show our determination to catch and prosecute those responsible for property-related crime. A 31 per cent. clear-up rate is simply not good enough. We have to ensure that resources are available to enable the police to catch and convict those responsible for such crimes.

I am particularly concerned about the special problems faced by the police in constituencies such as mine. Tourist resorts such as Blackpool contain large populations of elderly people who are terrorised by the increasing numbers of break-ins and burglaries. They also contain large numbers of hotels, restaurants and small businesses whose trade is particularly difficult at times when the police appear to be swamped by the sheer scale of the problem.

Blackpool has 17 million visitors every year, but there appears to be little understanding of the extra strain that this places on police budgets. The Lancashire constabulary receives little extra practical help from the Government to cope with the problem.

Our limited resources are considerably depleted by the fact that the cost of policing Conservative and Labour party conferences falls entirely on Lancashire council taxpayers. It is little wonder that local people in my constituency are annoyed when they see the streets full of policemen for one week in October every year, but, at other times, cannot find a policeman for love or money.

The problem is made still worse in some tourist areas by the large numbers of "commuter criminals" who visit Blackpool and other tourist areas courtesy of the Department of Social Security and end up plundering the local population and defrauding the taxpayer. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will urge the police and the DSS to make Blackpool the centre of a major crackdown on crime and social security during this year's holiday season.

People throughout the country are worried as never before about crime and the likelihood of becoming victims of it. We have seen a slow erosion of confidence in an individual's ability to go about his business securely without molestation or attack. We now have to change the balance of fear which has slipped dangerously away from the criminal, who was once wary of the consequences of his action, to the innocent who believe that they will become the helpless victims of people who feel no threat from the law.

The balance of fear is the biggest challenge facing us all. We have to shift it back so that criminals are the ones who have to skulk in the shadows and live in a twilight world instead of the innocent, law-abiding British citizens, many of them elderly, having to look over their shoulders when they leave their front doors and increasingly having to look under their beds when they return home at night.

If we want the sort of society that the Prime Minister talks about, where elderly ladies can bicycle to evensong without expecting to find that the church bells have been stolen or the vicar mugged, we must address the question of deterrence as well as detection and of punishment as well as confidence. I am delighted that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary appears determined to do just that.

People know that crime cannot be solved overnight, but they are sick and tired of being the ones who have to worry about it while criminals with broad grins gloat at them from the dock in the sure knowledge that they will get every care and consideration.

We have in my right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend a Home Secretary and a Minister of State determined to drive back the rising tide of crime. I hope that they will steel themselves to usher in an era of unprecedented harshness in our counter attack against crime.

8.43 pm

**Mr. Colin Pickthall** (Lancashire, West): I regret having missed the Home Secretary's opening speech. It was an unavoidable discourtesy. I was attending the launch of the Lancashire housing inquiry upstairs, chaired by the Bishop of Burnley, which has revealed astonishingly frightening housing conditions in Lancashire.

I am tempted to embark on a discussion of the complex connections between bad and overcrowded housing, homelessness and crime. I shall not do that, but it illustrates the fact that the fight against crime should be fought on many fronts as well as fiddling with the structures of the police force or police authorities, building more prisons and altering sentencing powers.

At the risk of prolonging my speech, I cannot resist commenting on the speech by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). It was an alarming speech from an hon. and learned Gentleman who is so prominent in this field. He seemed to be trying to smooth over all the worries being expressed by his right hon. and hon. Friends as well as by Labour Members about the rising level of crime and the changing nature of crimes by saying that it was simply a matter of rising detection rates. He displayed alarming complacency for someone in his position. I was also interested in his comment that barristers are sitting on their backsides in chambers because all their work has dried up. My withers are wrung at that prospect; no doubt we will have a collection for them in Skelmersdale in due course.

I want also to mention briefly what was said by the hon. and learned Member for Burton and the hon. Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) about the absence of the Liberals. People who live in glasshouses ought to be more careful. When the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) was speaking and being insulted by Conservative Members, he was representing almost the exact proportion of his membership of the House as Conservative Members were theirs. There were 14 Conservative Members present at the time and there are few more than that here now. They should be rather careful about that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) mentioned the Sheehy report. I received a letter from the North-West Police Superintendents' Association complaining about the fact that their entire organisation, representing 43 authorities, was given only two copies of the Sheehy report as they cost £40 a go, when previously they had been promised enough copies to go round their various districts as important consultees in the coming decisions.

I am grateful for the opportunity to raise one important aspect of the law and order crisis which the debate is struggling to address—the awful problem of what appears to be an increasing incidence of attacks on elderly people.

In my constituency, which is generally a peaceable place and which is sensitively and well policed, there have been in recent months a disturbing number of attacks on the elderly, particularly elderly women. The motivation for those attacks is usually theft, although the excessive and brutal violence that is sometimes characteristic of them suggests something more sinister. Some elderly people have been positively heroic in their physical resistance, but, unfortunately, as a result they have been worse hurt.

I have no reason to believe that this particular villainy is worse in my constituency than in any other. The horrible news items one hears and sees in the media of elderly women being raped and badly beaten suggests that my constituency might be relatively fortunate.

I am sure that every right hon. and hon. Member would agree that it is utterly intolerable for elderly citizens to live in fear, often feeling exposed to outrageous and unpredictable violence from thugs who think nothing of attacking them, sometimes for pennies.

A number of issues arise out of that obvious and incontrovertible comment. Such attacks grab the headlines, and rightly so. The press has a duty to condemn, to inform and to warn the public. However, I suspect that the frequent telling of such stories not only increases fear but serves to advertise to both the ruthless and the desperate the existence of easy targets in easy reach in every community. I am not arguing for the suppression of that kind of news, but I am anxious that measures to protect the elderly and to punish offenders are publicised with something close to equal effectiveness as at least some sort of counter-measure. If that is to be remotely useful, those measures must be in place and progressively improved and perceived to be progressively toughened.

While the Home Office must take the lead in such matters, the burden falls on local police and local authorities, and so there are implications for the Department of the Environment. Elderly people do not live just in sheltered accommodation, which offers a modicum of protection. In my scattered constituency, many of the elderly live in isolated lanes, cottages separated from villages by acres of farmland, and—as everywhere else—spread throughout the rest of the community in villages and towns. There are about 15,000 elderly people in my constituency, and all are potentially vulnerable in different ways.

West Lancashire district council has a successful mobile warden scheme, which seeks to prevent distress from illness or accident—but it cannot reach everyone or act as an emergency crimewatch service. The local police force has begun to institute community policemen and women with their own bailiwicks, which is a tremendously popular and effective approach. However, it similarly cannot hope to cover everyone on a regular basis.

The district council has a programme to introduce intercoms and security locks, with the specific aim of helping the elderly defend themselves—but the steady strangulation of funding prevents the council from realising its improvement programme. I do not expect the Government—least of all this Government—to produce X millions of pounds to solve that problem, but I believe that a huge effort should be made to tackle it in the short and medium term.

This is a resource problem, and standard spending assessments should be carefully examined to see how the funding of protection of the elderly can be enhanced and earmarked. Councils should set targets to provide every elderly person with a personal alarm and an instant emergency line, house intercom, security locks, doorstep lighting, and better street and lane lighting in key areas. Funding should be increased to provide better information to the elderly on how to be cautious. Many elderly people have slowed down—as we have, or will do—and find it difficult to absorb detailed warnings or to take quick decisions in a crisis. Every means of advising them of the right action in such circumstances should be used. Similarly, attention should be paid to educating communities on how to watch out for and to care for the

elderly in their midst. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) mentioned young people working with the elderly.

It may be that postmen and women and milkmen and women, who often act as unpaid social workers, could be offered incentives and training on how to be especially vigilant in respect of their elderly customers.

Above all, the steady extension of community policing should be vigorously encouraged. It might be an effective way forward in police forces that are moving strongly in that direction to encourage them to do more by allocating extra police on the basis of existing provision of beat police rather than the lack of it.

I hope that a determined programme along those lines, led by the Government and well publicised, would do something to make some thugs hesitate. It might also help to alleviate some of the fear that is felt by the elderly, and it would at least ensure a feeling among them that national and local government and their local communities are alert to their fears and are on their side.

For many years, Labour Members have pointed out that most victims of crime are the poor, young and elderly, and those who live on rundown estates. Most of them cannot afford sophisticated means of defending themselves from crime or harassment. Most are not effectively organised to demand more policing or additional resources. It is unacceptable to me for any of my constituents to be exposed to violence. It is also unacceptable to me that means of helping to combat that violence are not applied, or are insufficiently applied through a shortage of resources, when the technology exists to do the job.

It is even more unacceptable to me when the targets of such violence are those least able physically to defend themselves. We should all be determined that we will not allow such a situation to continue. If we cannot offer sufficient protection to our elderly, we are failing as a community—and the Government are failing in their duty to lead such a campaign.

8.55 pm

**Mr. James Paice** (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I remind the House of my interest as a consultant to the Dixon group. I do so only because of the considerable publicity recently given to remarks on this issue by the chairman of that company.

Many hon. Members referred to current massive widespread concern about crime. Like one or two of my hon. Friends who have spoken, I represent a largely rural area that has seen an explosion in crime of different sorts, and particularly in burglaries. That is evident in correspondence from individual constituents, parish councils, and so on.

Cambridgeshire has the additional problem of travellers. I do not mean huge bands of new age travellers but smaller groups of itinerants, who have been described to me by senior police officers in the county as nothing more than a mobile crime wave. There is no doubt that they pose a serious problem in many of the villages that I represent.

Public perception of the situation is of too few prosecutions and that the police are either unable or unwilling to help. The public are angry. Because crime is ever increasing, they perceive that the intellectual approach to solving it that has been adopted for a number of years appears to be failing. They see lenient sentences being passed. In the past two years, there were two cases in my constituency of causing death by dangerous driving that both resulted in a massive public outcry because of the leniency of the sentences imposed.

The public see too few police evident on the streets and in the villages. They see parents apparently getting away with allowing their children to run totally out of control. No wonder that the villages are seeking to hire their own security guards, and that in Norfolk two men took on the role of vigilantes, and that there was a massive public outcry at their initial sentences—thankfully, now reduced. Yesterday we saw reports about the Welsh hill farmer, Mr. Bill Price. He was assaulted by a band of new age travellers while the police stood by, and was then prosecuted after using his digger to push those parasites off his land. Thankfully, the judge was sensible enough to throw out the case, but it was a massive waste of time. What has happened to our sense of proportion?

As several colleagues on both sides of the Chamber have said, even the police are frustrated by the failure of the Crown Prosecution Service to carry through cases into which they have put a vast amount of time and effort. At the same time, they see the CPS pursue cases such as that of Mr. Bill Price, whose only offence, if it is an offence, was to defend his property. Whatever has happened to the ability of the British people to stand back and take an objective and balanced view of the seriousness of crimes?

We have a dichotomy. Despite their concerns, the public do not fully accept that they have an important role to play. They tend to expect the police or the Government to do it all. The Government have devised and entered into a multitude of crime prevention measures, such as neighbourhood watch or safer cities. You name it, and we have thought of it. However sensible those schemes may be, the fundamental question is, why should people be forced to turn their homes and vehicles into fortresses? Why should we be encouraging people to become nothing more than snoopers on their neighbours and others? When we do that, we treat the symptoms, not the disease. The disease is the inability of too many people to know right from wrong. That is why we are now having to adopt what we call crime prevention, but which is, in some ways, simply defending oneself against crime. For generations the moral value of not knowing right from wrong has been in steep decline and it is, therefore, self perpetuating.

It is easy to apportion blame to one group or another, usually the group furthest from one's own position. We are all to blame. Most of us are or will be parents. Many parents were probably insufficiently controlled or disciplined themselves, and that comes through generation after generation. There is no doubt that teachers have largely abdicated any responsibility for discipline. The end of corporal punishment in schools was one factor in that and it was shameful.

The media—television and videos—have already been mentioned and I will not spend much time on that. However, people say, "Oh, there has always been violence on television. There were cowboys and indians when we were youngsters." I enjoyed cowboys and indians and I still do. However, the significant difference between cowboys and indians and much of today's violence on television is that much of today's violence is presented in an every-day scenario with which people can identify. The western was set in some sort of make-believe land with which people could not so easily identify.

*[Mr. James Paice]*

The Church has been far too wishy-washy for years on the question of moral values. Whatever happened to the hell fire and damnation vicars that we used to have in my childhood? They did a great deal to encourage people and to help them to understand right from wrong. *[Interruption.]* Yes, politicians too. We have concentrated on the symptoms to which I have referred rather than on the disease.

How should we address the problems? It is very much a carrot-and-stick approach. There is no simple, single solution. The stick has to be tough sentences and tough policing. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) said, there has to be a uniformed presence on the streets and in our villages.

I value the special constables immensely. They must be used wisely and, wherever possible, they must be used to police their own community. They should not just be used for crowd control at football matches or for paperwork. They find that frustrating and get fed up and do something else. They can find something more interesting to do with their time. They want to be involved in protecting their own community and villages want to have their own special constables. They want to be able to employ them if possible. I am looking forward to the early results of the pilot scheme running in Dorset where special constables are being paid.

We need the ability to lock up the worst of our young criminals. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will accept that the accommodation must be available on the day the law changes next year. It is no use local authorities or anybody else saying that they will have problems for a year or two. There are plenty of buildings available that could be adapted over the coming months.

The carrot of the approach that I recommend has to be opportunity. If there were any Opposition Members left in the Chamber, they might find themselves in some agreement with what I have to say. I totally reject the idea that poverty itself is the cause of crime. It is offensive to many people to suggest that. However, one cannot escape the conclusion that boredom and hopelessness are part of the equation. "The devil makes work for idle hands" is a saying that I remember from my childhood.

I recently saw a report about the Bonnemaison scheme in France, where three tiers of councils for the prevention of delinquency were set up at national, departmental, and town and city council levels. The councils were not excessive in their cost, but the approach was one of prevention and repression working together. All departments and city councils have set up such schemes and they are working extremely successfully.

The attitude of the Treasury pervades so many of our debates. One of the problems of crime is the inability of the Treasury to recognise the costs of crime: the direct costs of keeping people in prison or in bail hostels and the indirect costs to the community, to insurance companies and, of course, to individuals. The Treasury needs to understand that there is a significant trade-off between expenditure on programmes such as the youth training scheme and others and the costs of crime, and that there is a trade-off between the costs of secure accommodation and the costs of crime. As the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) said, there has to be a clear recognition that the cost of providing some of the curative measures that he recommended is insignificant compared to the costs of keeping people in prisons and elsewhere.

There is no simple solution, but tough policies and tough sentences have a vital role to play. The public expect them, but it is not the solution for every individual criminal. There must be greater co-ordination between all Departments and a far more positive approach by the Treasury.

My final message to my right hon. and hon. Friends, and especially to my Whip, is this. We are now in the season of guessing the contents of the next Gracious Speech, which will be made in November. Excluding the Finance Bill, which is an inevitability, I do not mind if there is only one other piece of legislation in next year's Gracious Speech, as long as it is comprehensive and addresses the problems of crime. It needs to bring together not just the Home Office but every other Department. Nearly every Department must work together in a co-ordinated programme—a combination of the stick and carrot—to crack down on the problems. My constituents in Cambridgeshire expect that of a Conservative Government, and I hope that we can deliver.

9.8 pm

**Mr. Mike O'Brien** (Warwickshire, North): The constructive speech made by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) raised the important issue of rural crime, to which I will return shortly, because it is also a problem in my constituency. I exclude him from some of the comments that I intend to make about some of his hon. Friends.

I am awed by the gall of some Conservative Members, who, after rightly condemning rising crime and drawing attention to the problems in their constituencies, said how much confidence they have in the policies of a Government who, for the past 14 years, have presided over the largest ever increase in crime. One wonders who has been in government for the past 14 years. It seems almost a triumph of party loyalty and complacency over reality, because the reality of crime has been felt by over 30,000 victims in my county. Since the Government came to office in 1979, crime in my county has trebled, car thefts and burglaries have quadrupled and, in the same period, the number of police has increased by only 16 per cent.

The Government have now announced a year-on-year freeze on expenditure on future police recruitment. The nation is calling out for a fight back against crime. There is real fear out there, and people want to see more policemen on the beat. The Government have not only failed to halt the rise in the crime rate, but have now decided that they will not put the resources that the public are demanding into the police.

The failure to resource properly not only the police but drug rehabilitation centres and other social projects which help to reduce crime is a false economy. If we do not continue to provide the resources, the public will pay the price—in increased crime, increased debt, increased insurance premiums, higher charges, higher prices and greater fear.

In our rural areas, as the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East has already said, where once people lived in relative safety, there is increased fear of crime and a demand for more village policemen and more policemen on the beat.

I was speaking at the weekend to Police Constable Adrian Lofthouse, who works very hard in the village of Arley, a small former mining village in north Warwickshire. In Arley, over the last few months, we have had to have a number of public meetings to address the increasing concern about severe crime. They have been attended by senior county officers.

PC Lofthouse is doing a really excellent job in seeking to restore confidence in law and order in Arley, as are the rest of the Warwickshire police. He is a credit to his force and his community, yet he works against a background of little help from Government. In particular, there have been, for example, cuts in the youth service in Warwickshire, following two years of poll tax capping. This has meant youngsters on the street who perhaps otherwise would not have been there, and the recession has left many unemployed and increased deprivation in my constituency.

Increased crime is linked not just to a lack of police, but also to social conditions at home and in the community. But the police play a key role and, at a time when they are under such pressure, it is essential that that public service be provided with adequate resources, and important that we do all we can to maintain and improve police morale.

At the last Police Federation conference, the chairman of the federation, Mr. Alan Eastwood, said:

"I have truly never known a time when the service at every level has been so demoralised."

It seems to me that, after reading the Sheehy report, he is likely to see morale fall even lower.

One senior Police Federation member said to me this afternoon:

"I do not understand what we have done to deserve this. It is a mill owners' charter. Edmund-Davies treated us better, because we had no right to strike. Sheehy treats us worse."

The Sheehy report is a report for saving cash, not for beating crime. Many of the provisions will bring a reduction in the standard and conditions of police officers. Any group of workers who have their conditions made less attractive are likely to suffer a fall in morale and motivation. At a time when crime is escalating and the public are demanding action to fight crime, it would be wrong of the Government to implement policies that would undermine police morale.

The Sheehy report has provoked anger among many police officers. It comes on the back of announcements that local police authorities will include Home Office appointments and be reorganised—something that I know has caused great disquiet in my area, and doubts as to whether police forces such as Warwickshire's may face amalgamation in the not too distant future.

It cannot be sensible to impose one change after another upon the police, while at the same time freezing recruitment. No one denies that some changes are necessary, but we need reform and gradualism, and Sheehy and the other changes all brought together provide a revolution in policing that will shake it to its foundations and cause dislocation, at the very time when we need stability in the police force in order to enhance the fight against crime.

I do not dismiss the Sheehy report. Many of its provisions are well worth considering. There are too many chiefs and not enough officers on the beat, and plans to remove some layers of management can be supported if they release resources to put more officers on the beat.

Better management structures and efficiency are necessary, and the report has much to recommend on that. It deals with the need to remove incompetent officers quickly but fairly. All police officers want to ensure that that is possible. Some allowances are antiquated and should rightly go—but beware: I say, not all the allowances. Allowances for removal, for example, are important, as police officers can be removed almost at a moment's notice to another area, and it can be quite a considerable distance in rural areas. Such allowances are important.

Many of Sheehy's proposals are not helpful. For example, its pension proposals are considerably worse, which will cause great concern among many officers. Fixed-term contracts and a reduction of up to £5,000 in the income of recruits are likely to reduce the incentive for young people to join the force and place their lives at risk in a difficult job. Those contracts introduce semi-privatisation, based on theories of productivity which will be difficult to define and implement.

The handing of unprecedented powers over police conditions to chief constables and the curtailment of negotiating rights make the report almost a Gradgrind's charter. It places the police officer at the mercy of senior management, with little ability to negotiate better conditions.

Police officers forgo the right to a trade union. The Police Federation is, after all, a staff association. They forgo many employment protection rights. They cannot take industrial action, and they daily place themselves at personal risk to protect other members of the community. We owe them better support than simply to impose change upon change, cuts in the income of their new recruits and the under-resourcing of this most important public service.

The Sheehy report was produced by a group of academics and business men, few of whom know much about the realities of policing. The result is that police morale may be undermined by what one newspaper today called

"half-baked and misapplied theories of market forces."

The danger is that the Government will put ideology before common sense and damage the police in the process.

The Home Secretary said that combating crime is the greatest issue facing us. It is unfortunate that the Government are not prepared to recognise it as such in their policy. They are adopting cash-saving policies instead of properly resourcing the fight against crime. They are undermining police morale rather than supporting the police.

They have no policy to deal with crime, and their main concern seems to be cutting the cost of the forces of law and order. In addition, their social policies almost seem to create the conditions in which crime festers—bad housing, high unemployment and cuts in public sector provision.

My constituents want policies that tackle crime and its causes. I regret to say that my constituents will see from the policies that have been pursued by this Government in the past 14 years just why Britain has experienced unprecedented rises in crime. Finally, let me issue a warning to the new Home Secretary. Many of his policies were initiated by the previous Home Secretary, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke). Our people will remember well his tenure of education and the

*[Mr. Mike O'Brien]*

national health service. His responsibility for those sectors resulted in his successors having to deal with serious damage to services.

I warn the current Home Secretary to beware of the poisoned chalice that has been passed to him by the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe. If the present Home Secretary follows the policies pursued by the previous one, he may end up spending most of his time trying to remedy the serious damage that was done by those policies.

We need a real fight back against crime. Yes, we need to be tougher on crime and, yes, we need to be tougher on the causes of crime. At the moment, the Government have not shown that they are prepared to do either.

9.19 pm

**Mr. Edward Garnier** (Harborough): I am grateful for this brief opportunity to speak in the debate. I will attempt to gallop through my speech, but I assure hon. Members that we are quite used to galloping in my part of Leicestershire.

One of the main policy planks of the Conservative group on Leicestershire county council before the county council elections was to provide, with great urgency, secure accommodation with training and education to deal with the problem of persistent young offenders. However, when that proposal was made, it was voted down by a pact between Labour and the Liberals. When the Liberals and the Labour party were presented with a Conservative proposal for capital spending, that was also voted down in committee.

The issue has great public support in Leicestershire. Our opponents, the Liberals and the Labour party combined, are only too aware of their own vulnerability on the issue. Their claimed support for a so-called regional unit is merely a smokescreen for the continuance of the hopelessly restrictive existing local criteria.

The Conservative policy was to take the lead in developing a co-ordinated Leicestershire strategy to tackle the problem, working with all the agencies concerned—the police, the Crown Prosecution Service, the juvenile panel, the youth court, the probation service and the social services in their newly enhanced role. In the latter case, the Conservatives sought to establish new criteria that made the most effective use of existing law pending a commencement order under the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

The Conservatives were particularly concerned that the current county council guidelines go far beyond legal requirements virtually precluding most applications for secure placements for persistent absconders and re-offenders, both on remand and under supervision orders. The Labour claim that we need only two to four places in Leicestershire is based on maintaining the fiction that those criteria and existing practices will adequately serve the needs of society and promote the welfare of offenders.

We are not seeking to lock up children in a spirit of penal vengeance. We wish to remove some of the more impressionable young people from self-perpetuating peer group influences at a stage when skilled and caring treatment can still prevent a juvenile's criminal habit from becoming an adult way of life. With a fairly constantly renewed representative group of 28 juveniles responsible for more than 2,000 offences, we would also wish to afford better protection to the public and continue to reduce the drain on police resources.

We are equally concerned to promote other measures, not just remand to security and supervision in secure accommodation, that will ensure earlier positive action to curtail persistent and potentially persistent offending.

Taken together, the Conservative strategy, as advocated at county hall before the county elections, was for the treatment of offenders and the facilities and operational methods proposed which could be said to be a new initiative. That might almost be thought of as a Leicestershire system. I believe that that system was justified, at least on a trial basis, on its own merits. I suggest that it is certainly justified and crucial in the present climate of public concern.

In the Leicestershire context, that system must be seen against a background of previous secure accommodation and, more importantly still after remarks from the Opposition Benches, in the light of the combined votes of Labour and the Liberals to knock down every proposal to increase the provision of persistent young offenders institutions in the county.

My colleagues on the Government Front Bench should beware of the Opposition's kind words. What they say here is quite different from what they do in the country.

9.23 pm

**Mr. Michael Shersby** (Uxbridge): The House is aware that I am the parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales, and I wish to declare that interest.

The massive shake-up proposed by Sir Patrick Sheehy and his fellow committee members could change for ever the very nature of the police service as we know it today. I believe that it strikes at the root of a dedicated and professional service committed to maintaining law and order. It will cost about £200 million in redundancy payments to middle ranks and it is said to save about £312 million over five years.

Out will go the long-serving, experienced constable whose friendly manner and wise advice make him or her the person to whom we and the general public turn, and whom we trust, to help us when danger threatens. In will come a new breed of short-service, hard-nosed police officers on 10-year-contracts renewable every five years, who, from day one, will make it their business to get a fresh contract. But even a contract will not protect them from compulsory severance on what was described as structural grounds.

A police officer could lose his job if the need for police officers of a certain rank or in a certain place had ceased or was expected to do so. That could mean, for example, that if Liverpool were no longer top of the first division, and attendance at football matches dropped and fewer officers were needed to patrol the ground, police officers could be sacked—just like that. That is a major departure from the way in which we run police forces today.

Pay will be determined by reference to the median scale of non-manual workers in the private sector, plus a bonus scheme that will result in officers doing the same job being paid at different rates. That will be divisive and set officer against officer. As the *Evening Standard* pointed out in its leader today,

"Having officers effectively competing with each other for bonuses might help keep them on their toes, but it might also

lower morale . . . but not fracturing their . . . comradeship in the struggle against crime. A leaner, more efficient force is what we need—not one destabilised by half-baked and misapplied theories of market forces."

Those words were used by the Opposition. I agree with the *Evening Standard*.

An example of the application of those forces is to cut the pay of an average new entrant from £12,055 to £10,360. With the loss of housing allowance, that cuts a constable's starting pay by about £5,000 a year, because, Sir Patrick Sheehy and his colleagues claim, it is above what he or she could get in the private sector. But, as the then Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, one Major Baird, told the House in a debate on the Police Bill 74 years ago,

"When a man goes into the police force he must necessarily forfeit a certain amount of the liberty which he enjoys as an ordinary citizen. He assumes distinct responsibilities towards the community, and we have endeavoured to recognise those responsibilities by greatly improving the conditions under which he serves."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1919; Vol. 118, c. 839.]

Those were the words of a Minister in a Government who brought forward the Police Act 1919, one of the most enlightened measures that have been placed on the statute book this century.

I do not believe that the Sheehy committee is following those principles. Why is that? It is because the Sheehy committee considers that

"police base rate salary entry rates were well above the market."

I wonder how many hon. Members would like their sons or daughters policing the tougher areas of our towns and cities and putting their lives at risk to maintain law and order to be paid as little as £199 a week. Why is it that only the day before the Sheehy report was published members of the Fire Brigades Union, who are threatening industrial action because they, like all other public sector workers, are limited to the Government-imposed ceiling on pay rises this year, were promised by their official side that their pay formula, which was secured around the time of Edmund-Davies and which gives them a guarantee of the upper quartile movement in the earnings index each year, would be honoured in full in 1994? I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will answer that question because it is rather important.

One of the prices that has to be paid by the police for maintaining law and order is the high risk of suffering serious assault leading, perhaps, to the loss of a limb, an eye or even the loss of life. At the present, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board provides compensation for loss of earnings. However, I understand that the forthcoming White Paper on reorganisation of the board will abolish that. The Sheehy report recommends that sick leave on full pay should be limited to six months, with a further period of six months on half pay. But those periods are capable of being reduced, in individual cases, at the discretion of the chief officer. After six months, an injured officer could get nothing for maintaining law and order on our behalf.

Another aspect of respect for law and order relates to the personal record of a police officer, which may be challenged in a court by defence counsel. The celebrated case of Regina *v.* Edwards makes it necessary to disclose even the most minor infringement of police regulations. But Sheehy—incredibly—recommends that statutory regulations governing the keeping of such personal records be regarded as "entirely unnecessary" and that

"any necessary procedures in relation to personal records should be decided locally."

I mention these points just to illustrate the very strange proposals emanating from that committee. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will indicate that he has taken careful note of what I have had to say.

9.30 pm

**Mr. Alun Michael** (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I am delighted that a number of my hon. Friends followed my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) by trying to make positive and constructive contributions. Several Conservative Members have done likewise.

I was at a loss to know why the Government should have sought a debate on this topic, as their recent record is so poor. I hoped that the purpose was to offer a new analysis, a new understanding, and to announce a new set of proposals for action. We did not hear that from the Secretary of State at the beginning of the debate. However, among Opposition Members, hope springs eternal. We continue to hope that we shall hear, in the Minister of State's winding-up speech, evidence of a positive approach.

The Minister should listen to the warning given by my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) and by the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) with regard to the approach that should be adopted to the police. The hon. Gentleman should listen also to the thoughtful contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) and to that of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice), who rightly asked that we treat not just the symptom—the crime itself—but values in society, and said that he accepted a share of the responsibility. I disagree with some of his analysis, but I welcome his constructive contribution to the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) talked about having spent time with a police officer, so she spoke from experience. I have done likewise, having been with the police through the night in the centre of Cardiff. That experience makes one realise just how thin is the blue line that looks after the interests of the public at night in our great cities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) made a very forceful rejection of what seems to be a concerted effort by the Conservative party to make the police the whipping-boys for the Government's failure to tackle crime.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) referred, from direct experience, to projects that work and to the motivation of young people. I have had direct experience of such projects. The truth is that most young people do not need to be offenders, that they can be challenged into constructive behaviour—and could be so challenged, up and down the land, were the opportunities and facilities available. With that diversion, we could concentrate the machinery of punishment and incarceration on those who refuse to give up their criminal and anti-social activity, instead of, as now, having to address youngsters who, given the right opportunity, could be attracted out of that way of life.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South referred also to reparation, either directly to the victim or indirectly to the community. It is with some regret that I have to say that that proposal was made recently by the

*[Mr. Alun Michael]*

Labour party during the Committee stage of the Criminal Justice Bill but was rejected by the Minister and his Conservative colleagues.

The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) wanted to know what had changed since 1970. Well, he has aged a little since he has been in this place. I started in youth work at that time, and a year later I became a magistrate. I saw a decade of progress, and then I saw things become perceptibly worse under Mrs. Thatcher. It angered me to see hope stolen from young people, hope stolen from families with the loss of housing cash in local areas, and hope stolen from communities. I cannot go too wide in my speech, but the Government must make the connection between their policies and rising crime over the past 14 years.

The right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), who courteously gave a reason for leaving the Chamber, gave a devastating indictment of the past decade. He warned the House that vigilantes will move in and society will break down. He referred to the shortage of youth workers. Many of our local authorities have been devastated by the pressure that is put on them to cut back on non-statutory responsibilities such as youth work because of the inadequacy of support from the Government. There is a clear place where the responsibility for that development must lie.

The right hon. Gentleman rightly set out the effect of the decline in areas such as apprenticeships. I agree that the loss of opportunity for some youngsters on our great housing estates to train in the services has been a devastating loss recently, as has been the loss of schemes which sought constructively to work with young people and which often succeeded in motivating them.

I draw the attention of the Minister to reports published on the links between those who break the law, unemployment and multiple debt. That is no excuse for crime. However, I say to the Government: for God's sake understand the connection and the way in which the environment for crime is being developed and encouraged.

The Home Secretary gave a simplistic four-point strategy for tackling crime. The problem is that the Government have failed badly on each of the four elements. First, the Home Secretary said that we need to prevent crime. I strongly support the expansion of neighbourhood watch schemes and welcome the additional number of special constables. But that is no substitute for proper support for the professional police service. The Home Secretary fails the test of seriousness. Clearly, he does not understand the nature of the problem; nor does he make the same connections as those of the right hon. Member for Brent, North.

On Tuesday, the Home Secretary failed the litmus test when he and the Government Whips made an arrangement to vote against a Labour amendment to accelerate work on crime prevention to create the right partnership between the police, local authorities and the community. He failed another litmus test when Conservative Members voted against a Labour amendment to help the victims of crime. They voted against the principle that victims and their families should be consulted before charges are dropped or downgraded in the courts.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Michael:** There is little time to give way. The hon. and learned Gentleman, who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, should have addressed the subject of victims when he had the opportunity earlier. This week, we gave the House an opportunity to do something for victims and the hon. and learned Gentleman trooped in the Lobby in obedience of the Government Whips to vote against our amendment. The Government's record on prevention is poor.

The Home Secretary paid tribute to a number of projects that have worked well. I agree with him on that. However, I ask him to reject the project mentality adopted by his predecessor, which was to praise a project here, give a little bit of money for a project there and fail to put in place a strategy that learns the lessons of those constructive projects. It is not enough for him to praise projects and then fail to offer the opportunity for that success to be developed and redoubled around the country.

We know that many approaches and techniques work, but it is the Government who fail to turn those projects into a national strategy. As a result, the cost of crime is borne by every community, by every victim, by every person who pays insurance and by every shopper who now pays a sort of Conservative crime tax, which is exacted by criminals in an unplanned way. The Government need to put a strategy in place.

The Home Secretary's second suggestion was that we should catch criminals. I certainly agree that that is the greatest deterrent but the Government are not doing it. We saw crime rise and the clear-up rate drop from 41 per cent. in 1979 to 29 per cent. in 1991. At the same time, we saw a minimal increase in police numbers and a rise in crime of 121 per cent. All that has developed because we have seen the greatest rise in crimes of violence and, in volume, crimes such as home burglary and car crime which are so damaging to so many individuals and communities.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), after making a cheap jibe at my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield, suggested that rising crime was all in the mind. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes, he did. That is precisely what he implied. That is not what I hear from chief constables throughout the country; it is not what I hear from constables; it is not what I hear from councillors and Crime Watch representatives; and it is not what I hear from Victim Support groups.

**Mr. Garnier:** That is stupid.

**Mr. Michael:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It was stupid for his hon. and learned Friend to make that remark.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton also said that he wanted the people of this country to continue to feel that they could walk the streets safely. He said that we could walk the streets of our country feeling safer than people in other countries could. We want to keep it that way. We want to restore the sense of security that is being lost in Britain. It is worrying that the hon. and learned Gentleman, who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, is so complacent on that issue.

The hon. and learned Gentleman also referred to the success of the safer cities programme, but did not seek to explain why the Government are now cutting those projects. Again, we have a Government who learn a lesson and then throw away the results of their learning. The hon.

and learned Gentleman then shed crocodile tears about the members of his profession who sit around with nothing to do because not enough cases are being brought before the courts. He said that there is too much cautioning.

Why is this breakdown happening? It is because there is a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system, which is falling into disrepute. That needs to be addressed by the Government. No one owns the criminal justice system. The Government must concentrate on getting the whole act together nationally. That would enable police, local authorities, magistrates and communities to get their act together locally. Support, instead of criticism, should be provided by the Government to those groups.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton also said that the police should become more local, and we agree. Already forces around Britain are devolving authority to local commanders, mainly at superintendent level. But this week the Government have made proposals that will result in a loss of local accountability. We have seen the threat of mergers, which the Home Secretary tried to hide when he presented the White Paper.

The right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) rightly said that nostrums waved at the Conservative party conference did not work, and he went on to call for amalgamation.

The Home Secretary must come clean, and not simply ask for an expedited procedure, because answers from Home Office Ministers have shown that that is not needed. The Home Secretary should tell us what his intentions are. Does he intend to amalgamate forces if he is given those extra powers to do so, without consulting and regarding the views of local people?

The Home Secretary then said that we needed to get people to court. There are two aspects there. We need to speed up the criminal justice system. But, again, the Conservative Members of the Standing Committee voted against the idea that we should place the principle of "justice delayed is justice denied" in the criminal justice system.

We asked for ways of speeding up action and making the system more effective. For example, we proposed that if a person received a second caution, things should happen rather than the person—in particular a young person—simply walking away from that caution. There should be help for the young person and his family. That was rejected in the Committee also.

We must tackle the issue of offending while on bail. I understand that the Bail (Amendment) Bill proposed by the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) comes back before the House tomorrow. The Bill was handled poorly by the Government's representatives in the Lords and has survived as a result of the co-operation and support that has been given by the Opposition to a welcome initiative by a Conservative Back Bencher. That has resulted in the Bill getting so far. I hope that it will complete its passage speedily tomorrow.

The fourth element that the Home Secretary asked for was that we should punish offenders. I agree, and we have proved that by supporting measures to deal with drug trafficking, terrorism, City fraud and causing death by dangerous driving, as we did only this week.

Attrition in the criminal justice system means that for every 100 offences committed, only two result in a conviction. That is a reduction on three last year. That is why the Government must tackle not only the element of punishment, but the 98 per cent. of crime that does not result in a sentence in court. They must tackle that problem with urgency and determination so that they also make better use of prison and secure accommodation.

The issue of secure accommodation has been mentioned on several occasions. When the right hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) was Minister of State, Home Office he promised in February 1991 that secure places would be provided to deal with 15 and 16-year-olds. I have checked again today, as we checked in February, and no additional places have been provided to fulfil that promise. What is the value of a promise by the Government to take action if action is not delivered?

When the Government's record is so poor and when concern has been expressed so loudly by both Opposition and Conservative Members, I ask the Minister to reply to this question tonight: will he accept the analysis and the advice that we have so freely offered, and reverse the situation? I hope so.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) saw a glimmer of cause for optimism in the exchanges between my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield and the Home Secretary at the beginning of the debate. The fight against crime was weakened in recent years by the party-political knockabout and inattentiveness of the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe when he was Home Secretary. I hope that this Minister and this Home Secretary will aspire to the more constructive and positive attitude exemplified by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield. That is what the people of Britain are crying our for.

9.46 pm

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean):** Almost every debate in the House on law and order for the past 40 years has been held against a background of rising crime. We should not conclude from that fact that we are powerless to act in the face of growing disrespect for the law. On the contrary, we should conclude that we face an immense challenge. The challenge is to turn the tide of rising crime, to come up with new ideas, to make life more difficult for the criminal and easier for the law-abiding citizen and, above all, to take the tough action that law-abiding people throughout Britain so clearly want and my hon. Friends have called for.

I believe that in meeting that challenge we should be guided by some straightforward principles. First, protection of our citizens and the maintenance of law and order is the first duty of the Government. Secondly, those who break the law must be held to account for their actions. Attempts to blame society or anyone else are a distraction, and a dangerous one at that. We shall never shilly-shally about who is responsible for it, or make excuses for the criminals.

Thirdly, while we must do all that we can to prevent crime, we must give the courts the powers that they need to deliver tough punishments to deter criminals and protect the public. Fourthly, the Conservative party stands four square behind the police and wants to give them all the support that it can in their difficult and often dangerous job.

No Government has a better record than the present Government in supporting the police in their work. It is a record of which we are rightly proud. There are 16,700 more police officers today than in 1979 and 14,000 extra

*[Mr. David Maclean]*

civilians. I am amazed that the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) ignored the extra 6,000 policemen for the Met. Spending on the police is up by 80 per cent. in real terms. Police pay is up by 40 per cent. above inflation. That is an enormous investment by the taxpayer in the police and it shows the high priority that the Government give to law and order.

However, we also have a duty to make sure that we are getting the best value for money and the best service from the police. That is what our reforms are all about. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary explained the main thrust of our reforms on Monday. I welcome the support of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I Lawrence). The reforms envisage a clear set of aims and objectives for the police, to be issued by the Home Secretary each year. There will be a better partnership between police and local communities. There will be smaller and more effective police authorities, in control of their budgets and drawing up local strategies with the police and local people. Chief constables will have more freedom and responsibility to use their resources to meet the tasks set for them. What we want is an efficient and effective police service, working with local people to prevent crime and bring criminals to book.

I listened very carefully and respectfully to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) when he expressed his concerns. I believe that the Sheehy report is an important contribution to the work of the police in preventing crime and in bringing criminals to book. We will study the Sheehy report recommendations very carefully over the summer before coming to conclusions. I also accept the wise words of my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) that we must always maintain police morale.

I point out to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) that the White Paper and the Sheehy report address totally different issues. I do not know how the hon. Gentleman came to his conclusions.

The police are part of our defence against crime, but our attack on crime must start with its origins. This is where we have to banish the trendy, so-called progressive thinking so favoured by too many of the Labour party. It began in the 1960s, when a former Labour Home Secretary, Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, told us that the permissive society is the civilised society. That was the start of the decline into sloppy attitudes. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) so rightly reminded us, the attitude was that examinations and competition were bad and prevented children from expressing themselves; that there should be no respect for authority. That was all part of the question-everything attitude; the let-it-all-hang-out era.

That sort of attitude and belief, prevalent in some sections of society, hastened our decline in the 1970s. It was thought that mass picketing was the right way to persuade others to one's point of view; that rights were more important than duties and that society owed people a living, no matter how little effort they made to help themselves.

We will not arrest those attitudes by merely legislating in the House. They will only be changed in homes and schools. But we have a duty in this House to take measures to crack down on criminals and crime, and that is what we have done. The whole range of measures that we have introduced, and will introduce in future, have the same goal of making life more difficult for criminals and easier for law-abiding citizens.

I thank the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) for his support and the warm welcome that he gave to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

We have many schemes and many initiatives for crime prevention. We have had considerable success, but we want to mobilise as many people as possible and get them involved. Between the Home Office, the Department of the Environment and other Departments we are spending more than £200 million on all aspects of crime prevention.

A great deal of concern has been expressed in the House, the media and up and down the country about persistent juvenile offenders. I share that concern. Some of those offenders have caused havoc in local communities by breaking the law again and again but getting off scot free. Action needed to be taken, and that is why, on 2 March, the Home Secretary announced his plans to create a new sentence of detention, a secure training order.

That sentence will be available for the small hard core of persistent offenders aged betweend 12 and 15 years who have not responded to community sentences. Those training orders are not for innocent young scallywags scrumping a few apples; they are for persistent young offenders who have become hardened criminals and who have a string of convictions. They must be taken off the streets in order to protect themselves and the public, as my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) rightly said.

It is time that we had a straight answer from the Labour party about secure training orders, instead of the pretence that a few more local authority secure places would satisfy a different need. Its proposal to extend local authority secure accommodation simply will not cut the mustard. We need to give the right to the courts to sentence persistent young offenders to custody, where they will receive special treatment and not be mixed with other youngsters.

It is time for a decision from the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). Will he let the courts have that right to sentence directly persistent young offenders to juvenile custody? I think the answer, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton said, is that the proof of the Labour party pudding is in the eating. Perhaps the hon. Member for Sedgefield will also tell us when he had his great change of heart on lenient sentences which he appeared to show at the start of his speech.

I shall reflect on all that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton said about cautioning. He made some important points, and I can tell him that new guidance will be issued shortly which will discourage repeat cautioning. He might be interested to know that I spent the whole weekend reading the memoranda which have been submitted to the Select Committee.

We are also determined to crack down on rural crime. People in the countryside, in our villages and small towns are particularly frightened of crime. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) spoke so eloquently and passionately for rural constituents. Country people are unused to crime. We do not always take precautions to prevent it, not because we

are careless but because we have never found it necessary before as we used to be able to leave the house unlocked and the keys in the car.

Although rural crime is rising, it is rising from a very low base. The 700 per cent. increase reported in this week's *Country Life* was an increase of two crimes to 14. It also cites a 75 per cent. increase in Cambridgeshire, which meant two extra crimes, one in a telephone box—although it did not say what it was. We should not take any comfort from the low figures. Indeed, we must crack rural crime before it becomes established. That means that all of us who live in the countryside must do a lot more for ourselves in terms of crime prevention.

There are several successful initiatives such as County Watch and Farm Watch which must be copied and extended. I give *Country Life* much encouragement in its campaign against rural crime. Above all, country people should use their natural camaraderie and community spirit to be the eyes and ears of the police in rural areas.

In the House three weeks ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) gave me some extremely good advice. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North will agree with his excellent plea on behalf of victims and his speech tonight about the balance of fear. My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield asked me to meet the victims of crime before meeting sociologists with their woolly jumpers and their even woollier theories, I think he said. I promised that I would, and I have kept my word. I have met magistrates and policemen and this morning I met the victims of crime. These people offered such good common sense advice that I am not sure that I shall need to meet too many sociologists in the future. I hope that my hon. Friend can rest more easily having received that news, but I assure the House that, in the months ahead, I shall look forward to meeting everyone involved in combating crime and criminals.

I must tell the hon. Member for Lewisham, East that our criminal injuries compensation is the most generous of any in the world, standing at £152 million. We have spent £500 million on various aspects of drug control and prevention, and we are increasing the safer cities programme from 20 projects to 40, not cutting it.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland made a passionate speech about drugs. I wish that he had also made it at the Scottish Liberal party conference in Dunoon which passed a resolution to legalise cannabis.

We have a packed agenda on law and order, promoting crime prevention, supporting and reforming the police, toughening sentences for criminals, dealing strongly with young offenders and rolling back decades of wrong-headed nonsense in our schools. They are the measures that people expect from this party which is dedicated to law and order, to protecting ordinary people and to upholding the rule of law.

What did we hear from the hon. Member for Sedgefield? We certainly did not hear a set of concrete measures to hit criminals; we heard nothing to reassure people who are frightened of crime and not a hint of regret for the years that the Labour party spent calling for softer sentences, undermining the police and encouraging law-breaking. What we heard was merely a lot of words. Whatever post the hon. Gentleman has held on the Opposition Front Bench, he has always taken the same approach: no speech, no press release and no interview is complete without a call for immediate action. It does not matter what the action is as long as it is immediate and as long as he has called for it. He cannot get out of bed in the morning without calling for a Government statement or a new initiative. He is a good dealer in sound bites. This time the sound bites are on "law and order", but they could just as easily be on "training and investment" or "motherhood and apple pie".

There is no substance to the hon. Gentleman's words, but that is hardly surprising because Labour has no record of sticking up for the police and law-abiding citizens against those who break the law. Where were the Opposition when the Militant Tendency organised a campaign of non-payment of the community charge? They were not exactly encouraging people to obey the law. Some Opposition Back Benchers were encouraging them to break it.

Where were Opposition Members when policemen were attacked by pickets during the coal strike or at Wapping? They were not behind the police: many of them were behind the pickets. Above all, where were they when the Government repeatedly legislated to toughen sentences for criminals? They did not support us but tried to vote us down. No doubt they were following the advice——

*It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.*

## Oldchurch Hospital, Romford

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

10 pm

**Sir Michael Neubert** (Romford): The headline on the front page of the *Evening Standard* on Wednesday 23 June was:

"Hit list dooms nine hospitals".

Oldchurch hospital in my constituency was one of those identified for closure. Therefore, I am glad to have this early opportunity to register my strongest opposition to that proposal.

This is not the first time that Oldchurch hospital has been threatened. During the almost 20 years that I have served in the House there have been regular and repeated assaults by the establishment on different aspects of our local hospital. Exasperating as it is, I am ready for the challenge to return to the fight for that hospital. I am encouraged by the support of my immediate neighbour, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), who is present for the debate but is obliged to maintain ministerial silence.

We are also supported by my hon. Friends the Members for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) and for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) who are strongly against the proposals. I am also encouraged by the good will of my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) who has good reason to be thankful to Oldchurch hospital as he was born there.

I shall preface my speech by mentioning two matters. First, it must cause concern that the Tomlinson report on the problems of the national health service in inner London has, by the setting up of six speciality reviews, been extended to outer London. It seems that the problems of inner London are to be solved at the expense of outer London, and that is unacceptable.

For decades, as the population of inner London has declined, we in outer London have watched the teaching hospitals draw on our outer-London constituents to fill their emptying clinics, with the result that, in general terms, we on the periphery have been starved of resources. It is unacceptable that once again it should be suggested that to make good the lack of patients in the centre of the city we should lose some of our facilities.

Secondly, review committees dominated by professionals must be expected to favour centres of excellence. It is natural that professional people should want to achieve the highest standards and advance the frontiers of medical knowledge, and that they should favour the most advanced technology, the most lavish facilities and, of course, the highest paid consultants and administrators.

I accept that the proposal for Oldchurch hospital would be subjected to proper consultation. If the public who pay for the service were asked, most of them would say that they preferred the comfort, convenience and assurance of an excellent local hospital. For all its outdated, Victorian workhouse appearance, Oldchurch hospital is just that. It has some pretensions to excellence and I sometimes think that that is the reason for resentment by those who are perhaps better placed in other parts of London.

However, the fact that the teaching hospitals are concentrated in the centre of London is an accident of history, and it does not necessarily follow that they need always be there, and that there might not be a case for a hospital on the edge of London such as Oldchurch hospital itself becoming a teaching hospital. That may seem fanciful, but in principle there is nothing wrong with the idea.

The proposals are related to the provision of cancer services and neurosciences. Both the units at Oldchurch hospital have been threatened twice before, and my hon. Friends and I have been involved in saving the cancer unit on two previous occasions.

The most important factor is that cancer is a terrible disease. If it can be treated locally, that is by far the best solution. There will always be unusual cancers which perhaps need certain specialist treatment, but it is desirable that people should not have too far to travel for general cancer treatment. That is an important factor, although there is also the question of investment in equipment already established at Oldchurch hospital. Those were the main factors, and I hope that they will prevail again.

The regional neurosciences unit has had considerable investment over the years. One of the major factors against change has been that the unit at Oldchurch in Romford is placed at the heart of a very convenient and effective road and rail network. People can get there quickly and, although it is a local facility, it has regional importance and about 75 per cent. of its work comes from the county of Essex. Those are the principal reasons against proposals to close those two aspects of Oldchurch hospital.

Like the cancer unit, the neurosciences have been threatened twice in the past 20 years but each time closure has been fought off and for good reason. There is no particular proposal that Oldchurch hospital should close, despite the headline with which I began my speech, but it is clear that the removal of two important parts of the hospital would call into question its viability.

In particular, neurosciences depend on the interaction of different disciplines within the hospital and that is greatly valued by the consultants themselves who would look upon Oldchurch hospital as a very different place if there were no facility to cross departments and seek advice and assistance and the use of equipment from other parts of the hospital for their particular specialty. That is an important consideration.

There may, of course, be a hidden agenda. It may be part of a process eventually leading to the closure of Oldchurch hospital, but that certainly would be resisted by those who work there. It is a fact that I personally regret and express to my hon. Friend the Minister that such uncertainty obviously undermines the confidence of the public in the national health service and the morale of the staff working in the hospital, and we have enjoyed more than our fair share of uncertainty in recent years. I consider that to be unfortunate, but it may be inevitable.

It is only a matter of months since the most recent threat to the hospital was lifted, with the setting up of a trust based on two hospitals—Oldchurch and Harold Wood—and a twin-site strategy. Only months later, Oldchurch hospital is once again under threat.

An important factor which is not sufficiently taken into account in all these exercises is what I call the patient-visitor factor. Financial equations are set up to match the revenue and capital investment and consider the concentration and co-ordination of services and see some saving or better use, but rarely does the unseen factor of convenience and accessibility come sufficiently into

question. It is rarely costed, but I can assure my hon. Friend the Minister that there is a very real cost, which should be respected.

His predecessor, our hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), answering my Adjournment debate on 27 February 1991, said:

"Convenience and accessibility are important factors in deciding the pattern of health care in any locality."—[*Official Report*, 27 February 1991; Vol. 186, c. 1096.]

I strongly believe that that is true.

I recently learned in my own surgery of the human cost of people having to travel long distances to see consultants and to receive treatment. One of my constituents explained the problems that she had encountered taking her elderly father, ill with cancer, to the Royal London hospital—which is one teaching hospital proposed for a concentration of resources under the review.

When she and her father—a frail, sick man who had to be left at the hospital entrance—arrived, she found that there was nowhere to park and had to find somewhere nearby. She parked in a place that she thought was safe. She saw a warning notice, but thought that it applied to a British Telecom depot. When she returned to her car, she found that it had been towed away.

She was forced to get a taxi to return to the hospital to collect her father, who was in great pain, and suffering considerably. Treatment often induces nausea, but even travel and seeing a consultant is painful for someone in that condition. That lady then had to return to the pound to reclaim her vehicle. All that, so that a patient living in my constituency could receive the treatment he needed. He has since died.

That example illustrates the human experience of patients having to travel longer distances than otherwise are necessary. I urge that those financial costs be entered into the question because they make the outcome look very different.

It is clear from the review documents that the financial implications of the proposals are virtually non-existent. The *Evening Standard* reported that the leaders of the review teams were very nervous when defending their plans. They admitted that their knowledge of the financial consequences was virtually zero and that they could make no meaningful comparison between one department and another.

The same report mentions the concern of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, who himself represents a London constituency. I am not surprised at his concern, because the review is something of a pig in a poke. There is very little figuring to it. My experience of all NHS changes is that a great deal of money is needed up front and that they depend on other factors, such as the value of vacated sites—which, in the present climate, is not a reality.

Any suggestion, for example, that the NHS could capitalise on the Oldchurch site in Romford would be rather diminished by the fact that only last year Romford brewery closed after nearly 300 years, leaving a 20-acre site awaiting some useful development. Creating another such site just across the road would not have much value and would represent the unwise disposal of a public asset. All those factors come into the question.

The reviews are based on certain factual errors. I shall quote from a critique of the two review documents prepared by the hospital trust, because it is important to read it into the record and to show that in the review committee's haste to reach conclusions and to make recommendations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, it may have laboured under a misapprehension.

On cancer services, reference is made to page 115 of the review. The trust comments:

"The Trust is currently reviewing how all of its existing services should best be located, using both the Oldchurch and Harold Wood sites for the foreseeable future. Centralisation of all specialties on to one site is not an option due to the volume of patients currently treated and the excessive capital implications of such a development. Oldchurch Hospital has a comprehensive range of general hospital services on site. These include General Surgery, Urology, Orthopaedics, Medicine, Oral Surgery, Ophthalmology, Intensive Therapy, Paediatrics, Accident and Emergency, Medicine for the Elderly, Rheumatology, Radiology, Nuclear Medicine and others.

This can hardly be described as a restricted range.

Recruitment difficulties for physicists and radiographers are not thought to be any more problematic at Oldchurch than similar centres."

The trust says of paragaraph 102 on page 24 of the neurosciences paper:

"Oldchurch has been successfully running a Neuroscience Nursing course for some years. No mention is made of this, although plans to develop such a course in other units are referred to."

It says of paragraph 103:

"A Senior Registrar rotation scheme exists in Neurosurgery, linked to St. Barts. The report overlooks the wide body of research work undertaken in Neurology. This includes, beside the Neuro-care team, clinical trial in Parkinson's Disease and research into Alzheimer's Disease, Essential Tremor Disease, and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME). Funding for this work in 1992-93 exdeeded £100,000."

It says of paragraph 104:

"This incorrect assumption is similar to that detailed above in the Cancer Review."—

that is, that there will be only a single site.

"Aside from the ENT Department, the most recent capital investment at Harold Wood was Phase 1 of the nucleus development, some 7 years ago.

Whilst the lack of on-site MRI (Magnetic Resonence Imaging) is described as a deficiency for Oldchurch, similar absence at other sites (such as Hirstwood Park and the Maudsley) is not mentioned. No reference is made to our current bid to fund MRI within Havering Hospitals.

The operating theatre mentioned is dedicated to the exclusive use of Neurosurgery.

The Oldchurch service is criticised for the lack of linked specialties"—

I have already illustrated the range of specialties available—

"when it is better supported than other centres, such as Atkinson Morley and the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases. In particular Maxillo Facial (Oral) Surgery, Ophthalmology, and Orthopaedic Services are on the same site, together with the wide range of other clinical services mentioned above."

Finally, it says of paragraph 107:

"The Oldchurch centre is described as a local service. In fact it currently serves 75 per cent. of the Essex population, and ME patients are referred nationally. The statement that the unit does not have the facilities that should be available to a major general hospital is clearly wrong. A recent specialist advisory committee report on Neurosciences was quite satisfied with the general range of services."

Oldchurch hospital has a high standing in the community. It serves a large district—previously 453,000 people—and even now, with the detachment of Brentwood, it serves an important part of London's population. Part of that population in the Barking and Dagenham end is, to a degree, deprived and has a high incidence of health need. The population generally can be characterised as having a high morbidity and a low

*[Sir Michael Neubert]*

mobility rate. Both those factors point to the need for the continued existence of Oldchurch. It has served the population very well.

In April this year, three months ago to the day, I unveiled a plaque at the opening of the new Havering hospitals trust. I was confident in my comments that it was a new chapter in the national health service in Romford. I hope that at the end of this latest exercise my confidence and that of my constituents will not prove to have been misplaced and that Oldchurch hospital will continue to serve the community that values it so highly.

10.17 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville):** I am pleased to have an opportunity to respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert). I congratulate him on his success in the ballot. It has given him the opportunity, on behalf of his constituents, to voice his concern about the future configuration of health services in the area. Both he and my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), who is in his place on the Front Bench, have written to the Department expressing their concern. I know that there is widespread public interest, not least because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received many letters on this subject from members of the public.

Havering hospitals NHS trust was launched in April this year. It consists of the old Barking, Havering and Brentwood health authorities' acute units—the Harold Wood, Oldchurch and Rush Green hospitals. The trust is large and serves a local population of more than 440,000.

It may be appropriate for me to put into context the recent press reports about possible changes in cancer services and in neurosciences, to which my hon. Friend referred. The reports of the cancer and neurosciences review teams are independent advice to Ministers and to the NHS. They are not policy, and they will certainly not alone determine the future pattern of services.

The London Implementation Group, set up in response to the Tomlinson inquiry, will consider the recommendations of the review teams alongside the central London hospital site option appraisals already under way, the review of the special health authority research due to be published in mid-July and the views of purchasers and academic interests.

The London Implementation Group will also ensure that the implications of all those elements are fully assessed at local level. Following that process, proposals for the future configuration of services in inner London will be presented to Ministers in the autumn.

In making their recommendations, the review groups have sought to improve quality of services for patients well into the next century. Their advice with regard to Oldchurch hospital will now be considered and assessed by the North East Thames regional health authority, by local purchasers and by the trust itself.

The immediate need for change is, of course, in central London. If proposals to alter services in outer London are presented to Ministers, we should need to be convinced that they offered real benefits to patients and value for money before taking them forward. There will, of course, be full public consultation, as my hon. Friend has said, on major changes to services and on any services that involve transfers between NHS hospitals or from hospitals to community services.

There are presently two reviews of services in the area, and it is essential that each takes account of the views of those who live in the area. Barking and Havering health authority has instituted an accident and emergency services review to look at the emergency services that it commissions from local hospitals. That is quite proper, and the health service has made it clear that it seeks to improve the service available to its residents.

The health authority will look at the current use of the accident and emergency service, and especially at the most important issue of access and travel time. The London and Essex ambulance services will both be invited to provide evidence to the review.

At the same time, Havering hospitals trust has launched a major review of services and is actively seeking reviews of the community health council, of GPs and of patient groups. The review is considering the configuration and delivery of large areas of the trust's acute work. The main objective is to ensure that the trust can best meet the demands of health care purchasers to the greater benefit of patients.

My hon. Friend will know that, a couple of months ago, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State approved the health authority's proposal to relocate services from Rush Green to the Oldchurch and Harold Wood sites and to close Rush Green hospital by 1996. She made the decision on the understanding that alternative services are in place at Harold Wood and Oldchurch hospitals prior to the closure of Rush Green. Her decision should greatly improve the opportunities for Havering hospitals trust to reorganise acute services to give a more effective and efficient service to patients.

The trust aims to achieve excellence through the provision of a balanced range of services to meet the needs of the community. The trust is committed to pursuing quality, efficiency, staff development and financial viability. Considerable challenges face the trust, but I have great confidence in the new structure of the NHS which devolves management to a local level and introduces the incentive to excellence of the purchaser-provider split.

As it prepared for trust status and during the early months of the trust, Havering hospital, despite a fall in the number of beds, achieved much in terms of efficiency—that is, in treating more patients. In the last 18 months, the total number of patients waiting for treatment has fallen by 15 per cent. Perhaps more significant is the fact that no one now waits more than 18 months, and 89 per cent. wait less than one year.

The trust has undertaken a detailed internal review, by specialty, of workload against planned contracted activity. Resources will be matched to patient needs expressed through purchaser demand, and not issued according to historical patterns of spending. I am delighted to say that this approach—putting money where it can best help patients—has won Audit Commission approval.

I could give a number of other examples of initiatives that have been taken by the trust. There have been a number of quality initiatives, such as the initiative on the nutritional intake of patients, with the implementation of various other patients charter initiatives, which have been characterised by a great deal of imagination and enthusiasm.

May saw the launch of the trust's patients charter for children, which aims to ensure that children are treated in an environment appropriate to their age and needs.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Romford for giving me the opportunity to highlight some of the trust's achievements, and also the challenges that it now faces. I listened with great interest to some of the concerns that he expressed and, in particular, to what he said about the historical problems as between inner and outer London, and what he saw as the unnecessary concentration of teaching in inner London. I was interested also in his idea of the hospital becoming a teaching hospital.

I noted what he said about the recent proposals, which do not include the closure of Oldchurch hospital. However, I agree that such reviews produce uncertainty. On the other hand, there is an historic and continuing problem in London with regard to duplication of specialties which has to be solved.

It can be solved only through the medium of reviews by those most qualified to decide the future of services in London. These reviews have to be published. They will, almost by definition, induce periods of uncertainty, but I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be in a position to take steps to limit this.

**Sir Michael Neubert:** My hon. Friend has very fairly said that there is a major problem in London, which we all accept. It is most frequently expressed by saying that 20 per cent. of national health services resources go to London, with 15 per cent. of the population. That is not challenged, but people like myself and my colleagues in outer London say that that problem is not spread equally over London.

The imbalance is to be found, as I believe that my hon. Friend acknowledged, very largely in central London. It would be unfair and inequitable if the problem that arises in central London were to be spread, with an evenness of misery, over the whole of London, to the detriment of outer London's interests.

**Mr. Sackville:** I certainly take that point, but these are problems that are not peculiar to London. All over the country, services need to be rationalised in order to balance the ever rising demand for health care, and the greater activity and expense of health care for each patient, with what is available. That sometimes requires some very hard decisions.

I noted what my hon. Friend said about the virtues of accessibility and convenience, and about people needing to be treated, as far as possible, near to their homes. I agree that finance and factors such as land sale are not everything, but these are all factors that need to be taken into account.

There are no decisions on this matter. We have had advice from an independent committee. There will be consultation if there are to be any major changes in service. I congratulate my hon. Friend again on raising this matter. His contribution tonight will be a major factor in any decisions that are taken in the future.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Friday 2 July 1993*

*The House met at half-past Nine o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PETITION

### Maastricht Treaty

9.34 am

**Mr. William Cash** (Stafford): I present an instalment of a petition for a referendum on the Maastricht treaty. It represents the wishes of many millions of citizens of the United Kingdom, as shown by 73 per cent. of the population in the latest MORI opinion poll, the 90 per cent. of those requested who agreed to sign the petition and the 88 per cent. pro-referendum response for the Dial for Democracy.

The petition, with its hundreds of thousands of names, comes from throughout the United Kingdom—from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland—and more names are flowing in and will continue to flow in. Our own citizens should have the same opportunity for a referendum as other citizens of the European Community. As the implications of the treaty unfold, so the case for a referendum strengthens.

The petition says:

To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of Electors of the United Kingdom sheweth

That the Maastricht Treaty would bring about a European Union.

That the people of the United Kingdom have been given no right to determine, for themselves, in a democratic vote whether or not they wish these constitutional changes to be made;

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House: Will ensure that before the Maastricht Treaty, or any modification or amendment of it, is approved by Parliament, or ratified by Her Majesty's Government, the electors of the United Kingdom shall be given that right to vote for or against that Treaty, in a National Referendum.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

*To lie upon the Table.*



# Orders of the Day

## Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill

*Lords amendments considered.*

### Clause 1

POWER TO PROVIDE ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

*Lords amendment:* No. 1, in page 1, line 16, at end insert——

("() Before giving any general authorisation under section (3) above, the Secretary of State shall consult with such persons appearing to him to represent local authorities as he thinks appropriate.")

**Mr. Jim Lester** (Broxtowe): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

**Madam Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 2.

**Mr. Lester:** We have now reached the final stages of the passage of the Bill. I am particularly grateful that their Lordships' House has made a contribution to it. I should like particularly to record my thanks to Baroness Flather, who took the Bill through the House of Lords, and to Lord Graham, who spoke for the Opposition in the same constructive and helpful spirit that we have witnessed throughout the Bill's stages hitherto.

The amendments complete the Bill. They seek to reinforce the basis on which the Bill was drafted. Local authorities, perhaps with some justification, were rather suspicious of the Bill's requirement for the Secretary of State's approval. In fact, none of us who support the Bill intended to restrict the existing powers of local authorities to have cultural exchanges and to promote the best interests of their members, but the Bill clearly defined new powers.

In a changing world, all democratically elected bodies have a part to play. As I said, local authorities were concerned about the requirement in the Bill for the Secretary of State's approval. That was always a fall-back position and was never intended to be anything else. In Committee, we had wide discussions on how best to promote and remove the dead hand of bureaucracy from the various measures that we hope will flow from the Bill. It was decided that we could do so through a general authorisation, which has been drafted for two reasons.

First, I would not have been associated with the Bill unless it really achieved greater links between local authorities world wide and especially the transfer of needed help and advice to the developing world. Indeed, the whole purpose of the know-how funds, which were established to help eastern and central Europe, would have failed if we were not able to give local authorities the clearly defined power to play their full part.

Secondly, I know from my experience of working with the Department of the Environment that it has more than enough to do without trying to police the many different links that the Bill will encourage. The last thing that it would want is to be inundated with inquiries, and the last thing that local authorities want is to suffer from the dead hand of bureaucracy because that is not the way to water what I believe will be a new and flowering garden.

*[Mr. Lester]*

The amendments make it clear that the general authorisation is an important element in setting out the parameters whereby local authorities can operate. Basically, the general authorisation as discussed so far gives powers to go ahead with schemes that have been funded by the know-how funds and which, clearly, the Foreign Office have already approved. It gives the powers to go ahead where there is no cost to the local charge payers because a local authority or another body in the other country can fully fund the advice that it is seeking. Perhaps most important, the general authorisation gives the freedom to spend a certain amount of money even before the schemes reach fruition.

The figures discussed in the original authorisation draft were based on population. Without staff-related costs, which are an important component, the suggestion is that a local authority of 250,000 to 400,000 people would spend £80,000 independently and freely. That would be sufficient for the authority to make a worthwhile contribution even before it entered any bigger schemes. The same applies up and down the scale.

We want to reassure local authorities that we are on their side. The amendments would ensure that local authorities were consulted about the general authorisation before it is produced, to ensure that the greatest possible agreement is reached. One cannot be more helpful than that. I am prepared to recognise that previous Administrations have not always been famous for consulting or working with the grain—if I may use that expression—of the rest of society. In this case, however, we are including in the Bill something which Opposition parties often demand. The fact that the Department of the Environment will consult local authorities about the general authorisation before it is published will ensure that it is drafted in such a way as to command the widest possible agreement.

After consultation, the Department of the Environment will issue general guidance to local authorities on how they can utilise the new right and power.

**Mr. Hartley Booth** (Finchley): Will the general authorisation clarify the position? What happens if, for example, Edinburgh, which happens to be twinned with Kiev, or if another town twinned with an eastern Europe town, wants to send a group of special advisers there for some years at a cost of several hundreds of thousands of pounds? Will the guidance note ensure that we are not inadvertently getting involved in huge extra public expenditure?

**Mr. Lester:** There is no possibility of our allowing huge extra expenditure, for the simple reason that the amount covered by the general authorisation is not sufficient to do so. Equally, I cannot imagine any local authority wanting to move in that direction at charge payers' expense because it is prohibited. If it were to take place—and my hon. Friend paints a very alarming picture—it would have to be through the know-how fund, which means that the Foreign Office would have had to approve it because it would be paying. Alternatively, it could happen if Kiev, for example, suddenly found "gold in them thar hills", asked Edinburgh or some other city to send its officials and said that it would fund the project.

If my hon. Friends have any suspicion that the intention is to create junketing or the usual things that we hear about, I beg them to put it from their mind. As the Bill states, it is intended to enable local authorities in Great Britain

"to provide advice and assistance as respects matters in which they have skill and experience"

to bodies engaged in local government anywhere in the world.

9.45 am

The transfers that took place both ways, before we discovered that they were illegal, involved relatively small numbers of people. The example that I cited on Second Reading was that of my own county council in Nottinghamshire, which is linked under the know-how fund with a city in Czechoslovakia where it helped to establish the fire brigade, mainly because the city had none but was surrounded by incredible potential risks due to its industrial production. As a result of that initiative, the Czech lands government have adopted the procedures taught to that town for the whole of Czechoslovakia. Firemen there have received a British training, which has meant great overall improvements.

On Third Reading, I said that the growth in the number of people involved in transfers means that we also benefit. Local authority officials who have had the opportunity to widen their horizons and interests come back as better men and women because they have acquired a much wider understanding of what the world is about.

Under Lords amendment No. 2 the guidance will mean an increase in the number of local authorities wanting to play a part in the exchange of advice, assistance, skill and experience. Because of the way in which they operate, if local authorities are issued with guidance they will be more likely to understand what is on offer and be willing to play a part. The two amendments improve the Bill's acceptance and scope and will encourage more local authorities to participate.

It may be of interest to my colleagues and all those interested in the international concept of Britain's role if I say a little about what happened at the recent International Union of Local Authorities' conference in Toronto. Those who recall my Third Reading speech will know that it was the International Union of Local Authorities' conference, which I attended in 1970, which partly inspired me to take on the Bill, so it is ironic that we are talking about the subsequent conference, which was held in the same place.

I had already suggested the idea that one way in which to proceed was for the Commonwealth to give an example. In the Commonwealth, there are local authorities on every continent, the gap between the rich and the poor, and a common link. It would be useful if the Commonwealth could give a lead in showing eastern and central Europe how the scheme could work. I am pleased to say that at the conference Commonwealth delegates from all over the world came together and the idea received widespread support.

The suggestion now before the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth is that we form a Commonwealth local government forum which would have as its tasks encouraging and developing democracy at local level, facilitating the exchange of experience among local government practitioners within the Commonwealth,

promoting a programme of worshops specifically designed to strengthen the practice and institutions of local government and assisting with capacity building in countries where the strategic development of local government is a high priority. Our local authority organisations could give such guidance and the Government could join in.

It is lucky that the head of the International Union of Local Authorities in Africa is the mayor of Kampala. He is very much seized with the idea that the Commonwealth countries of Africa should come together and facilitate the exchange of ideas. Before anyone tells me that we should beware of such a development, I shall read part of the letter that the Local Government International Bureau has written to the head of the Commonwealth secretariat. It says that the scheme is intended to be a practical development which will be

"a business-like mechanism for doing essentially practical work."

I am delighted to say that the Canadian Federation of Municipalities, which already has a worthwhile scheme, is very encouraged and is working with its own parliamentarians, some of whom have been here recently, to help and to promote the idea. I remember telling the chairman of the CPA that when our delegation goes to Cyprus this year it should raise the matter at the conference and should give it a push forward.

I have given a small example of how the Bill can produce a reaction from many people who can release their energies to help to develop all the ideals for which the House stands. I hope that we all realise that the Bill has been a worthwhile project. It is generally supported. We now want to release the energies of a new sector of people in places far and wide to the benefit of all.

**Miss Emma Nicholson** (Torridge and Devon, West): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate and to support my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester). The Bill is one of the most worth while that I have heard debated on a Friday for a long time. I am happy to have the chance to support it. I pay tribute to the Bill's promoter in the other place, Baroness Flather, who suffered a personal tragedy and so had to defer her promotion of the Bill. It was wonderful to see her back recently in her usual sparkling form. She tabled the amendments in the other place that we are now discussing.

I beg your indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I have to go to my constituency this morning. Our adopted son is unwell and I need to go home to see that he is all right. My absence will not be a result of any lack of desire to hear the totality of the speeches. The Bill is close to my heart and to the heart of my constituency. That will please the Minister because he has family links in my constituency.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe has pointed out the benefits that will be achieved in widening the scope of the know-how fund. I have had the opportunity to see how excellent the know-how fund has been in operation. Immediately the fund began, I visited Poland where I was invited to meet excellent and eminent members of the United Kingdom world of financial management and to discuss the way in which they were offering their services to emergent local and central Governments. As I drove to the dinner party, I was given the guest list and I saw that all the names were Polish.

When I arrived, I asked where the people from the City of London and from local and central Government were. My host said that they had given me the guest list. It turned out that all the Polish names were the names of sons and daughters of people who came to the United Kingdom between 1937 and 1939. They worked for the merchant banks, for local government and for central Government. All their names ended in "ski" and they told me that in London they have a club called the Ski Club which is for the sons and daughters of the Polish emigrés, who are now fully fledged members of the know-how fund and who are working out ways in which our organisations can assist Governments overseas.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe has already covered the know-how fund. I intend to talk about local government initiatives that are already up and running. Their effectiveness will be enhanced and underwritten by the swift and successful passage of the Lords amendments. The Minister knows that I have two district councils in my constituency. The one in the north is Torridge district council and it has a technical twinning arrangement with Gaborone in Botswana. It is a model of the work that my hon. Friend has described to the House.

I shall describe how such arrangements have been working quietly and effectively in recent years. The relationship led to the opportunity for written advice and guidance to be given on a number of topics. The district council has been able to offer practical placements within the authority in connection with university courses being undertaken by Botswanan students in the United Kingdom. That is the first triumph of the relationship which was created by the chief executive, Mr. Richard Brasington, as a result of his experience of Africa before he became chief executive. Students already at universities here have been able to learn hands on about the district council's work in my constituency.

The relationship would be more meaningful and would be strengthened if the Bill were passed. Torridge district council has participated in numerous forums to discuss the Bill especially at the Local Government International Bureau. The carefully worded clauses will be most helpful for our district council in its efforts to provide proper guidance and assistance to emerging local governments in the developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where our systems of local government are held in the highest regard and are seen as the example to copy.

**Mr. Matthew Carrington** (Fulham): I applaud wholeheartedly what my hon. Friend's local authority is doing. It is exactly what is intended under the Bill and deserves as such to be highly commended. I should appreciate my hon. Friend's thoughts on one slight worry. Lords amendment No. 1 imposes an obligation and a duty on the Secretary of State to consult. Would that not cause a local authority additional delay in providing the vital assistance which it has provided in the past? Would it not add another hurdle for that local authority to overcome which would make it even more difficult for it to assist people than was previously the case?

**Miss Nicholson:** Perhaps I should refer my hon. Friend to the comments of Baroness Flather when she moved the amendments that we are discussing. She explained to Lord Graham that the amendments would strengthen the process of consultation and she said:

"By putting it on the face of the Bill the Government want to flag the consultation process and make sure that the final

*[Miss Nicholson]*

outcome is achieved in fullest consultation rather than in any kind of one-sided way."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 14 June 1993; Vol. 546, c. 1286.]

That is the important point.

10 am

**Mr. Lester:** The point about the consultation is that it will be with the Local Government International Bureau. Once the general authorisation is completed following that consultation, the freedom for Torridge and any other authority to operate will be enhanced. The consultation is important at a national level in the drafting of the general authorisation. Local authorities will then operate under that general authorisation much more freely.

**Miss Nicholson:** I welcome that explanation from my hon. Friend. I want to expand, from personal experience, on points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe and those by my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) about consultation being hampering and not helpful.

I had the honour to be the official observer from this House in the multi-party elections in Zambia. The former high commissioner to the United Kingdom from Bangladesh and I were given northern province to look after. For three weeks we hauled ourselves all over northern province which is half the size of England, but has considerably fewer roads.

If you recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government of Zambia thought that they were going to win. I do not want to heighten the hopes of Her Majesty's Official Opposition by that rather challenging statement because it is clear that the Opposition are not going to win here. However, the Zambian Government thought that they were going to win. They were so optimistic that they committed the folly of inviting outside observers. As a result, they lost profoundly because the Zambian people and the Zambian local authorities knew how they should behave.

When I entered a very important local authority head office in Zambia, I saw Government electoral material fiercely displayed all over that office. I could say only that that was not correct. I told the people there that that was not how local authorities are meant to behave. I said, "As you are aware from your links with local authorities in the United Kingdom, local authorities are meant to be strictly neutral."

Against all the odds and with no power, I was able to have posters of that kind taken down in many local authority headquarters. I would not have been able to do that if I did not have the example of local authority behaviour in this country.

I do not believe that consultation will do anything other than strengthen and enhance the process. I am glad to report to the House and to my hon. Friend the Minister that Torridge district council's links with Gaborone and Botswana have led to tentative first steps towards a link between the Association of District Councils in England and Wales and the Botswana Association of Local Authorities. Those burgeoning links would, in the view of our chief executive, be assisted by the clarifications implicit in the Bill.

I hope that, before too long, there will be multi-party elections in Malawi. Broad brush approaches to democracy are wonderful as banner-headline statements. However, it is the detailed work on the ground that implements democracy. We have already seen that the life President of Malawi, despite an overwhelming vote against——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. The hon. Lady really cannot tour the world in respect of democratic elections in relation to the Lords amendments that we are considering.

**Miss Nicholson:** Perhaps I can complete that point within your terms of reference, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The guidance required under the amendments in respect of local authority work internationally is of critical importance in terms of foreign policy. How can local authorities be expected to know the full details of the overwhelming majority against the life President and the way in which the elections will have to be carried out?

The last time that I was in Malawi, the mayor of Blantyre was the most important person that I met. His power is very great. He operates his local authority powers in such a way that the people in his large district will be able to adopt the full democratic process. That is perhaps more important than whether he can immediately be recognised from the face of the Bill. That is an example of Torridge district council's work and it shows why the issue is so important.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe rightly dwelt on the ways in which the know-how fund experience will be enlarged at ground floor level. He referred to sub-Saharan Africa and I hope that I have enlarged and strengthened his point. However, the Bill refers to countries outside the United Kingdom. Therefore, there is no need to focus solely on eastern Europe or on sub-Saharan Africa.

As hon. Members are aware of this, I want to refer to the common economic development strategy which Torridge district council has set up with the Finistere conseil general. That is a link with a county outside the United Kingdom. It is a link with a fellow European Community member. It is a regional link between Torridge district council and a part of northern France. Finistere conseil general and Torridge district council have now set up superb links. The social twinning links already existed and that is not the purpose of the Bill. Nor is it the purpose of the guidance in respect of the amendments. Indeed, Baroness Flather referred to that in the other place.

Agricultural and tourism diversification plans and other forms of economic diversification are being established. Such links and common economic development strategies between members of the European Community would be greatly enhanced as a result of the Bill.

Torridge district council also established links following a visit by a party from Pays de Landivisiau and the Pays du Haut Leon in 1991. It was wonderful to watch the agreement being signed. Such links are fully within the EC's policy and they are strengthened and enhanced by the Bill. I have a copy of the development strategy with me and I should be glad to show it to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe because I am sure that he would be pleased to see it.

Torridge district council also links with a German town and the department of economic promotion in

Landratsamt Bergen. That is another economic twinning opportunity and it will also be enhanced and strengthened by the Bill.

It is critical that proper guidance and consultation are obtained between the Department of the Environment and the Foreign Office in all matters affecting such links. There has to be some overall undertaking of the political, diplomatic and economic problems of the countries with which such relationships are being set up. The Foreign Office, particularly now that it has strengthened the economic side of our embassies and high commissions, has unrivalled knowledge of the countries that will receive assistance. Therefore, I most strongly support the two amendments. Once again, I congratulate the sponsor of the Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe, in the largest possible terms, on his wonderful initiative in bringing the Bill forward in the first place.

**Mr. Carrington:** The House will know that I am a strong supporter of the Bill. Indeed, I spoke about it on Third Reading and on the various amendments. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on having piloted the Bill so far and on ensuring its successful passage through the other place. I add my congratulations to those of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). I am sure that the whole House hopes that her adopted son makes a full recovery and that he is in fine fettle when she arrives home.

I have one or two concerns about the amendments. They are concerns about detail and they raise questions which I hope will elicit explanations about the way in which the amendments are proposed to be operated. I worry about our passion for consultation. Consultation is a wonderful thing. It is important in ensuring that everyone who is to take a decision or be involved in an activity is on side, that everyone understands the implications of what is happening, that they are talking to the same agenda, and that all the wonderful phrases in business talk are implemented and produce the desired result. However, consultation is also an opportunity for people to sit around a table and waste inordinate amounts of time trying to consult and sort out the final vestige of dispute and to reach consensus when what is actually needed is a decision. Often, what is needed is someone who will cut through the red tape, examine a certain activity or proposal and say that it is correct or incorrect.

I worry that Lords amendment No. 1 will tie down my hon. Friend the Minister and make him spend endless hours talking to people to try to get the right result. I understand that the consultation is with the generality of local authorities, whether through a local authority association or through other bodies representing local authorities. However, I will give an example which is close to my heart in that it affected my borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

Some years ago, the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham was a leader in local authority finance. The borough was a major participant in the financial markets —to such an extent, indeed, that it was the major player in the swap markets for some years—to the extent of gambling £6,000 million of the then ratepayers' funds on the swap markets. The London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, in its wisdom, thought that it understood the swap markets and that it would exercise its ability to manipulate those markets to the general benefit of ratepayers in the borough and make a substantial return. Unfortunately, as history relates, the borough lost a very considerable amount of money on the swap markets. That money did not have to be paid by the ratepayers, because we eventually ended up with a very protracted series of court actions which ruled that those financial transactions were ultra vires.

The London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham demonstrated for all to see that it was financially incompetent in the swap markets. However, other boroughs entered into activities in the swap markets in an extremely efficient, competent and correct manner. They used the swap markets in the way in which the swap markets are intended to be used—that is, for hedging the interest rate risk that local authorities have to undertake in the normal course of their business. There was no doubt that some financial activities that were undertaken by other local authorities were correctly undertaken.

Immediately, in one example, we have a conflict between local authorities that are competent in financial management and those which are incompetent in financial management. One can readily see that, as a result of that, if there were to be genuine consultation with the bodies representing local authorities in the generality, there might be a conflict in those bodies over whether they believe that local authorities should be able to give advice to local authorities overseas on how to management their investments and how to manage their activities on the world capital markets, if that were appropriate in the particular case.

10.15 am

I am concerned that we might end up with a very protracted, inconclusive negotiation which would delay the whole process of resolving what general permissions and consents my hon. Friend the Minister would give to local authorities and would ensure that the wonderful activities that are undertaken, as we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West, by Torridge council are delayed. I am sure that that council is very well managed, is highly competent and employs highly professional staff. Those staff would not be able to offer their financial expertise to councils overseas because of my hon. Friend the Minister's understandable worries about other local authorities such as my own borough of Hammersmith and Fulham wishing to enter into the same activities. That might cause difficulties in drawing up general consents, and I would be concerned about that. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister would explain how he proposes to ensure that unreasonable delays do not occur as a result of the amendment.

I am also worried because the amendment lays down a statutory duty to consult. I am not a lawyer, and I do not pretend to understand the finer points of judicial review, but it seems that where a statutory duty is laid down on a Minister and is written on the face of a Bill, in cases of dispute it opens up the opportunity to challenge whether the Minister consulted in the right way, consulted all the people whom he should have consulted, and took proper notice of the advice that he was given in that consultation process.

I am a little concerned about whether some of the activities that the amendment imposes on the process to enable the beneficial effects of this legislation to come into effect somewhat over-egg the process and make it overly complicated, and whether on balance it might have been

better to leave it to the common sense and good will of the Minister and the people in the local authorities and local authority organisations in deciding what activities should be undertaken.

The amendment also raises questions about how long the consultation process can take, because one can imagine that such a consultation process could be protracted. One does not have to take account simply of my example about financial management to see that there may be many disputes about the appropriate activities of local authorities and which local authorities should be able to engage in certain sorts of advice and activities.

If the consultation process takes too long, I can imagine a situation in which a local authority will be on the point of entering into what would be fundamentally a commercial transaction. It will be a local authority going to, say, eastern Europe under the aegis of the know-how funds and it will get paid for its expertise and the work that it does. One hopes that it will make a profit on the work —it will not do it simply at cost. It will certainly not make a loss.

The local authority may well be in competition for the contract to advise the overseas body, so time may be of the essence in terms of whether it can sign the contract to get the business. If the negotiations to provide the general authorisation become too protracted, the general authorisation might not be available to be issued because of the statutory requirements of this amendment and might not be able to be issued sufficiently speedily to enable the local authority to sign the contract that it wishes to enter into in the time frame set up by the other people trying to get the contract as well.

I am worried that the whole process may be too protracted and delayed. However, it is absolutely right that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be required, under amendment No. 2, to give guidance to local authorities throughout the exercise of powers that he thinks appropriate. It is important that specific guidance will be given to local authorities as some of them may think that it is a wonderful opportunity not to be bogged down in the boring minutiae of local government in the United Kingdom and that what they will be doing is foreign travel, staying in fancy hotels and dealing with glamorous international life in giving international advice to foreign local authorities. Some officers in local government may be attracted to that, to the detriment of their local council taxpayers.

One can imagine that the leader of a council might well decide that his or her real objective in life is not to run the council that he or she was elected to run but to assist the development of eastern Europe and that he or she might spend too much time on that. I hope that the guidance given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will ensure that the activities undertaken by local authorities will be commensurate with their ability to undertake those activities and that no activities undertaken will be to the detriment of council taxpayers who, after all, have first call on the expertise and skill of the officers and councillors elected to represent them and to look after their interests.

The criticisms that have been made about the amendments are small compared with the enormous benefits that the Bill will produce and I certainly would not wish to throw out the Bill for the sake of concerns about the amendments. I hope that the problems that I foresee —the administrative problems, the problem of delay and the problem of getting into too much detail and spreading the consultation too wide, to the detriment of decision-taking—can be addressed and that we can be reassured that my fears are not real.

**Mr. Matthew Banks** (Southport): I am sure that the House will join me in wishing my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) a safe and speedy journey. We all hope that her son is returned to good health as soon as possible.

Before I address the Lords amendments, I should like to congratulate Baroness Flather and my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester). For many years, my hon. Friend has taken an interest in overseas assistance to lesser developed nations and I have no doubt whatever that he will be remembered for this Bill in years to come.

The political and economic regeneration of the former communist countries in eastern Europe will be helped considerably by the Bill. However, as my hon. Friends the Members for Broxtowe and for Torridge and Devon, West suggested, the Bill should not concentrate solely on eastern Europe. It should enable local authorities to provide assistance to countries throughout the world, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

The absence of legal clarity and authority has necessitated the Bill. For many years, local authorities have been involved in ensuring that assistance is given to lesser developed countries. However, until today and this Bill, there has not been the opportunity for clarity, which I hope that the amendments will provide. The amendments will facilitate a better working of overseas assistance and a check against some of the excesses, which amendment No. 3 will tackle.

Amendment No. 1 will strengthen the position of local authorities in undertaking much needed and desired overseas assistance as a whole. I welcome such activities by local authorities. Many schemes—my hon. Friends have already drawn attention to some of them—are currently being undertaken under the general discretionary powers available at present. Unfortunately, those general discretionary powers do not have anything other than fairly questionable legal backing. The amendment gives local authorities greater autonomy in providing assistance through the concept of general authorisation. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on some of the points that he raised a few moments ago.

The Bill provide a watertight legal framework in which local authorities can operate. It is an excellent addition to the current arrangements and will prevent costly and bureaucratic delays because local authorities will no longer have to approach the Secretary of State before proceeding. While it is important that there will be a consultation process initially to ensure appropriate general guidance, when that general guidance is laid down there will be a broad watertight framework in which local authorities can operate. Consent is not needed for schemes that have already been approved by the European Community, Government Departments and other international organisations.

I represent a constituency which is part of the borough of Sefton. My hon. Friends have already alluded to the activities of their local authorities. While my local authority has been twinned with a number of areas in Europe for many years, since the fall of the Berlin wall my local authority has taken steps to twin with Gdansk in Poland. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take

note of the importance that I attach to the general guidance ensuring that those local authorities that undertake overseas assistance do so in a way that will have a direct benefit for the countries, as well as possibly for the local authority officers who may travel abroad for an extended period, as my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe suggested. That is vital because otherwise overseas assistance may simply become nothing more than a set of civic duties in which the major of a borough goes overseas without any consequent benefit for the overseas countries.

10.30 am

I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already approved several educational exchanges and cultural links. I hope that when the general guidance is in operation it will ensure that his duties are less onerous in this respect and that it will be clear what local authorities can do without seeking his guidance. Local authority associations saw no need in principle for the Secretary of State to give his consent to individual schemes because, as they said in a briefing, local authorities are

"responsible, democratically elected bodies acting within the law and accountable to the electorate."

However, the local authority associations welcome the general authorisation to proceed without recourse to the Secretary of State.

I commend Lords amendment No. 1 for introducing consultation. It will lead to greater co-operation between local government and central Government. It would be good to see such development across the board. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister could clarify exactly to whom the wording in the amendments refers. Amendment No. 1 says:

"the Secretary of State shall consult with such persons appearing to him to represent local authorities as he thinks appropriate."

Does the amendment refer to local authority associations alone or to other groups? Why are parish and community councils not included?

The amendment says, "as he thinks appropriate." In what circumstances would my hon. Friend the Minister consider it inappropriate to consult local authorities? Greater definition and assurance needs to be provided in that respect, but otherwise the amendment is most worthy and has my full support.

Lords amendment No. 2 is crucial for the protection of local authorities. I hope that it will prevent them from being drawn, perhaps unwittingly, into potentially compromising, dangerous or corrupt alliances especially if they considered specifically granting money for particular schemes of overseas assistance, which, of course, they will not be allowed to do. For example, a local authority such as Lambeth or any other council might be involved in a project that breached national security and provided access to information that could be dangerous in the wrong hands.

**Mr. Carrington:** In mentioning Lambeth, my hon. Friend raises another troubling possibility that he might wish to consider. Lambeth might win a contract overseas to advise a local authority in, say, an innocent country such as Poland or Czechoslovakia on how to avoid fraud and corruption in local government. If Lambeth won such a contract, my hon. Friend the Minister would be worried. But if Sefton, the local authority of my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks), won such a contract, that would be perfectly acceptable. There should be clear guidance on which local authorities can give assistance on what.

**Mr. Banks:** My hon. Friend makes his point in his own way. It is particularly important to have an extended process of consultation with local authorities to ensure that the general guidance is watertight. To take an example from the past, it would have been inappropriate for a local authority to seek to establish links with a Romanian council when not necessarily the Government but perhaps Members of Parliament in the United Kingdom wished to see the back of Mr. Ceausescu. It would also have been inappropriate for Merseyside police to teach Serbian city riot police urban warfare tactics when the United Kingdom Government and Members of Parliament were seeking to end relations as civil war brewed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fulham is entirely right to wish to ensure that the general guidance is watertight. The Secretary of State will be able to provide advice on the pros and cons of a certain project. I hope that when the general guidance has been agreed and is in print he will be happy so to do. That would be less onerous than the present arrangements. We must be assured that the general guidance prevents abuses of the current arrangements.

In recent years, I have been involved in overseas assistance to sub-Saharan Africa. My hon. Friend the Member for Fulham was right to pursue the argument because I am sure that if watertight arrangements preventing the expenditure of large sums were not established, money which went overseas might not necessarily be spent as wisely as we would wish. Indeed, it would be dangerous for any local authority to be given the opportunity to spend money in certain countries in sub-Saharan Africa where money disappears and where the Overseas Development Administration provides tangible aid rather than cash handouts.

I have tried to cover the two Lords amendments briefly. The Bill will be widely welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Overseas assistance can be provided by not only Her Majesty's Government but by local authorities. I hope that the Bill will be an important enabling measure.

**Mr. Eric Pickles** (Brentwood and Ongar): It is a great pleasure to see the Bill back in the House. I shall be brief because I know that other hon. Members are keen to speak. I had the opportunity to attend all the debates on the Bill except the Second Reading. It would be foolish of the House to underestimate the value of the Bill. When it becomes an Act, it will lay for a considerable time the groundwork of our co-operation in a technical sense between local authorities.

The Bill came about because there was uncertainty in the law, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) lucidly explained. Such is the importance of the work that will be undertaken by the know-how funds that I was pleased that the Government agreed to authorise some of the schemes even before the Bill was enshrined in law. By the time of the Second Reading, 20 schemes had been approved. In May, 15 additional schemes were approved in anticipation of the Bill's becoming law.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Southport, I have noticed many of the schemes and much of the activity that

*[Mr. Eric Pickles]*

takes place in eastern Europe and I look forward to seeing many more schemes being established in the developing world, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

There is a growing trend for local government to co-operate globally. Local government officers who entered the service a few years ago would not have dreamt that such co-operation could exist even among relatively small authorities. In my constituency, I have two local authorities—Brentwood and Epping Forest district councils. Both those authorities have considerable experience of dealing with other authorities in all parts of Europe. Recently, the Brentwood borough returning officer went to Cambodia to help supervise part of its election.

The Bill is best described as one which clarifies technical twinning. It builds on the twinning arrangements that have existed between local authorities for a number of years. It provides for a modern twinning, which offers practical assistance and help to local authorities that share similar problems.

Some of my hon. Friends have expressed worries that mayors may jet-set around the world on junkets. I respectfully point out that that kind of behaviour is already lawful and that lord mayors can engage in that kind of activity. I will be brave enough to predict, however, that the Bill will make it extremely unlikely that we will see any junketing.

The Bill is about offering practical assistance. Many countries, particularly those in central and eastern Europe, are starting a process to try to find a way to establish representative democracy within their communities. They also must tackle the difficult problem of dismantling much of the existing burdensome bureaucracy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) expressed worries about unknowing overseas councils being advised by councils such as Lambeth or Hammersmith and Fulham. I suspect that such is their infamy that it is extremely unlikely that any community in the world would be gullible enough to take advice from them. I read recently that a hitherto unknown tribe had been discovered in Borneo, I believe, that was clothed in tree bark and carried a stone round as a god. Clearly, those are the only kind of people gullible enough to listen to Lambeth council. I hope that my hon. Friend, in his winding-up speech, will undertake to ensure that a copy of *Hansard* is sent immediately to those unfortunate people.

What is particularly good about the two amendments is that they demonstrate a willingness by the Government to consult and listen to local government. I do not share the concerns of my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham about delays. The general consents are meant to speed up the process, not slow it down. The fact that consultation is, to use the words of my noble Friend Baronesss Flather, "flagged up" in the Bill is an important statement about the partnership between local and central Government.

That partnership has been subject to strains and stresses in recent years; too often, it has been an unequal partnership, conducted with all the reason and care of a lobotomy being performed by a chain saw. We have good reason to see the Bill as establishing and codifying that relationship, and I hope that it will be built upon.

Lords amendment No. 1 relates to consultation before the general consent is given, and what is pleasing about it is that it will take place between the local authority associations and the Government, at the strategic stage, before the ideas are fully codified. From discussions with representatives of the various local government associations, I know how pleased they are about the level of co-operation between themselves and the Government.

The idea behind the consultation is not to cut through red tape, as my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham suggested, but to avoid red tape being placed in the way of the local authorities and their schemes. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will make it clear that, under that process, it is intended that few applications will have to be made through Whitehall.

10.45 am

Lords amendment No. 2 seems very reasonable. We must bear in mind that most of the schemes will be ones that we come across jointly, in both central and local government. The Local Government International Bureau has a fund of expertise because of experience that it has gained from a number of years of overseas co-operation. It would be unfortunate if the Department of the Environment, which has expertise in local government but not in overseas assistance, were to try to second-guess or shadow the work of the Local Government International Bureau.

I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to assure the House that the kind of consultation and co-operation suggested in the Bill will take place, and that the advice offered to overseas local authorities will be joint advice, given by local government associations and central Government.

There must be a degree of certainty about such local government activity. For the reasons already eloquently expressed by my hon. Friends, however, local authorities are accountable to their charge payers. Those authorities must be able to demonstrate that what they are doing is reasonable and worthwhile.

I commend the two amendments to the House and have much pleasure in supporting my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe on this valuable and important Bill.

**Mr. Keith Mans** (Wyre): I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words in support of the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester). He has done the House a service by introducing the Bill, and I am pleased that it is close to gaining its Royal Assent.

As a number of my hon. Friends have already said, the Bill is most useful. I see nothing wrong in encouraging links between local authorities in this country and those elsewhere in the world. It is clear from the debate that not only eastern Europe but many other parts of the world will benefit from the experience that we have gained from decades, if not centuries, of local government. That experience enables us to provide the technical know-how that is so important to various nations across the world, especially in eastern Europe.

I must admit that I had not thought of councils such as Lambeth advising anybody. My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) dealt very well with such a possibility. When one looks at some of our local councils, one sees that we must be careful to ensure that our reputation for local government is not damaged. For example, if certain of the inner-London councils were to give advice to eastern Europe, that would be damaging to everybody.

It is important, in respect of both the amendments, that we have consultation and guidance between central Government, in the form of the Department of the Environment, and local government, to ensure that we get the best advice about how to proceed. I have been impressed by the range of activities that are already undertaken across the globe, and the range of links between our local government authorities and those in many other parts of the world.

I hope that, as a result of Lords amendment No. 1, the consultation process will include much of the information and knowledge that we have built up over the years. I note that the councils of Strathclyde and Birmingham are already extensively involved in overseas schemes. I hope that that experience can be brought to bear in the consultation process.

The guidance offered must be of a fairly general nature. It should not be too prescriptive. For example, on the Traffic Calming Bill, which I introduced a year and a half ago, there was considerable discussion about how much guidance the Department of Transport should give local councils in coming up with various traffic calming schemes. After much discussion, it was felt that the guidance in that case should be of a general nature to allow individual authorities to come up with their own ideas within that general framework, allowing them maximum opportunity for developing those ideas.

I should like to have similar guidance under this Bill. It is important that local authorities are given enough discretion to come up with their own ideas, provided that those fit into an overall general model.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) mentioned the speed with which the guidance and consultation exercise takes place. That is a bit of a worry. Although the Traffic Calming Bill was enacted two months after Royal Assent, the guidance on it took another 12 months to be issued. I hope that it will not take as long in this case and that the consultation exercise, at least initially, will be relatively brief so that councils can get on with the matters that will be so useful, particularly in eastern Europe.

In that respect, I have more confidence than my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham appears to have about co-operation between central Government and local government. We always see where it has not worked well, but we do not always see the majority of cases in which co-operation is effective between chief executives, individuals at the Department of the Environment, and individual councils. That co-operation is working all the time and, generally, it is highly successful.

I am reasonably confident, therefore, that, provided that the consultation and guidance exercise is carried out reasonably quickly, it will act as a spur to local authorities, give them the necessary background information, and result in this initiative getting off the ground quickly.

I am therefore very much in favour of both the amendments and hope that they go through relatively quickly.

**Mr. Roy Thomason** (Bromsgrove): Like other hon. Members I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on introducing the Bill. It is a timely and appropriate measure and I support the Lords amendments before us.

It is appropriate that I should briefly intervene in this debate as I was, for many years, a member of the board of the Local Government International Bureau as well as being chairman of the Association of District Councils. I was, therefore, much involved in early consideration of issues relevant to the Bill. I was extremely concerned at the initial lack of responsiveness shown by Ministers' reluctance to consent to schemes that involved local government talking to eastern Europe, in particular. With other colleagues from the world of local government, I often lobbied Ministers at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of the Environment to press on them the good work that it was possible for local government to do in disseminating best practices and encouraging local democracy in eastern Europe and other parts of the world.

It was, therefore, with great delight that I noted that Ministers listened to representations made by local government. They have given every encouragement to the development of schemes disseminating best practice and information. I was worried that, initially, other Governments were encouraging their local councils to establish contacts and I felt that it was important that British local government should work with foreign Governments because we have something special to offer.

There is much criticism of the relationship between central Government and local government in this country, and of how local government operates, but we should be proud of the work undertaken by men and women who sit on councils throughout the country and of their achievements. We should be proud of their contribution to community life over the years. Naturally, bad examples exist and my hon. Friends have rightly referred to those. Nevertheless, the majority of those who serve in local government undertake a difficult task very well. It is important that other nations are made aware of our experiences.

I welcome the amendment proposing consultation, which is the essence of the thinking behind the Bill. The Government listened to local government in working out schemes and went on to listen to their concern about limiting powers. They have, therefore, supported my hon. Friend's measure and consulted, throughout the Bill's passage, with local government associations and the Local Government International Bureau. I pay tribute to Ministers' work in that respect.

It is important that the general authorisation will be wide enough to avoid excessive scrutiny, because we do not want every scheme to be placed on a Minister's desk and studied in detail. I hope that, as a matter of course, it will include all know-how fund schemes and that de minimis rules will apply so that small schemes can be proceeded with without undue delay or the bureaucracy of formal consideration at departmental level.

I hope that, within certain limitations, local government staffing costs will be excluded in calculating the value of schemes, because it is difficult to quantify the work that may be done in committee and clerking time in considering such measures, and the assistance that is given within an authority in working out and progressing a scheme. I accept that it should not be seen as an excuse for some authorities to engage considerable numbers of staff devoted specifically to developing international work.

I welcomed approaches made in the late 1980s by members of local government in eastern Europe, a number of whom I met. They were seeking ways of understanding the development of their role. I met councillors who did not understand the basics of democratic principles; how

*[Mr. Roy Thomason]*

they should open a dialogue with their electors; or what sort of relationship they should have with the management of local government. All those concepts were strange to them. They had no idea how they operated.

We need not only to disseminate information on the operation of democracy at ground floor level but to help with the development of local government associations so that they can establish the dialogue to which I referred earlier, which allows local and central Government to talk together. Councillors also need assistance in management to ensure that democracy is not discredited by inefficient management. I hope that the schemes will assist in that way, too.

I invite my hon. Friend the Minister to say that the guidance issued under amendment No. 2 will be clear and will encourage the development of the important links already being established.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry):** First, I congratulate and thank my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on taking the Bill through the House. We have had a full and considered debate and he and other hon. Members, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), have explained the benefits of the Bill and the contribution that it can make. The tearing down of the Berlin wall and the disintegration of the Warsaw pact led to greater opportunities for local authorities here to share their experiences with countries in eastern Europe and elsewhere. My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West gave an account of what the chief executive of Torridge district council, Mr. Brasington, is doing. That shows that a contribution is being made not just in eastern Europe but throughout the developing world.

My hon. Friends the Members for Fulham (Mr. Carrington), for Southport (Mr. Banks), for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles), for Wyre (Mr. Mans) and for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) made useful contributions to the debate. I hope that I shall be able to deal with them before I am interrupted by the traditional Friday morning 11 o'clock point of order sound bite.

Amendment No. 1 requires the Secretary of State to consult local government representatives before giving a general authorisation. In practice, that will mean consultation with local authority associations.

11 am

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister was right for once. As you are probably aware from reading this morning's newspapers, there has been a further disclosure. The Minister of State Home Office, the hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd), has been referred to as the fourth Minister making representations on behalf of Asil Nadir. A day or two ago the Attorney-General refused to give us additional information. Does the Attorney-General intend to come to the House today to tell us exactly how many other Ministers, perhaps Treasury Ministers, are involved in making representations on behalf of Asil Nadir in return for the money that he has given to the Tory party? Will a statement be made?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Chair has had no request from any Minister to make a statement on anything.

**Mr. Pickles:** Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has raised that matter on his own behalf and not on behalf of a national newspaper. May we have——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. There cannot be anythng further to that point of order because I have ruled that there have been no requests for statements on anything.

**Dr. Lewis Moonie** (Kirkcaldy) *rose*——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I make it clear that I will not accept any further points of order asking whether I have had any requests for a statement, because there have been none on any issue.

**Dr. Moonie:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I crave your indulgence. *The Scotsman* has today leaked in detail the Government's White Paper on local government reform for Scotland. We await that White Paper with interest and it is highly controversial. Have you been informed about the leak and, in view of it, do the Government intend to advance the publication of the White Paper so that hon. Members may have a chance to see what *The Scotsman* has already seen?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Madam Speaker has made it quite clear that official documents should first be presented to the House and has deprecated the leaking from any source of any form of documentation that should first be presented in this Chamber.

**Mr. Baldry:** Before we were interrupted by English and Scottish sound bites, I was dealing with the amendment which requires the Secretary of State to provide local authorities with guidance about the exercise of the Bill's powers.

We have made it clear throughout that we intend to consult local government on the content of the general authorisation and issue guidance on the working of the Bill. Some of my hon. Friends asked for assurances and undertakings that there would be common sense guidance and consultation. I am happy to give that undertaking. The guidance and consultation will be with all local authority associations, including the National Association of Local Councils which represents parish and town councils as well.

The relationship that has developed during the passage of the Bill clearly demonstrates the generally close working relationship between central and local government. The debate has been full and detailed. My hon. Friends have raised some pertinent issues and the amendments have been properly balanced and examined. I commend them to the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Lords Amendments Nos. 2 and 3 agreed to.*

# Bail (Amendment) Bill

*Lords Amendments considered.*

## Clause 1

PROSECUTION RIGHT OF APPEAL

*Lords amendment:* No. 1, in page 1, line 12, leave out ("High court or").

**Mr. Michael Stephen** (Shoreham): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This amendment and the others before the House today are the result of a constructive dialogue in another place with which I have had the honour to be associated as the originator and sponsor of the Bill and which has resulted in a much improved Bill, I shall be brief because there are other matters for debate this morning.

The amendment relates to the judge to whom the prosecution may appeal. When the Bill left this House, the prosecution would have had a right of appeal to a judge of the Crown court or the High Court. That was because I wanted the largest possible number of senior judges to be available to hear appeals, because it is obviously of great importance that an arrested person should have his appeal determined as quickly as possible.

However, it has been drawn to my attention that if the prosecution were able to appeal to a judge of the High Court it might involve an application for civil legal aid, which can take rather longer to grant than criminal legal aid. That might result in the arrested person not securing legal representation until a late stage in the 48 hours allowed for the appeal to come on. I was, therefore, content to accept the amendment and I commend it to the House.

**Mr. Peter Luff** (Worcester): I think that hon. Members will welcome the Bill, which has been widely welcomed in the other place. The outrage felt by the general public about the events that led to the necessary introduction of the Bill is widely understood. However, I am concerned about the amendment and about some other aspects of what has happened to the Bill since it left the House without a full Second Reading. That concern stems from the fact that we seem to be steadily narrowing the scope of the Bill to which the House gave an unopposed and undebated Second Reading. I particularly question why we think it necessary further to narrow the scope of the Bill by excluding the possibility of a prosecution application to a High Court judge. I fear that, in the absence of a Second Reading debate, their Lordships have not had sufficient guidance about how the House felt about the Bill. Had they been guided by that debate, they might have understood our real sense of outrage.

Is the whole Bill and not just the amendment broadly drawn? I refer especially to instances that have occurred recently in my constituency. As I understand it, amendment No. 1 will bring no comfort to the police in West Mercia, where a driver was recently convicted of driving while disqualified and for a number of related offences. He was granted bail and subsequently committed eight further similar offences for which he was also granted bail. The Crown court judge criticised that, and I believe that he would have been concerned that the Bill would not help the police or the prosecuting authorities in that case.

Only on Thursday this week, in my police force area an individual was arrested at 4 am for burglary from a public house. He was already on bail for an identical offence. By 4 pm on the day of his arrest, 12 hours later, he was on bail again. Nothing, either in the Bill or in the amendment, remedies such a problem.

I understand that the problem is even worse than that. Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the police are obliged to release people on police bail if certain conditions are not met. The seriousness of the offence provides no ground for resisting bail. Therefore, even those charged with murder, if the conditions are not met, can and must be released on bail.

The scope of the Bill has nevertheless been narrowed time and again. I understand that in the Standing Committee of this place the clause relating to the presumption of the right to bail was dropped from the Bill to enable it to make progress. I fear that this amendment is yet another example of dropping something difficult from the Bill to enable it to make progress. Is my hon. Friend absolutely sure, in his heart of hearts, that this amendment, which narrows the scope of the Bill still further, is essential to enable the Bill to reach the statute book rapidly, as we wish it to do?

From what I have read of the debates in another place, and also from my hon. Friend's remarks, I understand that we are being obliged to make this amendment to the Bill because of concern that the legal aid system is unable to respond quickly enough to requests for new legal aid certificates. The view that High Court judges should be included in the scope of the Bill is, I believe, widely shared in all parts of the House. We are, therefore, being invited to make bad legislation because of bad administration. It is unsatisfactory that the House should find itself in this position. I am sure that all of us regard it in principle to be just as important that High Court judges should be included in the scope of the Bill. However, because of the different legal aid requirements relating to Crown court judges and concern about the speed of issuing legal aid certificates, we are dropping that provision from the Bill.

I ask my hon. Friend for particular guidance on the type of offender who is likely to gain the bail now, without the right of a prosecution appeal, as a result of this House accepting the amendment. I suspect that, sadly, the House will have to accept the amendment, if only to ensure that the Bill makes the progress that we wish it to make.

As I have repeatedly said, I am concerned that even before the Bill began its passage through Parliament its scope was too narrow. The scope of offences that it included could have been widened, to the great satisfaction of the people outside the House who are so concerned about the increase in the number of offences committed while offenders are on bail. Despite that concern, we are restricting the scope of the Bill.

I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to reassure me that my constituents need not be concerned if acceptance of the amendment leads to a particular class of offender being more likely to be released on bail than would otherwise have been the case. If I receive such an assurance, I suspect that, reluctantly, I shall be able to support the amendment. Nevertheless, I must register my real concern that a Bill which was already too narrowly drawn has been virtually emasculated. I am most concerned that we should do nothing to weaken its strength even further.

**Lady Olga Maitland** (Sutton and Cheam): I warmly welcome the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) has reflected the great anxiety of the public about this issue and has responded to it in a way that is widely welcomed both in this House and outside.

I agree with what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff), who regretted that we did not have a Second Reading debate on this most important Bill.

I welcome the amendment, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester pointed out, there is danger when the High Court is excluded, for reasons related to the terms on which criminal and civil legal aid is granted. The right of appeal must be fast; it must also be accessible. Sufficient Crown court judges must be available at all times. An alleged offender could, for example, be held over a weekend. Custody for him will continue unless the matter is dealt with properly, Therefore, it is appropriate that Crown court judges should be available at all hours, even at weekends. Justice must be seen to be properly done.

11.15 am

The principle of the right of appeal is important. The fact that so many persistent offenders get off scot free when let out on bail must be addressed. There is so much public frustration about it. It is appropriate that we should respond to newspaper headlines. One of these reads:

"Uproar as deaths case joyrider is jailed."

That headline refers to Christoper Lewin, aged 19, who was already on bail for two other driving offences when he killed two small children, Adele Thompson, aged 12, and Daniel Davies, aged nine. Adele was flung 90 ft and Daniel 50 ft. Their crime was collecting pennies for the guy.

It is tragic that the magistrates were not sufficiently alert when Lewin appeared in court six weeks earlier on other joyriding offences. I believe that we should rewrite the English language. We should refer not to joyriding but to deathriding. What is done kills and maims and is destructive. The expression "joyriding" is, I fear, deeply offensive to all those who have been so badly injured and to the relatives of those who have been killed.

When Lewin appeared in court—this is a good example of why the amendment is so important—the police had objected with some vehemence on two previous occasions to his being freed, because he had already been charged with reckless driving and other offences. I wonder whether the magistrates had full access to his previous record. Furthermore, do magistrates have access to the full records of all the people who appear in front of them?

The reason for the deep offence caused to the public and for their strong feelings about the amendment is that car-related crime is a curse. In my Sutton constituency, which I have made something of a landmark—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—there is as much car crime as anywhere else in the country. It is what I would describe as a textbook example of the sheer scale of the problem that we face.

When arguing about the need to keep persistent offenders in custody, we should bear in mind that we are referring not just to those who have committed murder or rape. In their way, car-related offences are deeply serious, because of their sheer scale, and reinforce the need for the amendment.

I do not want to underestimate the seriousness of charges of violence—for instance, the horrific case of Anna McGurk of Gloucester who was raped and murdered by a man on bail. Bail had been granted, despite strong police objections. Again, such a case justifies the amendment. The details of how that offender came to be freed are terrifying. He had been arrested for the brutal rape of a 20-year-old woman just 24 days before he murdered Anna. Had the amendment been in force, the police appeal against releasing that man on bail would have succeeded and Anna would still be alive.

In February, there was the case of the murder of Cathy Ainsworth. She would not have died had her boyfriend, Adrian Black, not been released on bail. The amendment would have kept him in custody and he would never have been able to shoot Cathy.

The Association of Chief Police Officers has long been aware of the seriousness of the problem. In February 1992 the Home Office produced a paper, "Offending on Bail: Survey of Recent Studies", which suggested that, on average, reoffending crimes increased by 26,000 between 1985 and 1990.

My experience in my textbook example of Sutton is of a demoralised police force. In their professionalism, the police find it frustrating and have almost given up opposing bail. They know that most criminals who appear in court will be released, despite their criminal history and convictions. The police are right. Those young men are temporarily getting off scot free—and in the present climate, they will do so almost for ever. They swagger off and commit more offences.

If offenders are remanded in custody quickly enough, that can have a sobering effect on young, would-be criminals—especially those in their young teens. There is a lot to be said for catching them young and giving them a clear understanding of what offending can really mean, especially in cases where a caution is not suitable.

Magistrates should be schooled more, and be more in tune with appropriate courses of action. Recently, there have been many cases of magistrates misreading the situation. I am glad that the Bill will apply not only to murder and rape but to car-related offences. It may be argued that keeping more people in custody will produce an extra cost for the taxpayer. I maintain that the sheer scale of reoffending more than justifies the taxpayer paying for more custodial accommodation.

**Mr. Michael Trend** (Windsor and Maidenhead): Does my hon. Friend agree that magistrates have been discouraged in recent years from committing offenders to gaol in certain circumstances? Some have become demoralised and have left the Bench because they felt that they were not encouraged to take the steps that my hon. Friend advocates.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. In some cases, magistrates do not have the power to commit a persistent juvenile offender to a secure unit, because that decision must be referred back to the local authority to make. I hope that the amendment, or perhaps another Criminal Justice Bill, will introduce for magistrates the right to extend their powers. We should listen to magistrates who say that they are being held back from their course of duty.

I heard from members of the juvenile Bench in Sutton that their frustration is supreme, and that the arrogance and rudeness of young offenders appearing in court is beyond belief. They behave almost as though they are making a fingers-up gesture to the judiciary. One boy and

girl were so determined to turn the hearing into a circus that they insisted on making a long and affectionate farewell in full view of the court. Nobody could do anything about it. There is insolence beyond belief.

The right of appeal to a Crown court will certainly help to tighten up a difficult situation. There is public support for such a measure. The public are beginning to buck. There are 33 different pressure groups campaigning on behalf of criminals, but only one, impoverished, victim support scheme. It may be impoverished, but it has the support of the public at large. The silent majority are saying, "We have had enough, and now we shall have the last word."

I have great faith in public opinion. More often than not, the public have their fingers on the pulse and know when things are going wrong long before bureaucracy understands and responds. In the west country in February, 2,000 people took to the streets of Plymouth. The local newspaper ran the banner headline:

"City march against rising crime. Enough is enough."

A campaign, "Citizens against Crime," was launched.

All of that emphasises the amendment's importance. My hon. Friend the Minister is looking at me with an eagle eye, but I am becoming used to that. The amendment is totally justified in reflecting public concern.

**Mr. Roy Thomason** (Bromsgrove): I join in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) on introducing the Bill and guiding it through the House thus far. It is a great tribute to the influence of the Back Bencher in producing legislation that responds to public concern.

I have every sympathy with the Bill's provisions and with amendment No. 1, but perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister can help to overcome one or two of my concerns. I am alarmed that Crown court judges may not always be as available as their High Court counterparts to deal with matters of urgency. I trust that my hon. Friend the Minister can assure me that Crown court judges will be available within the 48 hours required by the measure.

Can my hon. Friend confirm also that the appeal procedure will be subject to some standardisation in respect of the yardsticks used to determine whether it is appropriate to grant bail? As one who practised occasionally as a junior solicitor in magistrates courts before the Bail Act 1976, I recall that there were often wide variations between the standards that different courts applied in granting or not granting bail and in the conditions that they imposed. Will the appeal procedures facilitate the setting of standards that will provide guidance to magistrates on when they should or should not grant bail and on conditions that they might want to

**Mr. Hartley Booth** (Finchley): Is it my hon. Friend's experience, as it has been mine, that the availability of High Court judges makes them much more accessible than Crown court judges? We are debating the availability of judicial time at short notice.

**Mr. Thomason:** That is the point. I trust that it will be possible to establish a procedure to ensure that Crown court judges are made available for the purposes of the Bill when it is enacted.

I understand the purpose of amendment No. 1 and the need to address the question of legal aid because of the delays that might arise should an application have to be made to a High Court judge through the civil system, which might lead to an accused person being held in custody longer than is envisaged by my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham. Nevertheless, we need clear assurances about the judicial availability of Crown court judges.

11.30 am

May I return to the point that I was making a moment ago and invite my hon. Friend the Minister to confirm that information will be disseminated to magistrates to assist them in determining yardsticks for appeals? It is important that this measure is seen as part of the overall Government drive to deal with the problems of law and order. I trust that we shall see it as an important brick of the wall to protect the community against the increasing threats of disorder and the alarming cases to which my hon. friends have referred.

I invite the Minister to confirm that sufficient accommodation is available to hold accused persons, which there was not a few years ago, in the prison and police services to ensure that excessive overcrowding will not arise in the fairly limited number of cases to which the Bill is likely to apply.

**Mr. Matthew Banks** (Southport): I should like to follow the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason), because I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister is aware of the genuine concern that the amendment might be interpreted as a signal that prosecution appeals are not being given the highest judicial consideration that those who are concerned about the principle of a prosecution right of appeal should like.

Hon. Members are a little concerned that the amendment would restrict the hearing of appeals to Crown court judges. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister would address that point.

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean):** Some of my hon. Friends may wish to say a few further words on the amendment, but it might be helpful if I were to give the Government's view now.

I listened carefully to the valid points made by my hon. Friends and to the appalling, tragic cases that my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) mentioned. The amendment would prevent prosecution appeals from being heard by judges of the High Court, restricting the hearing of appeals to Crown court judges.

Some of my hon. Friends expressed concern that the Bill had not been given a Second Reading in the House, but it has returned from another place in a slightly different state from that in which we dispatched it. The Bill has benefited from the scrutiny of the other place and there has been an opportunity to reflect on the implications of what a prosecution right of appeal might mean to our criminal justice system.

I say "our system" and I am sorry that the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) has departed because he would have confirmed that under Scottish law the prosecution has had the right of appeal against bail decisions of the lower courts for a long time. Indeed, without wanting to detract from the drafting skills of my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen), I detect some similarity between the Bill and the prosecution right of appeal that operates in Scotland.

That is all to the good. Those who are concerned about the rights of the individual in law and the fact that the Bill

*[Mr. David Maclean]*

will, if enacted, give the prosecution the right to appeal against a court's decision to grant bail might draw some comfort from the fact that the system has been shown to work well in a part of the United Kingdom.

I make no apology for spelling out what powers the Bill and the amendment would endow on the prosecution. The defendant will be held in custody while the prosecution and defence prepare their arguments for the appeal hearing. There are strict limits on the time that the accused will be in prison pending the appeal. We should recognise, however, that the Bill will, in principle, deprive someone of his liberty who has already been granted bail by a court. I believe that from the outset the House has accepted the consequence, which was evidenced by the support for early-day motion 1134, which was tabled on Wednesday 13 January and signed by more than 100 hon. Members. That support is a measure of the concern throughout society about the problems of offending on bail. My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam vividly drew our attention to some horrendous incidents.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham on introducing a Bill which addresses an element of that concern—the need for a safeguard against decisions to grant bail that, in the past, have had serious and, at times, tragic consequences. That is not to say, I hasten to add to my hon. Friends, that the 500,000 bail decisions that are made each year in magistrates court are under suspicion: they are not. The Government have great respect for members of the community who are willing to play a part in the administration of justice by becoming magistrates. They are called on to make many judicial decisions, of which bail is perhaps the most difficult. At that stage of the proceedings, they will know little of the offence, the circumstances under which it was committed or the person alleged to have committed it.

The public have expressed concern that the granting of bail in inappropriate circumstances has brought bail and the courts into disrepute. That point was put to me by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) two days ago. I replied that, if bail was abused, it should not be granted, and I hope that he agrees with that.

The Bill provides a safeguard that will ensure that where the prosecution has objected to bail, but it is granted by magistrates, the prosecution will be able to apply, in certain circumstances, to a Crown court judge to rehear the arguments for and against bail. I listened to my hon. Friends' concern that High Court judges are removed from the face of the Bill by the amendment. The initial inclusion of High Court judges was a genuine attempt to provide as large a pool as possible of appellate judges so that appeals should never be delayed for want of a judge to hear them.

It was pointed out in another place that if an appeal over bail is made to the High Court and legal aid is applied for, it has to be on the basis that it is civil, not criminal, legal aid that is made available. Criminal legal aid can be granted by the courts whereas civil legal aid is available only from the Legal Aid Board. Assurances were offered on behalf of the Legal Aid Board that if an application is made for civil legal aid for the defendant to be properly represented before a High Court judge hearing an appeal, it will be granted over the telephone and, if necessary, retrospectively. But those assurances were not enough to satisfy the concerns that were voiced in another place about whether such legal aid would be made available in sufficient time.

As, in practice, the vast majority of such appeals would have been heard before a Crown court judge anyway, and in the light of concerns about legal aid, it seems right that the issue has been resolved by removing the words "High court or" from the Bill. It means not that the High Court will not continue to take a close interest in the operation of all aspects of the bail process, but rather that the appeals will be best brought on quickly and efficiently before a judge of the Crown court. Judges will, I am sure, be able to hear such appeals before the start of the day's court business and will want to do so in order to reduce as far as possible the time spent in custody by the defendant.

In this context, it may be right to refer to the views expressed by the Lord Chief Justice—I assure the House that he has been consulted, although with less time for deliberation than we would have wished—on the introduction of a prosecution right of appeal via the Bill. He came back to the Government on one point in particular: to ask that everything possible is done to ensure that defendants spend as little time as possible in prison, pending the hearing of the appeal.

To that end, the Lord Chancellor's Department proposes to consult the judiciary with a view to providing guidance to the effect that, in cases where the time limit would, but for the formula provided in the Bill as it now stands, expire on a Saturday or a public holiday, everything possible should be done to expedite the hearing. If that proves impossible, consideration will be given to the possibility of making special local arrangements to bring on the appeal on a Saturday or public holiday. That encompasses the desire expressed by the Lord Chief Justice, on being consulted about the prosecution right of appeal, that everything should be done to avoid the necessity of defendants being held in custody for long periods. Lord Taylor said that if the appeal is launched just before a weekend or bank holiday he would expect it to be heard wherever possible on the same day.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) asked about the criteria for granting bail. The Bail Acts already set out the criteria to be applied when considering the granting of bail. The bail process projects which were set up last November are considering ways of ensuring that feedback of decisions made in higher courts reaches magistrates. In addition, the Judicial Studies Board review of training, commenced in 1992 by the previous Home Secretary, should lead to much greater standardisation of those decisions.

My hon. Friend, the Member for Bromsgrove also asked about prison accommodation. The right of appeal will of course be used only in rare cases. The Government are satisfied that the increase in the number of remands in custody will be small and can be accommodated within the present prison system.

We may deal with the question of guidance when debating a later amendment, but I can say now that we intend that there shall be guidance for Crown prosecutors so that they may know the special circumstances in which they would raise the right of appeal. That may reassure hon. Members who may be concerned that the right of appeal will be raised in frivolous or unnecessary cases.

In the light of my comments, I hope that my hon. Friends will be satisfied that my hon. Friend the Member

for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) has not only introduced a good Bill but that this amendment is eminently sensible and should be supported.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Lords amendment:* No. 2, in page 1, line 13, at end insert—

("(1A) Subsection (1) above applies only where the prosecution is conducted—

(a) by or on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions; or

(b) by a person who falls within such class or description of person as may be prescribed for the purposes of this section by order made by Secretary of State.")

**Mr. Stephen:** I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 7.

**Mr. Stephen:** These two amendments are taken together because they deal with the question of who should be allowed to appeal on behalf of the prosecution. When the Bill left this House, it would have been possible for a private prosecutor to appeal and possibly—although it would have been rare—for the right of appeal to be used vindictively—and that a defendant could have been held in prison for a maximum of 48 hours. That was clearly not desirable and was not intended. I am, therefore, happy to accept an amendment to restrict the right to appeal to a public prosecutor.

Lords amendment No. 2 defines a public prosecutor as a prosecutor who acts on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions or

"a person who falls within such class or description of person as may be prescribed for the purposes of this section by order made by the Secretary of State."

The reason why paragraph (b) of the amendment is in its current form is that it is not possible in primary legislation to define all the classes of person who may from time to time be prosecutors acting on behalf of the public. At present, one can think of prosecutors who prosecute on behalf of Customs and Excise, the Inland Revenue, the Serious Fraud Office, the Department of Trade and Industry and many others. As Governments change over the years, those agencies may also change and it is, therefore, necessary to provide power by statutory instrument to prescribe who shall be a public prosecutor for the purposes of the Bill. That is covered by Lords amendment No. 7.

I have no difficulty in accepting the amendments, and I commend them both to the House.

11.45 am

**Mr. Thomason:** It would be helpful if the Minister could tell the House which bodies he would consider appropriate to be included within paragraph (b). For example, will that well-known body the Serious Fraud Office, which seems to command the headlines at the moment, be one of those which should properly be included? Will the income tax authorities also be appropriate, or does the Minister believe that, initially, inclusion should be restricted to the Director of Public Prosecutions as mentioned in paragraph (a) and perhaps the Crown Prosecution Service which, by implication, is presumably included in paragraph (a)?

I wish to make it clear that I in no way oppose the amendments, both of which appear to be entirely appropriate and reasonable. It is clearly essential that no vendetta should be pursued in terms of someone seeking to incarcerate an accused person unnecessarily by virtue of a private prosecution.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to confirm that, in a wider sphere, the Government will take action to discourage persons from reoffending while on bail. It would be helpful for us to know that the Government are examining various issues of similar nature and perhaps we could be given guidance to help us to determine our response to the amendments.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** I welcome the amendment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thompson) rightly said, it is extremely important that when a man's liberty is at stake he does not become the victim of a vendetta. It should be clearly specified that it is for the Crown Prosecution Service to pursue an appeal.

It must be said that in Committee the reference to the prosecution was rather woolly, and it is appropriate that it should be clarified.

The difficulty with private prosecutions is that a tremendous amount of emotion is involved. I am thinking of the people who come to my surgeries and who are outraged about a small car accident—two bumpers can cause more anguish than anything else. If people get to the stage where they feel that a custodial remand is appropriate, the matter could spin out of control, so it is proper that we should be clear in our own minds that it is the Crown Prosecution Service which controls this aspect.

I rather wish that the right of appeal by the Crown Prosecution Service already existed. I will tell the House of an incident which happened only on Monday. A juvenile offender, a member of my Sutton burglary posse, was put into a Glasgow secure unit, well away from his family and Friends. He managed to wriggle out of the unit by claiming that he had been sexually harassed. His lawyers pleaded that it was unfair for him to remain up there. With the assistance of social workers, he was transferred to another unit further south and nearer his home, and—surprise, surprise—he absconded en route. We must have strict controls of custody and we must ensure that they are safe.

It is, therefore, appropriate that the Crown Prosecution Service should follow the matter through. It should not be up to private individuals to bring prosecutions which could spin out of control and turn into a vendetta. I welcome the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister is coming to my constituency to meet the police and the community and to hear about their grave concerns at first hand.

**Mr. Booth:** I shall make a comparatively narrow point. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister would address this point when he winds up. About £3 billion to £4 billion worth of property is lost annually through shoplifting. I do not know the exact proportion, but I know that a very substantial proportion of cases are handled through private prosecutions. It is not a question of private vendettas being pursued by rich individuals bringing private prosecutions. The prosecutions are brought by well-known stores such as Marks and Spencer and C and A in Oxford street. Many hon. Members know about such cases.

The stores pursue cases involving great values. The important point is that they remove a grave burden from the Crown Prosecution Service by bringing private

*[Mr. Booth]*

prosecutions. Are those private prosecutors, who bring a series of cases to court, to be unable to benefit from the Bill? I hope that the use of statutory instruments under Lords amendment No. 7 will address that point. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will tell me that the issue will be addressed. Some £3 billion to £4 billion worth of property is involved. The cost of prosecuting is currently borne by the private sector. We do not want that burden to be shifted to the taxpayer as a result of lack of consideration of the Bill. I hope that my hon. Friend will address that issue.

**Mr. Luff:** I am not used to catching the Chair's eye as rapidly as I did on the first occasion on which I spoke this morning and I should like to correct a discourteous omission. I did not pay a sufficiently fulsome tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) for introducing the Bill. My slightly churlish remarks about narrowing the scope of the Bill were not intended to be a criticism of him. I pay tribute to the way he has responded so pragmatically to the concerns expressed so that his Bill can make rapid progress. Casting my eye across the Chamber, I express the hope that that pragmatism may be mirrored later to enable us to make rapid progress on another important Bill.

I find it my duty, once again, to play the role of devil's advocate. I suspect that I shall not bring my devil's advocacy to its logical conclusion by voting against the amendments. However, I am once again concerned that we seem to be narrowing the scope of the Bill so that it can make progress. To summarise, here we go again.

I have two reservations about the amendments, which deal with the question of who can appeal against the granting of bail. I am concerned about whom the statutory instrument will define and the method by which we choose to define who may appeal against the granting of bail. I shall deal first with the question of the legal persons who will be able to make the appeal. We should go back to the fundamentals of the Bill.

I understand that those who are rightly concerned about civil liberties have four principle anxieties about granting anyone the right to appeal against bail. The first is the civil rights implication of holding an unconvicted person in custody by an order of the Executive against a judicial decision. We can all imagine people's worries about that. The amendment would confer almost exclusively on the Executive the right to appeal against a judicial decision, so the concern is not addressed in it.

The second matter, which the House should be sure it is incorporating into legislation, is the time limits for appeal. We have all agreed that the limits must be long enough to allow adequate time for a rehearing to be arranged and prepared, but that they must limit the time in which the defendant is held in custody. The amendment does not address that anxiety, so the House need not concern itself.

The third concern about the prosecution right of appeal, which is relevant to the amendment, is that the power might be used for offenders who do not represent a risk of serious harm to the public. I have heard what my hon. Friends have said about the nature of the offences that might be involved, such as neighbourly disputes, which led to the anxiety in another place that the right under the Bill could be used capriciously by individuals. I do not share that anxiety, because the offences covered by the Bill are so tightly drawn—too tightly drawn, I submit—that that concern is not relevant. The charges that could be brought capriciously against individuals for whom bail could be refused would relate to more modest offences which are not covered by the Bill.

**Mr. Thomason:** Does my hon. Friend agree that there may be cases where a neighbour discovers, for example, that the person living next door has a history of crime? He might make serious allegations that would be covered by the Bill. He might seek for reasons of retribution the incarceration of that person under the Bill by making an application. We all know how bitter neighbourly disputes can be. Someone could seek to use the provisions. Will my hon. Friend reconsider his point? It is surely appropriate that private prosecutions should be excluded from the Bill.

**Mr. Luff:** My hon. Friend anticipates my speech. I shall deal with the matter later and if my hon. Friend feels that I have not dealt with it sufficiently, he will, I am sure, intervene.

The fourth concern that the civil rights lobby might have about the prosecution right of appeal is that an extra hearing would increase delays in criminal proceedings. I understand that point, which reflects the point which my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) expressed. As he said, people might be incarcerated unreasonably because the criminal proceedings are protracted. We must satisfy ourselves that the amendments are appropriate to address that concern.

I do not believe that we should be unduly concerned on two and half of those counts about who is given the right to appeal against the granting of bail, but we must be concerned on the fourth count, for the reasons that my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove has suggested. We should satisfy ourselves that we are granting the right people the right to appeal. The risk is that deliberate delays may be created by individuals who hold grudges against others. However, is that a real concern? I have already used the word "capricious" to describe the fears of their Lordships. I believe that there are two grounds on which we should consider the possibility of reintroducing private prosecutions into the Bill.

I have already given my first reason for such a reintroduction. It relates to the relatively narrow offences that would generally concern neighbourly disputes. The second is a rather broader concern, which has been expressed in the media recently, about the reduction in the number of prosecutions being brought by the police.

We have seen reports about the growing number of cautions which the police are issuing against alleged offenders. In those circumstances, private individuals may increasingly wish to bring serious prosecutions, on good public order and safety grounds, against people who have committed the kind of offences described by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland).

12 noon

Because of the concern about the rising tide of cautions and the falling number of prosecutions, individuals may wish to bring more serious charges than has hitherto been the case and against people who may be in danger of causing serious harm to the general public if they are not held in custody. We must satisfy ourselves about the amendment to exclude the right of private appeal.

**Mr. Thomason:** Is not my hon. Friend making the point that I made earlier? If the number of private prosecutions increases, which he believes might occur in view of the difficulties to which he has referred, it follows that the opportunities for abuse are, therefore, that much greater. If more people seek private prosecutions, there is a greater possibility that the mechanisms available in the Bill will be abused by people seeking to pursue personal vendettas. Does not my hon. Friend believe that the limitations that the Bill imposes on private prosecutions are very appropriate?

**Mr. Luff:** My hon. Friend is right. Once again, he has anticipated the flow of my argument. If we are to grant the denial of the right of a private individual to pursue an appeal against the granting of bail, the general public must be satisfied that their safety is not being put at risk by that perceived increase in the number of cautions rather than prosecutions being brought by the police. The public must feel that they have no need to bring such prosecutions. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will assure me that we can feel comfortable with granting that right of appeal, in the light of that very understandable concern that the public are likely to have in the light of media reports.

With regard to who has the right of appeal, as opposed to how we define who has the right of appeal, how close does the amendment mirror practice in Scotland? Who is defined in Scottish law as having the right to appeal? I fully accept that there is no need for total convergence between Scottish and English law. Such a task is probably beyond the intellectual capacity of the House and the current position reflects traditions dating back many hundreds of years. However, it would be a perceived injustice if such a right for a private individual to appeal existed in Scottish law, but not in English or Welsh law.

With regard to amendment No. 7, I am concerned about the mechanism by which individuals or legal bodies, which are given the right to appeal, are defined. Must we proceed by way of a statutory instrument? Would it not be better to insert in the Bill a simple provision along the lines, "such persons as the Secretary of State may, from time to time, determine"?

Conservative Members believe very strongly in the principle of deregulation. Wherever possible, deregulation should apply to the law as much as to the business of government or commerce. Would it not be an easier and more flexible mechanism to allow the Secretary of State simply to determine, on a pragmatic and day-to-day basis, who should have the right to appeal? That would save parliamentary time, which is a precious commodity.

That idea may commend itself to the spirits on the Conservative Benches who do not favour the ever-encroaching jungle of regulation in matters of law and in business and commerce. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to reassure me on those points.

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** Like my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff), I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) on introducing the Bill. I would particularly like to take this opportunity to congratulate him on his flexible approach. He was right to believe that he should be as flexible as he was in Committee to ensure that the Bill reached the statute book.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will respond to the latter part of the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester. We are discussing these amendments because far too many young offenders reoffend while on bail. It is significant that research undertaken by the Northumbrian police shows that an overwhelming number of offences of burglary and car theft have been carried out by a very high percentage of young offenders while on bail. It is, therefore, entirely right that powers should be available to appeal against the granting of bail.

However, that right should be strictly controlled and not abused. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) said, effectively to deprive someone of his liberty, contrary to the judgment of a magistrate, is a significant step. However, bearing in mind the current situation, such legislation and provision is absolutely essential.

Amendment No. 2 restricts the right of appeal to prosecutors acting on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions. I believe that that means the prosecutors of the Crown Prosecution Service. However, other people may prosecute serious cases in which a right of appeal against decisions to grant bail might be appropriate. For example, it might occur in cases brought by Customs and Excise or the Serious Fraud Office.

Amendment No. 7 will allow the Secretary of State to prescribe by statutory instrument which other prosecutors should have a right of appeal. My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester referred to deregulation. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to make it quite clear that the means by which the amendment seeks to list such prosecutors will work satisfactorily and effectively. That list of prosecutors must be capable of being readily amended. I hope that the Minister will make it clear how, if he wants to amend that list, he proposes to do that. I hope that he will make it clear that such amendment could be scrutinised by Parliament.

It is vital that the amendments are incorporated in the Bill. As I said earlier, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to ensure, following on from the excellent pilot schemes—five of which I am aware of—in relation to investigations into the way in which decisions are taken on the granting of bail, that we can use the Bill to crack down on people who are granted bail too readily and, sadly, given the opportunity to reoffend very quickly.

**Mr. Eric Pickles** (Brentwood and Ongar): I did not intend to speak on this matter, but, following the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) about amendment No. 7 and whether a statutory instrument is an appropriate way to define the list of prosecutors, I join my hon. Friends in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) on bringing this important Bill before the House.

Instinctively, I support any suggestion of moving towards deregulation—it is sensible and I am politically committed to it—but I recognise that many regulations represent the very fabric of a civilised society. They reflect the way in which an individual is taken care of and protected by the state. However, this important Bill takes liberties from the citizen. We have heard of the dreadful cases that caused the Bill to be brought forward, but there is another side to the matter where, an offender having been granted bail, the prosecution decides to appeal.

We have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) some very persuasive reasons about why the list should not be available to

*[Mr. Eric Pickles]*

everyone. The list is important, and we must guard it. If we have a duty, it is to protect the rights of the citizen. We should not allow the rights of the House to scrutinise who should be on the list to be given over lightly.

No matter how benign, good-natured, diligent or vigilant the Secretary of State is with regard to the protection of the rights of the citizen, the rights of the citizen should be protected by the House. We should have an opportunity to object to the kind of prosecutor who would be on the prescribed list. I hope that, no matter how persuasive and coherent the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove, the Minister will resist the suggestion that the House should not decide who should be on the list.

**Mr. Maclean:** This has been an important debate on a very important amendment. One of the concerns expressed about the prosecution right of appeal as contained in the Bill is that it offered no limitation on the sort of prosecutor able to launch the appeal or the circumstances in which the appeal might be brought. It has never been the Government's intention—nor has it been that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove—to see all sorts of petty offenders swept up under this right of appeal. I should, therefore, like to link the limitation on the type of prosecutor, which has been addressed by the amendment tabled by Lord Bethell in another place, with reassurances about the limits on the types and circumstance of offence that will see this right of appeal brought into action.

The amendment specifically addresses the limit on the type of prosecutor who has the power to bring those appeals. The point of the amendment addresses other concerns, in particular about the circumstances in which the appeal is brought and the time limits of the appeal. The amendment makes it clear on the face of the statute that the right of appeal against a decision by a magistrate to grant bail is limited, and rightly limited, to certain types of prosecutor, principally those of the Crown Prosecution Service. That will ensure control and supervision over the bringing of those appeals, which I am sure all hon. Members will welcome.

Not only will the launching of appeals be controlled but, because there exist in the Crown Prosecution Service degrees of experience and seniority, appeals will be vetted to ensure that those which are eventually brought before the courts are well founded. Any that are not well founded and yet still brought before the courts will very quickly become the object of the judicial displeasure of the circuit judge hearing the appeal. The high standards that the Crown prosecution sets itself will ensure that that is guarded against.

**Mr. Thomason:** Will my hon. Friend confirm that decisions about appeals will be made at a relatively senior although local level within the Crown Prosecution Service? I am concerned that there is a danger of delegation to relatively junior prosecutors who might not have the experience or the wisdom of some more senior members who might take a wider view.

**Mr. Maclean:** On the face of the Bill, the decision to appeal needs to be made orally on the spot. It is not possible to refer it upwards to a very senior prosecutor. But the Crown Prosecution Service has made it clear that it would want to look at that decision as soon as possible and, where practicable, make sure that, before the appeal is confirmed, it has been looked at by as senior a figure as possible.

However, I would not like any suggestion—I am sure that my hon. Friend did not mean this—that Crown prosecutors are not capable of making that important judgment. There is always a temptation to want such decisions to be made by the person at the very top. That is not administratively possible; nor is it necessary. I take the rather tough view that if someone is good enough to be a Crown prosecutor and if that person is good enough to decide to drop appeals, he or she should be good enough to decide to prosecute or proceed with an appeal. Of course, there will be guidance to help prosecutors to come to the right decision on making an appeal in the appropriate circumstances.

The amendment gives, on the face of the statute, the power of appeal to the day-to-day prosecutors of the Crown Prosecution Service. My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove was concerned that other organisations might be included as well as the Crown Prosecution Service itself. We intend that there shall be some other organisations included, and I assure the House that we will carry out with the authorities concerned full consultation on which other bodies should be prescribed.

12.15 pm

At present, the likely bodies are the ones that my hon. Friend suggested—for example, Customs and Excise. My hon. Friend will agree that it is terribly important for such an organisation to be included, because it prosecutes some of the most dangerous classes of criminal it is possible to imagine—for example, those involved in international drug-trafficking. Those who are brought before the courts often have links with other countries and often have resources salted away overseas and are a pretty nasty, violent bunch of people. Such people have a tendency to intimidate their associates, they have an attachment to violence, and the House would agree that, when Customs and Excise officers fear that a defendant might abscond or obstruct the course of justice, it would be right for them to have that right of appeal. Other organisations that could be considered are, of course, the Inland Revenue and the Serious Fraud Office, which deal with major fraud cases. Of course, we would want to consult on the list before coming to the House with it.

It is important that Parliament has the proper opportunity to scrutinise the list and examine all those potential prosecutors, and object if necessary. There is also the advantage that should the list of prosecutors need changing from time to time, primary legislation would not need to be changed; we would propose to do that by statutory instrument.

The powers contained in the Bill have brought some unease to some quarters. I do not consider that unease to be well founded, for the Bill offers a safeguard against the sort of decisions which, in the past, have brought tragic consequences and about which there is grave public concern. The amendment limits the prosecutors who will have the power of appeal against bail decisions to those whom I have described and over whom there is proper control. On that basis, I consider it an improvement in the Bill.

I am sorry that I have to disappoint my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) and my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff), who made a very

well-argued speech and said that private prosecutors should be reinserted. The Bill does not allow appeal by any prosecutor, other than the CPS or those prosecutors who will be designated by the Secretary of State. That is an important safeguard to ensure that the power is not exercised lightly and is properly regulated.

I apologise unreservedly to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove for my appalling memory lapse—I could not remember his excellent constituency of Bromsgrove a few minutes ago. I said that we will have guidelines for the Crown Prosecution Service. My hon. Friend was worried that even the Crown prosecutors might not be senior enough to have the responsibility to deal with such matters.

**Mr. Booth:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Maclean:** I shall give way in a moment. It is important, therefore, that we do not lightly extend the right of private prosecution to other individuals, even to the most respectable and best shops in the country.

**Mr. Booth:** Would my hon. Friend at least consider the nub of my point, which is not necessarily that private prosecutors—even those for grand stores such as Marks and Spencer—would have the right of appeal in the circumstances of the Bill? In the light of the gravity of the shoplifting situation in Britain, would private prosecutors be allowed, at the point at which the appeal has been refused, to be associated with the Crown prosecutor who is on duty in the magistrates court or to bring forward their own police evidence which is always associated with such private prosecutions? Would the Department consider whether the police could be associated with an application?

That matter needs some consideration. I have not formulated a solution in precise detail, but the issue needs to be addressed because it is important for a number of major stores. I remind the Minister that this often relates to a long series of offences, not simply the trivial theft of a packet of cigarettes.

**Mr. Maclean:** I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend said. I am not clear about what he means when he asks whether I will allow the Crown prosecutor to be associated with the appeal. I assume that he means that we would permit a system whereby the private prosecutor could go to the Crown Prosecution Service and say, "Will you take up this case for us and will you use your right of appeal against a case where we think it should be done?" My hon. Friend rightly said that some consideration would be required before we could contemplate making that move.

We must also bear in mind that we want the right of appeal to be exercised in serious cases. The Crown prosecutor would need to be careful about over-exercising his right of appeal in shoplifting cases, regardless of how aggravating or annoying they may be or how much theft is involved. The magistrates courts and the Crown court need to consider carefully whether they wish to keep people in prison in shoplifting cases as opposed to more serious cases involving violence against the person. I am not suggesting that shoplifting is not serious.

Giving private prosecutors the right to appeal will not necessarily mean that more people who are charged with shoplifting will be kept in prison over night. I will certainly consider what my hon. Friend said. Perhaps he will agree to write to me, or the organisations involved will flesh out their concerns and ideas so that we can consider them properly.

It might be appropriate for the Secretary of State to designate prosecutors acting on behalf of bodies or organisations. Any proposals to extend the power to other bodies would need to be subject to close parliamentary scrutiny. The House would want and expect to scrutinise any list of alternative prosecutors.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester asked about the Scottish legal system—who the prosecutors were and whether private prosecutions were allowed. Of course, the Scottish legal system is different from our system south of the border. In Scotland, all prosecutions are conducted by the procurators fiscal and they alone have the right of appeal.

My hon. Friends the Members for Worcester and for Southport (Mr. Banks) said that the Secretary of State should decide who should have the right to appeal. I have already covered that matter, but I emphasise that the power of appeal is a significant one which can result in a defendant being granted bail by magistrates and being held in custody at the instigation of the prosecution. It is a serious matter when someone who has been granted bail is then denied his right to liberty at the instigation of the Executive. Therefore, it is important that Parliament should have the opportunity to consider those to whom the power should be extended. We envisage an order subject to negative resolution. We all know that if Parliament is content with the Secretary of State's proposals, we do not need to waste parliamentary time. However, if any hon. Member is concerned, there is an opportunity for debate.

I wish to deal with the limitations that will be set on this power of appeal—the limitation on who will have the power to bring the appeal and the limitation on the circumstances in which it can be brought. We all agree that appeals against the grant of bail should be brought only in the most exceptional cases, not simply when the prosecutor disagrees with the magistrate's decision. Mere satisfaction should certainly not be enough. It is intended that this power will be used only in rare cases in which there is a serious public interest. My hon. Friend the Member for Finchley may say that shoplifting is a matter of serious public interest.

There have been attempts to draft an amendment that sets a test higher than that in the Bail Act and yet is comprehensible to the courts. We have not found a satisfactory amendment to date and, if the Scottish experience is anything to go by, I do not think that we shall find one. For the Crown Prosecution Service, we plan to follow the formula that provides that the procurator fiscal must abide by guidelines giving detailed advice on the circumstances in which an appeal may be brought.

It is important for hon. Members to understand why the decision has been taken not to accept on the face of the statute a test of, say, serious risk to the public. That ground was debated in Committee between my predecessor—my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack)—and Labour Members. The same arguments apply now as then. We must have a right of appeal that will apply when a person has been charged with serious offences and the prosecutor believes that there is good reason to suppose that the defendant will abscond. We must have a right of appeal that will allow serious threats to property to be guarded against.

*[Mr. Maclean]*

The guidelines intended to be used by the Crown Prosecution Service will in the first place make it clear that the Crown Prosecution service foresees that the number of places in which it will exercise the right of appeal is small. The broad effect of the guidelines is that the right of appeal will be used only in cases of greatest concern where there are substantial grounds under the Bail Act on which the court could refuse bail.

Prosecutors will apply an over-arching test of whether there is a serious risk of harm to members of the public or other significant public interest grounds. The public interest grounds will not be used to justify appeals in minor cases. In making their assessment, prosecutors will take into account the seriousness of the offence. Examples of such cases might include offences of violence where weapons are used, serious sexual offences where there is an element of violence and serious arson cases.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove asked me what action will be taken to stop people from offending while on bail. That is a serious matter. The Government share the justified anxiety about offending on bail and they are committed to action. Our aim is both to prevent such behaviour and to punish those who disregard the law and abuse the trust placed in them by the courts by offending when they are let out on bail.

12.30 pm

In addition to introducing legislation that will make offending on bail an aggravating factor for the purposes of sentencing, in the past 18 months we have introduced a package of practical measures to combat the problem. An additional £8 million over the next three years has been provided to fund bail hostels and bail support schemes, the better to supervise those on bail and to improve the training given to magistrates on bail decisions. We will ensure that bail notices make clear the penalties that people will face if they offend on bail.

One of the most important of the recent initiatives is the establishment of five action research projects tasked with finding ways of improving the bail process. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) told me only two days ago that that was exactly what was needed. I have news for him. One of the projects set up last autumn operates in Newport.

Accurate and up-to-date information is crucial to every bail decision. Therefore, we have asked that the projects should focus on the quality and quantity of information. The action research is intended to result in best practice guidelines for those involved at every stage of the bail decision and in particular to highlight ways of helping the court to make the necessary risk assessment for each defendant.

My last point in response to the anxiety of my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove about those who re-offend on bail is that a national bail issue steering group has been established to bring together senior representatives of justice agencies and other organisations with an interest, including the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Bar Council, the Law Society, the Association of Chief Officers of Probation, the Justices Clerks Society and the Magistrates Association to encourage inter-agency work. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend will be satisfied that a programme of action has been established to deal with those who offend on bail.

I hope that I have satisfied my hon. Friends that the amendment is sensible and should be accepted.

**Mr. Stephen:** I am grateful for the constructive and positive speeches that have been made by hon. Members in the debate on this group of amendments. My hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) was worried about private prosecutions. However, private prosecutions are not normally brought for the serious cases to which the Bill is intended to apply. I have never intended the Bill to apply to small thefts and other minor offences, even though they may come within the category of offences set out in clause 1(1).

Nevertheless, there may well be circumstances in which, by reason of the persistence of the shoplifting or other circumstances, it is inappropriate for the person to be released on bail. In those circumstances, I hope that, perhaps prior to the hearing, the retailer or other private prosecutor would speak to the Crown Prosecution Service to enlist its support, and that if necessary the CPS would take over the case and itself appeal against the granting of bail. I hope that that will satisfy my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) drew attention for the second time to the narrow scope of the Bill. I share his concern that the Bill had to be so narrowly drawn, and I hope that he will understand that in a private Member's Bill and especially a ten-minute Bill, if one seeks to achieve too much, one will achieve nothing.

I am particularly sorry that I had to drop clause 2 of my Bill which, while it did not shift the burden of proof in bail cases generally, would have focused on people who had previously committed offences while on bail. It would have let such people know that if, in future, bail, was considered, it would be for them to prove that they should have bail, rather than, as now, for the prosecution to prove that they should not have bail.

I give notice to my hon. Friend the Minister now that if those provisions or something similar are not included in the Government's Bill which I hope will be introduced in the autumn, I and other hon. Members will move amendments to ensure that the matter is taken into account. We want to make it more difficult for persistent bail offenders to obtain bail in the first place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester also mentioned civil rights. He was right to do so. But we must consider the civil rights not only of the person who is arrested but of all those people who are the victims of crime committed by people on bail. I have sought to strike a fair balance in the Bill between the civil rights of the arrested person and those of the public.

My hon. Friend was right to draw attention to the increasing use of cautioning instead of prosecution. That also causes me anxiety. If the reason for it is that it is thought that there is an insufficiency of prison places, that is not a good reason for proceeding by way of caution. There may well be good reasons for giving a caution, but that is not one of them. We could easily decrease the prison population by repealing the Theft Act 1968, but no one would wish to do that. I believe that it is the first duty of any Government to protect their citizens against internal as well as external attack, and if prison places have to be made available to accommodate those who are a danger to society, such places must be made available.

The cost to the taxpayer has been referred to. Of course it is costly to the taxpayer to keep someone in prison. I am

appalled by some of the costs of keeping people in prison that we have read about recently. I understand that it can cost up to £2,000 per night to keep someone in prison or in police cells, whereas I understand one can stay in the Ritz hotel for £130 per night. I believe that the public is being ripped off, and that the Home Office should look seriously into the cost of accommodating people in prison.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester also mentioned his concern about whether the list of designated prosecutors should be drawn up by a Minister or subject to parliamentary scrutiny. I disagree with him on this point. We have a duty to consider any extension or proposed extension to the list of designated prosecutors for the purpose of the Bill, and I would ask him to support amendment No. 7.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) mentioned the report of the Northumbria police, which is a valuable piece of research into offending while on bail. It concluded that nearly 50 per cent. of detected crime was committed by persons while on bail. I am sure that all hon. Members will agree that that is a horrifying statistic.

The Home Office has published its own report and its figures suggest that the problem is less serious. However, I doubt whether that is the case, because the Home Office figures do not include those persons who were cautioned rather than prosecuted, or those offences to which persons have admitted while in prison for other offences.

My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned that only circuit judges would hear the appeals. Notwithstanding Lords amendment No. 1, to which we have already agreed, I do not think that such will be the case. As I understand it, every person who is appointed a justice of the High Court is, ex officio, a judge of the Crown court. Therefore, the same individual could be made available, if necessary, to serve in the Crown court to hear appeals of this kind. Lords amendment No. 1 would not reduce the number of judicial personnel available to deal with those cases; all it means is that, under the Bill, one would not be able to appeal to a justice of the High Court sitting as such.

I was glad to hear what my hon. Friend the Minister said about the Government's commitment to bail research projects, bail information schemes and the like. We can all agree that it is far better that magistrates should get the bail decison right in the first place than that there should be an appeal under my Bill.

Having listened carefully to all the contributions that hon. Members have made, I consider nevertheless that it is right to restrict the right of appeal under the Bill to a public prosecutor, and I would therefore invite the House to accept amendments Nos. 2 and 7.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Lords amendment:* No. 3, in page 1, line 15, leave out from ("prosecution") to ("granted") and insert ("made representations that bail should not be")

**Mr. Stephen:** I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 4.

**Mr. Stephen:** I can deal with this amendment briefly: it is purely a matter of semantics. In all my years at the Bar, I have always heard of the prosecution "objecting" to bail, and I have never heard anyone object to the use of the word "object". However, one of their lordships felt that that was unduly confrontational and, as it makes no difference to the substance of the Bill, I am happy to accept the amendment that he wished to press.

**Mr. Thomason:** My hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) said that this was a matter of semantics. I am always wary of semantics because sometimes an issue that is considered to be merely superficial covers something more significant. I wish briefly to seek an assurance on those matters.

My constituents, like those of many other hon. Members, are worried about law and order. They are alarmed at persistent offenders and anxious about juvenile offenders. We want to know that changes in the Bill will not weaken its provisions, that the Government are firmly behind law and order and that those issues are being dealt with. They are the worries of the people whom we represent, so it is right that we give them proper attention. It is, therefore, essential that we do not simply nod through a change in this important legislation which, it may subsequently transpire, weakens it significantly. I do not see that it is likely to be so weakened, but I seek an assurance on that.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister also assure me that police bail will not be used more than at present as a result of the Bill's introduction? How does he see the role of police bail developing?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I hope that the Minister will not go down that road because it would be out of order.

**Mr. Luff:** I wish to echo some of the thoughts of my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) and to be absolutely clear that that change of words, which their lordships describe as "more felicitous", will not be some kind of lawyers' paradise and open up the loopholes that concern my hon. Friends. I am worried about it. Superficially, it seems plausible and acceptable. It verges on political correctness rather than anything else. Will the Minister assure me that there is no diminution in the effectiveness of the Bill as a result of the amendment?

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** I take issue with a couple of comments made by my hon. Friends. The word "objected" would have created no ambiguity whatever. I seek clarification from the Minister that he is happy with the amendment. The word "objected" would be far better than "made representations that bail should not be" granted.

There is a precedent for using the word "representations" in paragraph 9(a) of schedule 1 to the Bail Act 1976. My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned that Act. Without wishing to move too far away from the amendments, may I contrast them with what my hon. Friend referred to? The word "objected" is far better because it is not ambiguous. Although this is a matter of semantics, it is important.

It was suggested earlier that powers to object to the granting of bail and the right of appeal may not necessarily be used in many cases. If so, that also worries me. Allowing the prosecution right of appeal against granting bail was originally put forward as a response to tragedies such as the Hagan's case where, despite the prosecution's objections, a defendant was granted bail with serious and fatal consequences.

The provision would effectively give the prosecution a second opinion on bail in a higher court where it was felt

*[Mr. Matthew Banks]*

that bail had been granted without satisfactory regard to exceptions to the right to bail—that is, that the defendant was likely to abscond or commit further offences.

My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned, under previous amendments, the Scottish legal system. North of the border, the prosecution already has a right of appeal against bail decisions. The possibility of introducing a similar provision in England and Wales was under consideration before my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) introduced his Bill in November 1992. The measure for north of the border had considerable support and it is entirely right that there should be similar legislation south of the border. I appreciate that there are civil liberty implications, but my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham was entirely right when he suggested that we should remember the victims of crime and their rights, rather than concentrating far too much on defendants.

The amendments and the Bill strike the right balance. Of course I want to see time limits for such an appeal, because it is vital to allow sufficient time for an adequate rehearing to be prepared, but it is also vital to minimise the time that a defendant is held in custody.

12.45 pm

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I advise the House and the hon. Gentleman that the amendment's only effect is to substitute the word "representations" for "objected" and the debate is limited to that. I hope that hon. Members will bear that in mind.

**Mr. Banks:** I am grateful for your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I hope that when the Minister responds he will make it quite clear to the House that, in view of his comments on earlier amendments, he will take action to amend the Bail Act 1976 to reverse the presumption in favour of bail for certain categories of defendants. I hope that he will satisfy me and my hon. Friends that the wording of the amendments will ensure that there is no ambiguity whatever. If the Crown Prosecution Service, on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions, wishes to object to the granting of bail the objection must be quite clear and there should be no mealy-mouthed, wishy-washy wording.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** I support the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) about semantics as to whether the word "representations" or "objected" is used. The public do not want wishy-washy words. *[Interruption.]* They certainly do not get them from me. People will not be reassured if words such as "representations" are slipped into the Bill, because it will look as if our resolve is weakening. I trust that the Minister will make sure that our resolve is not weakened and will reassure the House about that. After so much work, public representations and the initiative and enterprise of my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen), it would be devastating if the legislation were derailed by semantics in the other place.

**Mr. Maclean:** I assure my hon. Friends that I would never be associated with mealy-mouthed or wishy-washy words. I expected them to know that. I have been exonerated from that potential crime and I have positive proof, because, after I replied to an Adjournment debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), he congratulated me and was completely satisfied with all my responses to his robust speech. My hon. Friends will appreciate that, as I was able to satisfy my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield on the Government's law and order policy, I could not have been using mealy-mouthed, wishy-washy words.

The Government do not oppose the removal of the word "objected". That does not alter the original meaning of the Bill, but renders it more consistent with the terms of the Bail Act 1976. The use of the phrase

"representations that bail should not be granted"

makes it clear that the prosecution is exercising no more than its right in law to influence the decision of the court about whether bail should be granted.

The phrase "objected to bail" is in common usage and is not in itself open to ambiguity, but I suggest that it has been improved on. Notwithstanding the fact that the Bill is about the possibility of the prosecution appealing against the bail decision, the fact remains that the decision to grant bail is a judicial one. Any review of bail decisions belongs to the court.

I hope that I have satisfied my hon. Friends the Members for Worcester (Mr. Luff) and for Southport (Mr. Banks) that there is no ambiguity. I can also assure my hon. Friend the Member for Southport that I want to look at the Bail Act 1976, but I am sure that he would not expect me to give the firm promise that he demanded of me. I hope, therefore, that he will not consider me wishy-washy if I do not instantly accept his suggestions.

I agree so much with the short but passionate speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason)—that this amendment is part of the Government's package for cracking down hard on crime. I am sure that he was here for yesterday's debate on law and order, though he was not called to speak in it. I hope that he realises from yesterday's debate that the Government announced tough measures.

Furthermore, it was in this chamber only on Tuesday that we took immediate steps to replace the unit fines system and restore the full power of magistrates to impose the sentences that they think just, in order to take into account the previous convicions of offenders, including those who have offended while on bail. In their case, we took the opportunity to make it an aggravated offence. We shall include other tough measures in the next Criminal Justice Bill to ensure that what this amendment seeks to do is done: that we have a proper crackdown on those who deserve to be cracked down against.

**Mr. Stephen:** I have listened carefully to what has been said about this amendment. I could not agree more that the House and the Government must act, and be seen to act, resolutely against those who offend against our laws. Nevertheless, I remain of the opinion that Lords amendments Nos. 3 and 4 make no substantial difference to the Bill and will have no adverse effect on it. Therefore, I invite the House to accept them.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Lords amendment No. 4 agreed to.*

*Lords amendment:* No. 5, in page 1, line 23, leave out ("one hour") and insert ("two hours").

**Mr. Stephen:** I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 6.

**Mr. Stephen:** In dealing with this final group of amendments, may I crave the indulgence of the House for one moment to pay tribute to the spirit of co-operation in both this House and another place which has made it possible for my Bill to reach this stage. It is a great honour for me, as a new Member, that both Houses of the United Kingdom Parliament have seen fit to approve this, my first private Member's Bill, particularly since it was only a ten-minute Bill. In particular, I offer my thanks to the Minister of State, Home Office, and his predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), the Home Office officials, the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and the 116 right hon. and hon. Members who supported my Bill by signing early-day motion 1134. Support came from positions as far apart in the political spectrum as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman).

Amendments Nos. 5 and 6 relate to an issue which we debated in Committee: whether the written notice of appeal which has to be served by the prosecutor should be confirmatory only, or whether failure to serve that notice would bring the appeal process to an end. We took the view in Committee that it should be confirmatory only, but, after further debate and discussion in another place, I am persuaded that it should be an integral part of the appeal process.

I have, therefore, been prepared to accept that if the written notice is not served within the prescribed time limit, that should in effect bring the appeal to an end. In agreeing to that, I was concerned that there should be sufficient time for busy members of the Crown Prosecution Service to prepare and to serve the written notice of appeal on the magistrates court and on the person concerned. I therefore insisted that the original one-hour time limit should be extended to two hours, and I shall be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm that that limit is considered by the Crown Prosecution Service to be practicable. If the written notice of appeal is not served within the extended two-hour period, the appeal would be deemed to be disposed of and, by virtue of clause 1(5), the person concerned would be released from custody.

**Mr. Luff:** In view of my earlier remarks about the way in which an admirably robust Bill that was not wishy washy in any way has been weakened by its progress through both Houses, it would be churlish of me not to welcome the one group of amendments that reverses that process and redresses the balance between the victim and the alleged perpetrator in the way that the whole Bill sought to do.

It is entirely right that we should agree with their lordships in these amendments, which strengthen the Bill and make the clause more robust. I welcome them unreservedly for that reason. However, I emphasise the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) that where the Bill has been weakened in order that it may reach the statute book speedily, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will examine the possibility of Government legislation in Government time in the next Session, to restore all the Bill's original intentions. Otherwise, I have no hesitation in supporting the amendments.

**Mr. Booth:** Earlier, I was permitted to intervene on minor matters on several occasions, and until now I have refrained from congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen). I do so now, and having heard him address the House this morning, I appreciate his skill and acumen—as I am sure other hon. Members do—in presenting his Bill. I am proud to be associated with it as a sponsor, because it addresses an issue which is long overdue for reform. It is only sad that it is not a Government Bill but comes from the Back Benches—but it is not in any way diluted for that. At least the Government have given it a fair wind.

From my little experience, of many years ago, as a prosecutor, I may say that the amendment is at the nub of the balance between the exercise of liberty and the practicalities of the workings of magistrates courts. The question whether the time allowed for an appeal should be two hours or longer should be addressed. I am fearful that the practicalities of magistrates courts may mean that two hours is not quite long enough—but only by a short while. I shall explain why.

The Bill is admirable, though it should be noted that such legislation was not necessary in the past. I recall being able, as a prosecutor, to call police witnesses who had to say only that they objected to bail on the ground of the gravity of the series of offences, that the defendant had previous convictions, or whatever, for bail to be invariably refused. That is not the case today. In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) spoke of the revolving door—the vast number of defendants who leave the docks of magistrates courts and immediately commit further offences.

1 pm

The chief superintendent who is responsible for my constituency tells me that a vast number of offences in my part of London are committed by people who are on bail. So, on the one hand, the Bill's provisions to tackle that problem are thoroughly welcome but, on the other, I am concerned about the amendment. Those who have practised in the magistrates courts know that a trial may last two or three hours during a morning or afternoon and that the court clerk may be loth to interrupt it. If bail is refused, the prosecution may decide within minutes of the court adjourning that it wishes to appeal. However, a new case may have been called and the court clerk may not want to interrupt it—nor may it be in the best interests of the subsequent defendant to do so. If a case were adjourned for example just before half-past ten o'clock, the resumed application for bail might not be heard until one o'clock. I do not believe that two hours is long enough. Similarly, a typical afternoon sitting of a magistrates court is two and a half hours. I contend, therefore, that the amendment should provide for two and a half hours. Concern for the victim, which all hon. Members have expressed, demands that we reconsider the amendment and provide for two and a half hours rather than two hours.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** I do not want to hold up the business because I know that there are more matters to consider today, so may I briefly say that I accept the amendment, but with some reservations? I support what my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) said about the period being two and a half hours.

*[Lady Olga Maitland]*

I have an awful feeling that there may be a loophole, whereby an appeal may fail on purely administrative grounds. As I understand it, an appeal is valid only if it is confirmed in writing within the time specified. It is academic whether it is two hours, two and a half hours or four hours. What worries me is that it somehow or other invalidates the first application for an appeal, which is made orally in court. That is the moment from which the appeal should be valid, and its confirmation in writing should be merely an administrative factor. If, however, it is the judgment of the House and of the Minister that this is the way to proceed, I trust that the two-hour limit will be sufficient.

I trust also that we shall understand the problems that are experienced by the Crown Prosecution Service, which works extremely hard and is responsible for many cases each day. It would be most unfortunate if, because of a slip up, someone who should be detained in custody were released.

It is in general, however, an excellent Bill. I support the spirit behind it and very much appreciate the support given by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) because, without it, I doubt whether we should have been able to proceed as satisfactorily. I also appreciate the Government's enormous interest in the increasing concern about crime and their backing for my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen).

There is, however, one matter with which the Minister still needs to deal—the tricky and difficult problem of persistent juvenile offenders under the age of 15. He is well aware of public concern, and it would be reassuring to hear his thoughts. Many persistent juvenile offenders get off scot free and are not held in custody when they should be, but society has a right to be protected from them.

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** I listened carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) and, although I applauded his flexible approach in Committee in ensuring that the Bill was dealt with expeditiously and will become law, I am very worried about this amendment.

Following the remarks made by my hon. Friends the Members for Finchley (Mr. Booth) and for Worcester (Mr. Luff), I must say that the amendment, which seeks to increase one hour to two hours, is not as acceptable as it should be. I think that it was my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester who said that it is one of the amendments that seek to redress the balance.

The fact is that nearly 500,000 people are granted bail each year by the courts. I do not have the figures for 1992 or 1993, but in 1991 about 52,000 people were remanded in custody. Research suggests that 10 per cent. of those granted bail are convicted of an offence while on bail or that they reoffend while on bail. That proportion has stayed the same since 1978. If we are to give the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Crown Prosecution Service the opportunity to take advantage of the Bill's provisions, it is vital that we give those responsible at the magistrates court the maximum possible, sensible time to ensure that written notice of appeal can be served. I am not entirely satisfied that increasing one hour to two hours is the right way to proceed.

I urge the Minister to take on board my concerns and those of my other hon. Friends. Many of those who are, or will be, involved in serving written notice of appeal are busy people with heavy work loads and, like conscientious Back Benchers, working under a great deal of stress. They might find that increasing one hour to two hours is not appropriate.

It would be cold comfort if one of my constituents—for example, a widow living on her own in Southport—suffered a burglary or other aggravation when a crime was committed, simply because someone had been released on bail because those involved in serving written notice of appeal had had insufficient time to serve that notice.

**Mr. Thomason:** Earlier, the Minister said that, of necessity, decisions about appeals would have to be made by prosecutors on the ground, the people who are handling the files for the day and who are engaged in a series of cases. It may be difficult, if they are going straight on to another hearing, for them to deal with an appeal notice within the time limit. Does my hon. Friend agree that that adds to his point?

**Mr. Banks:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He makes a pertinent point about the difficulties of work load that may mean that somebody who should be the subject of an appeal may not become the subject because there is insufficient time for officials to serve a written notice of appeal at the magistrates court. I am concerned about that and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will address that concern. I am not satisfied that increasing the time limit from one to two hours, as the amendment proposes, is satisfactory.

**Mr. Maclean:** This is an important amendment and my hon. Friends have rightly touched on some crucial points. The amendment will ensure that if written notice of appeal is not served within the period specified, the appeal will fail. The written notice serves the purpose of recording for all concerned the fact that an appeal has been launched and the grounds of the appeal, which the defence will want to be confirmed, so that work on the arguments that will be presented to the judge can begin straight away at the appeal hearing. If the notes have been arranged, they will contain the time and place of the appeal hearing. It is, therefore, a document of record that the defence may wish to have to consider how to respond to the appeal.

The Government accept the importance of ensuring that such a written record is provided as quickly as possible. Although we accept that a two-hour time limit is more realistic than one hour, we realise that prosecutors may often go straight from one case to another, which might make it difficult to meet a one-hour target. Those hon. Members who have experienced a busy magistrates court room, in whatever capacity, will agree that, in a two-hour period, it is realistic to expect some break in the proceedings, allowing the prosecutor to wrote out and lodge a notice.

I shall give a little more detail to my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) on how we envisage that that method might work in practice. The Crown prosecutor arrives in court to face a mountain of case papers, some of which will have been perused already. Other papers that relate to defendants who have been arrested by the police and detained in custody overnight will be known to the prosecutor.

Where the prosecutor, having argued against bail being granted to a defendant, then sees it granted by the magistrates, as is their judicial right, and wants to launch

an appeal, he must immediately inform the court by way of an oral announcement. The written notice will take him a little time to prepare—not long, but he will need to gather his thoughts. After one hour, the courts will still be working through their case load. Two hours, I am assured by the CPS, will provide an opportunity for the prosecutor to break off from his duties to fill in the form.

I must say to my hon. Friends the Members for Finchley and for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) that we considered the issue carefully. The judgment had to be based largely on what the Crown Prosecution Service saw as the minimum amount of time that it will find not just convenient, but practical in most circumstances, to complete the form. Of course, it will also give attention to how to make the form simple and easy to complete. One does not envisage that prosecutors will have to spend hours writing reams of notes on the reasons why they believe the appeal ought not to be granted. I anticipate that they will use a rather simplistic form in which they will record reasons why they object—the reasons why they wish to make representations that bail ought not to be granted. We envisage that being a relatively simple procedure.

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** My hon. Friend has just said that he was advised that one hour or two hours is the minimum time. If that is the case, does he recognise that that is why my colleagues and I are so concerned about this matter?

**Mr. Maclean:** I would not want to mislead the House. Perhaps I did not use the best choice of words. When I discussed this matter with CPS representatives, they said that a two-hour limit would be satisfactory and would not cause them difficulties. Having explored all the options and time limits, I believe that it would be inappropriate for me, with my inexpert judgment on the matter, to suggest a different time limit. If the CPS believes that it can operate in the two-hour period, I advise my hon. Friends, who have considerable experience of these matters—and I note the plea for a two-and-a-half hour period—to accept the judgment of the CPS in this case.

1.15 pm

**Mr. Booth:** Does my hon. Friend accept that the basis on which he has explained his point is very different from the point that I was trying to make? I was not making a point about a prosecutor who was in charge of his own pile of briefs or about an able prosecutor who can juggle five minutes here and there. I was proposing a different situation which I hope my hon. Friend the Minister has considered in the advice that he has taken. What if a prosecutor cannot get back into court because another case is going on in that court?

**Mr. Maclean:** I understand my hon. Friend's point. However, the CPS does not see any great difficulty.

My hon. Friend the Member for Finchley also suggested that the court might have to adjourn its other business to receive the written notice, but the notice can simply be passed to the clerk of the court.

The CPS envisages, and their lordships with whom this was also discussed expected, anticipated—I do not wish to put words in their mouths—and I believe would accept the concept, that the written notice should be in a very simple, tick-the-box form for the reasons of appeal. In those circumstances, I do not envisage a great deal of time having to be spent on the written notice itself.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam has been reassured by my advice to her and to the House that the two-and-a-half hour time limit which she suggested is not necessary in view of the opinion of the CPS.

The wording in the amendment is consistent with the wording of subsection (6). It avoids any suggestion that might be capable of being read into other forms of words, such as the appeal being "null and void", that the original decision to appeal was in some way "unlawful". That aspect of the time within which the appeal is confirmed in writing is linked with the assurances that were sought during the Bill's passage in another place about the level of prosecutor allowed to launch an appeal against a bail decision.

It could be argued that if prosecutors are entrusted with all the other responsibilities of prosecuting a case, they should be trusted as the people on the spot—and this is the point that I made earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason)——

**Mr. Thomason:** That is right.

**Mr. Maclean:** I eventually managed to get my hon. Friend's constituency right.

As I was saying, as the people on the spot, prosecutors should be trusted to use their discretion whether they should launch an appeal. I believe that the prosecutors in the court, who are appraised of the facts, will be best placed to make a decision on whether to appeal. They will be aware of the risks that a defendant might pose if released on appeal and of the arguments put by the defence in support of bail.

The alternative of requiring senior lawyers to be available to take through all decisions to launch prosecution appeals, would vastly and unacceptably increase the costs of the CPS because it would be impossible to ensure that a prosecutor of such rank was present at all magistrates courts or contactable by telephone at any time to give authority to appeal.

In discussions about this part of the Bill and this amendment, the Government have recognised concerns implicit in the desire to see authorisation given at a senior level. In order to meet those concerns, the Government propose to ensure that there are proper procedures within the Crown Prosecution Service by which senior prosecutors will be able to vet and, if necessary, discontinue appeals.

I shall go into a little more detail on the important point —which was raised earlier and is relevant to this amendment—about senior prosecutors being able to vet appeals. The guidance that will be issued by the Crown Prosecution Service will indicate that appeals should not be made by junior prosecutors without seeking approval from more senior lawyers. In any case where Crown prosecutors consider that it might be appropriate to use the right of appeal, they will, wherever possible, obtain prior authority to do so. If, at the hearing when they have heard all that the defence has to say, that view is confirmed, they will have authority to launch the appeal. If, in exceptional circumstances, it is not possible to obtain prior authority, Crown prosecutors will seek a subsequent review of the decision to appeal by a more senior lawyer. That will be done within the time limit for giving written notice of appeal if possible, but, if not, within 24 hours at the latest.

*[Mr. Maclean]*

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam raised a very important point on powers to deal with persistent juvenile offenders. Of course, it is important that when juvenile offenders appear before a court, and if the prosecutor wishes to exercise the right of appeal, the minimum time should elapse before alleged young offenders remain in custody. The whole House will agree that that is important and that it is of particular relevance, therefore, in consideration of the two-hour time limit, that we look at the situation in regard to persistent juvenile offenders.

To answer my hon. Friend's point briefly, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 reformed and strengthened juvenile remand arrangements. It gave courts a new power to attach conditions when juveniles are remanded in local authority accommodation, and it placed the decision to remand 15 and 16-year-old boys squarely with the courts. We are all concerned about persistent offenders. The trend towards that small hard core of offenders committing a disproportionate amount of crime which destroys the quality of life for the law-abiding majority of our citizens cannot be tolerated.

We must be particularly concerned that, as studies consistently show, repeat offenders are often young men and boys who have the potential to carry on offending for years to come. We believe that their habit of offending must be broken. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam rightly pointed out, some persistent offenders seem to have become either careless of the consequences of their actions or arrogant when they appear before the courts. As my hon. Friend said, they make a gesture towards the courts' authority. That is why we are considering ways of tackling offending at its roots —by influencing individual attitudes and behaviour, particularly among the young; and persistent offenders must be made, while in custody, to confront their offending behaviour and its consequences.

Juveniles who persist in anti-social criminal behaviour must, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary made clear in the House last night, be brought to fear the strength of the law. We attach a high priority to the matter and shall soon introduce legislation to establish secure training orders to deal with the hard core of persistent juvenile offenders aged under 15—exactly what my hon. Friend asked me.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his remarks. I welcome them, and they will be a great reassurance to the public at large. Will he clarify that the area that I——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I must inform the hon. Lady that that point must not be pursued any further under these amendments.

**Mr. Maclean:** I cannot go further, because I would be outside the relevance of the two-hour limit in this amendment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) was also very concerned about the two-hour limit in the amendment and the conditions attached to bail. Courts already have the power to attach tough conditions to bail where they are appropriate. They can and do require defendants to keep off the streets at certain times, to keep away from certain places, and to keep away from certain people. The availability of bail conditions is very important in increasing the range of options available to the court in considering how best to deal with a defendant before trial. Those conditions must be effectively policed and enforced, and magistrates must be fully aware of the possibilities open to them.

The work of the local projects has highlighted the importance of bail conditions at the remand stage. We will be examining carefully how to make the best use of the option of conditional bail to prevent offending while on bail. In those circumstances, the court might feel that it is appropriate to grant bail and not allow a prosecution right of appeal if the person can be kept in reasonably sensible conditions, but short of being remanded in custody.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southport was concerned about whether there would be increased pressure on prison places if we reduced the number of people who are remanded on bail. The Bail Act makes clear a general presumption in favour of bail in line with the fundamental principle of our criminal justice system —presumed innocent until found guilty. Therefore, it is not our intention—I am afraid that I must disappoint my hon. Friend—that bail shall be refused in the majority of cases. The emphasis must be targeting to improve the chances that those who are most likely to offend on bail or abscond will be identified by the courts and to increase the likelihood of identifying some who are currently remanded in custody who could safely be released on bail.

Evidence suggests that the majority of defendants do not offend while on bail and, therefore, locking them up in those circumstances would serve no purpose. That is why the Bill makes such a sensible contribution to improving the range of powers to deal with bail. Of course, the amendment is also appropriate to those purposes.

My hon. Friend referred to the extent of the problem of people offending while on bail. In 1991, 480,000 people were granted bail by the courts and 52,000 were remanded in custody. Research suggests that 10 per cent. of those who are granted bail are convicted of an offence while on bail and that the proportion has stayed the same since 1978. Many of the offences are not ones that would result in a custodial sentence. Undoubtedly, there is a hard core of offenders—burglars, car thieves and the Sutton posse —who do not respect the courts. Those offenders must be taught a lesson.

Some hon. Members will be aware that police research shows that the figure of those offending while on bail is much higher—17 per cent. in one study and a third in another. I welcome those police studies as shedding more light on the problem. We are trying to ensure that there is an agreed method of measuring offending on bail. Whatever the figures—let us not disagree about them— clearly there is too much offending while on bail.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) on the progress that the Bill has made. I thank hon. Members on both sides of the House who have made thoughtful and valuable contributions to the Bill's progress. I especially thank my hon. Friends who are present today who have made such excellent speeches —my hon. Friends the Members for Worcester (Mr. Luff), for Sutton and Cheam, for Bromsgrove, for Southport, for Finchley, and others. I have been told that the Bill has the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman). I studied the Bill carefully. I was surprised

that she supported it because I could see nothing dealing with castration. Nevertheless, I am glad that she supports it.

The amendment is important and sensible. I commend it to the House, together with the Bill, which the Government treat with sympathy. We believe that it is broadly in line with the need to provide some safeguard against the sort of bail decisions that have resulted in tragic consequences in the past. The principle has been welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House and I hope that the Bill passes through all stages today.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Lords amendments Nos. 6 and 7 agreed to.*

# Right to Know Bill

*As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.*

[MR. GEOFFREY LOFTHOUSE *in the Chair*]

## New clause 2

PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF ACCESS

'.—(1) Where, in any proceedings before the Tribunal, a person claims access to a record, then, subject to subsection (2) below, it shall be for the authority holding the record to show that access to the record should not be given.

(2) Subsection (1) above does not apply where access to the record is being resisted on the ground that it contains information exempt by virtue of section 25 above.'.—*[Mr. Thomason.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Roy Thomason** (Bromsgrove): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 69, in clause 42, page 24, leave out lines 7 to 30.

No. 70, in clause 43, page 24, leave out lines 32 to 43.

No. 71, in clause 44, page 25, leave out lines 1 to 29.

No. 72, in clause 45, page 25, line 30, leave out from beginning to end of line 5 on page 26.

No. 73, in clause 46, page 26, leave out lines 6 to 33.

No. 74, in clause 47, page 26, line 34, leave out from the beginning of line 34 to the end of line 9 on page 27.

No. 75, in clause 48, page 27, leave out lines 10 to 16.

No. 76, in clause 49, page 27, leave out lines 17 to 30.

No. 77, in clause 50, page 27, line 31, leave out from the beginning to the end of line 4 on page 28.

No. 78, in clause 51, page 28, leave out lines 5 to 19.

No. 79, in clause 52, page 28, leave out lines 20 to 23.

No. 80, in clause 53, page 28, leave out lines 24 to 29.

No. 81, in clause 54, page 28, line 30, leave out from the beginning to the end of line 11 on page 29.

No. 82, in clause 55, page 29, leave out lines 12 to 33.

No. 83, in clause 56, page 29, leave out lines 34 to 40.

No. 42, in clause 57, page 29, leave out lines 41 to 45.

No. 85, in clause 58, page 30, leave out lines 1 to 9.

No. 86, in clause 59, page 30, leave out lines 10 to 26.

1.30 pm

**Mr. Thomason:** I am obliged to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me. I rise to speak in support of new clause 2 and amendment No. 42. I congratulate the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) on his enormous work in producing the Bill. It is never easy for any Member of Parliament to produce a private Member's Bill, and one who produces a Bill of the complexity and size of the Right to Know Bill deserves special congratulation. The House is obliged to the hon. Gentleman for his efforts.

In that spirit, I inform the hon. Gentleman that new clause 2 is not intended to be a wrecking amendment. Far from it—it aims to be constructive and to ensure that the Bill can operate effectively once it is implemented. It deals with a particular problem which, on reflection, many hon. Members will feel should require attention.

The Bill suggests that a third party should have the burden of proof against him in establishing that information should not be made available to a tribunal. For example, if a public body is approached by company

*[Mr. Thomason]*

A which asks for information on the public body, that information should be provided if possible. The public body must have the burden of proof against it if it refuses to produce that information. That is the position under the proposals of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central. It is also the position under new clause 2.

If the information sought by company A relates to company B, burden of proof will still be on company B to resist making that information available, so it will be a difficult hurdle for the third party to overcome to resist the disclosure of information held by a public body and requested by a third party. Where information is requested by the third party, the burden of proof should rest against the person who makes the application, because that person seeks to obtain information which may be used against another person or body.

**Mr. Michael Trend** (Windsor and Maidenhead): In the spirit of the debate, can my hon. Friend tell me whether company A or company B made any donations to any political party?

**Mr. Thomason:** Company A or B or, indeed, trade union A or B may well have made contributions, but that would be irrelevant to obtaining justice before the tribunal.

I am surprised that several amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) have been taken with new clause 2 and amendment No. 42. His series of amendments seek to delete the provisions on the establishment of the tribunal. That does not seem entirely in the spirit of the proposal in new clause 2, which seeks to add to the provisions in the Bill, not to destroy the tribunal arrangements entirely. I shall need some persuasion by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester that I should support his amendments. So there is a discrepancy between the objectives of the amendments in the group. It is wholly proper and appropriate that some mechanism should be created for testing whether information should be disclosed.

New clause 2 goes a long way towards achieving those arrangements for disclosure without imposing an undue burden on those who seek information from or about someone else. The associated amendments, however, appear to destroy the ability to provide an appropriate mechanism to deal with deciding whether a public body should disclose information in the first place. I wait to hear what my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester will say to justify his amendments.

**Mr. Peter Luff** (Worcester): My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) need not hold his breath for too long. I assure the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) that my amendments are designed to probe the need for the existence of the commissioner and the tribunal. It is not my intention to press them to a vote, so he, too, can breath easy.

The means of establishing the commissioner and tribunal deserves to be scrutinised and alternative enforcement mechanisms must be considered. I am sure that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central has spotted that I have not proposed any such alternatives, however, so it would be foolish to push my amendments to a vote, because we would then be left with a toothless Bill. That is not what I desire.

I also believe that my amendment No. 54 relates closely to the same issue and, therefore, it is no longer my intention to move it.

I am extremely concerned about the cumbersome mechanisms for enforcement set out in the Bill. I seek reassurance from the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central that those elaborate procedures are essential to secure the objectives of his Bill. I must make it clear that I am in sympathy with much of the principle behind the Bill—I know that the hon. Gentleman will think that I am being disingenuous, but I am not—but my reservations tend to mount as we consider its later clauses. We all support the principle of freedom of information. The Government share that commitment, as I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister will make clear when he speaks.

It is right that we should pause and reflect on whether the mechanisms for enforcement are right and the scope of the Bill is appropriate. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central drew on several examples on Second Reading to support his argument, but his choice of the poison apple scare was infelicitous. That is like a red rag to a bull to an hon. Member who represents the county of Hereford and Worcester. The lessons that he drew from that example were different from my own. The House and the Government had to devote an enormous amount of time to dealing with utterly false scare stories, that could have had serious implications for farmers in my constituency. I am saddened that he chose to draw attention to that particular example, because it caused me to question many of the Bill's early clauses.

My amendments refer to part IV. If I understand it correctly, the Standing Committee did not consider the clauses in that part, but passed them on the nod. We must, therefore, spend a little time on Report considering the merits of the framework that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central seeks to erect.

We should pass legislation only if we believe that it will assist to alter attitudes as well as the legal framework. If we believe that a particular part of a Bill may have an adverse effect on attitudes and the way in which people conduct themselves, we should pause and think long and hard before passing that legislation. Its enactment may make us all feel better, but it may make things worse in the real world outside.

The first two clauses in part IV deal with the internal review and I have no argument with them. I am concerned, however, that the other clauses will create a siege mentality in the institutions from which we are trying to gain information. I fear that the threat of overly officious enforcement may not foster the right attitude of openness.

I worked in government for two years and I strongly believe that the need to create openness in our society relies on attitude rather than the law. Some ingenious officials working in government may feel that they can circumvent provisions should they need to. It is much better that they should be encouraged to regard openness in government as desirable in itself and so develop a natural climate of openness. My amendments provide an opportunity to consider whether alternative enforcement mechanisms would not have an overly officious effect on civil servants and would therefore create that climate of openness.

**Mr. Trend:** Why does my hon. Friend feel that a legal framework would stifle rather than help to bring about a change in attitude or approach? I can think of some circumstances in which a change of attitude might be

stifled by a draconian measure, but in the present case a change of law may encourage and accelerate—as seems to have happened in other parts of the English-speaking world—a move towards greater freedom of information, which most hon. Members favour.

**Mr. Luff:** I understand and have some sympathy with my hon. Friend's concerns, but a more flexible framework to enforce the law might not only produce less of a siege mentality in those whose attitudes we seek to alter, but might also lead to a speedier resolution of the issue. I shall return to that matter with an alternative suggestion.

Even if my hon. Friend disagrees that an excessively legal, regulated framework is the wrong approach, he may at least join me in considering the possibility of a speedier way of resolving disputes about access to information. I am concerned not to force people to adopt increasingly imaginative ways of avoiding the provisions of the Bill. If individuals know that their recorded words, actions, thoughts and deeds will be subject to intense public scrutiny, the records may become less frank and therefore of less value. We see that at work in many areas of life, particularly in an employer's fear, when he writes a reference for an employee, that his employee may see it. The euphemisms which enter references are legion.

If we do not create the right climate for enforcing the Bill, it could lead to less good decision taking because less information will circulate in writing in the organisations concerned. That could lead to less good government and commercial decision taking. We might rely instead on a framework of nods and winks, of verbal agreements, and no written records. That would be unhealthy.

I note in particular what the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central said when he introduced the Bill:

"The minds of Ministers, civil servants, local government officials and leaders would be wonderfully concentrated by the thought that the public had access to the information and records on which they made their decisions.—[*Official Report*, 19 February 1993; Vol. 219, c. 588.]

The stick with which the hon. Gentleman proposes to beat people in this clause is what he proposes would concentrate their minds. I prefer the carrot approach, providing those individuals with the intellectual arguments which would make them wish to conduct their business more openly.

The clauses that the amendment seeks to delete add to that pressure. I suggest to the hon. Gentleman and to my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend) that an alternative mechanism would better be modelled on the ombudsman procedure, which works in other areas of public life. It is less cumbersome, more flexible and sometimes—althought I must admit not always—speedier.

**Mr. Eric Pickles** (Brentwood and Ongar): Is my hon. Friend aware that the ombudsman's judgments are not enforceable in law—in Scotland it is different from south of the border—and that many public bodies have sought simply to ignore those decisions? In trying to change people's attitudes through a more flexible approach, what does my hon. Friend suggest that we do when we come up against an organisation or institution whose mind does not want to be moved?

**Mr. Luff:** My view of the ombudsman is slightly more rosy than that of my hon. Friend. I do not know why solicitors in my constituency are working so hard to get the ombudsman to produce favourable outcomes for their clients if they do not share that view. My local authority recently used an ombudsman's judgment to deny compensation to one of my constituents because it felt that as the ombudsman had said that no fault rested on the authority, the Audit Commission would have been extremely critical if compensation had been paid. Ombudsmen are more effective than my hon. Friend suggests.

1.45 pm

**Mr. Pickles:** Is my hon. Friend aware that despite criticisms from the district auditor and the Audit Commission, councils such as Wakefield and Manchester have persistently ignored ombudsmen's decisions? Despite the work of solicitors in his constituency and the reasonable nature of most institutions, what happens when somebody will not co-operate?

**Mr. Luff:** I am prepared to be persuaded on the issue. I have said that I do not intend to divide the House on the amendments and I hope that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central will be able to assure me that the adverse consequences which I fear will not flow from the legislation and that my proposal of an ombudsman is inadequate. I do not wish to become bogged down in debate with my hon. Friends because that prevents the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central from telling us how the Bill will work in practice.

I am not opposed to the early parts of the Bill, but I am worried about the way it seems to work. The Bill on Sunday trading presented by the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) had my entire and robust sympathy, but the way the Bill developed in Committee made it too bureaucratic and difficult to administer. That is precisely my concern about the section of the Bill that we are debating. To make speedier progress, I shall restrict my remarks to that aspect.

On Second Reading, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said:

"It shows a profound truth: whatever we do in legislation, nothing ultimately changes, unless the culture of organisations genuinely changes. It is always possible to find a way round rules if those working within them really want to. That is a fair point, whatever approach we take to the matter."—[*Official Report*, 19 February 1993; Vol. 219, c. 596.]

In that spirit, I urge the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central to reassure me that the central mechanisms in his Bill are necessary. For example, is it not possible to find a better way to operate our system of parliamentary questions to procure the necessary information? I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman's comment on Second Reading that hon. Members are too often fobbed off with inadequate answers. He said that hon. Members had noticed the increasing use of answers

"such as 'This information is not available,' or 'This information is too expensive to compile,' or 'This information is no longer centrally collected'. Usually, the questions are reasonable, and the answers would be of assistance to the quality of understanding and public debate. But Ministers and civil servants decide what is good for us—not our needs or rights."—[*Official Report*, 19 February 1993; Vol. 219, c. 584.]

Is that not perhaps an alternative enforcement mechanism in the making and one which we should consider rather than an elaborate and expensive method of enforcing desirable legislation?

*[Mr. Luff]*

Part IV of the Bill seems too draconian. My amendments give the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central an opportunity to justify the edifice that he seeks to create to achieve the noble ends that we all share.

**Mr. Mark Fisher** (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I am surprised that the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) who moved the new clause is not in his place. If he were here, I would tell him that he either does not fully understand the brief that he has been given for his new clause or has not read the Bill. I see that he has just returned to his place. He seemed to be under the misapprehension that the tribunal would enforce requests from one company to another. The wording of the new clause is almost identical to that in clause 57 of the Bill and it is therefore difficult to see exactly what the hon. Gentleman seeks to achieve that would not be achieved by clause 57, which is about establishing a burden of proof on an authority that seeks not to disclose information that is covered by the Bill.

**Mr. Thomason:** The point relates to the burden of proof on a third party. The burden of proof will remain exactly the same as in the Bill.

**Mr. Fisher:** The hon. Gentleman has not read his own new clause, which states that where

"a person claims access to a record . . . it shall be for the authority"—

there he is referring to the authorities covered by the scope of the Bill, which are all public bodies—

"holding the record to show that access to the record should not be given."

It would be a courtsey to the House if the hon. Gentleman who tabled the new clause had even a rudimentary knowledge of what he was moving. It illustrates what has happened this morning. Every hon. Member who is in the Chamber knows exactly what has happened. However, members of the public may not. As we are accountable to the public, I believe that I ought to explain what has been happening and how it is that a highly intelligent and capable Member of Parliament finds himself moving a new clause that he has not read and does not even begin to understand.

Tory Members have been wheeled in to spend four hours of the time of the House speaking to six sets of Lords amendments, none of which is opposed. The amendments are agreed by both sides of the House and by every single Member who has spoken this morning. They have the approval of the House and of the other place. It has been a time-wasting exercise. The reason for it should be explained to the public.

The Government are determined to prevent the Right to Know Bill from completing its Report stage and being given a Third Reading.

**Lady Olga Maitland** (Sutton and Cheam): I really must protest at the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that we have been involved in a time-wasting exercise. It has escaped his notice, it seems, that the whole country wants to know how we intend to deal with persistent offenders. It is their right to know that that Bill was properly and adequately debated.

**Mr. Fisher:** I am sure that the hon. Lady is right about the will of the country. She will also be aware that the will of the House is not opposed by any opposition party or by any of her hon. Friends. She knows very well that what has gone on this morning is something to which she has been a party, Friday after Friday. There have been the same usual suspects—the hon. Members for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles), for Worcester (Mr. Luff) and for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason). Week after week, they have come here to——

**Mr. Luff:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you guide me? I think that the hon. Gentleman is coming perilously close to impugning the honour of hon. Members. I have severe reservations about some of the Lords amendments to the Bail (Amendment) Bill. I wanted to explain what they were to the House.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) is entitled to make his own speech.

**Mr. Fisher:** I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Everybody knows what has gone on here this morning and what has gone on here when other Bills have been before the House, such as the Bill that was introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) relating to disabled persons, both in the previous Parliament and in this, and also the Bill that was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) concerning medical information. It is no mystery to Members of Parliament. They know what goes on here when private Member's Bills are debated, but it is important for the public to understand the actions of this House.

**Mr. Pickles:** I had hoped that we would hear the hon. Gentleman's views on this Bill. I have been here on every occasion that the Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Bill has been debated. I was here last on a Friday on 26 March. That hardly qualifies me as a regular attender on Fridays. The hon. Gentleman may consider himself to be a machine politician and he may believe that what the Opposition Front Bench tells him must be right. Just because there may be a cosy agreement between the two Front Benches does not mean that I do not want to come here to defend the rights of local government.

**Mr. Fisher:** I will not enter into that debate with the hon. Gentleman. The hon. Gentleman knows the purpose behind his tabling, with other Conservative Members, 86 amendments to my Bill—which received an unopposed Second Reading, when there was plenty of time either to vote against it with a closure motion or to speak against it. The Bill also received 15 hours of scrutiny in Committee, where it was not substantially amended. Suddenly, the hon. Gentleman is taking an interest in the right to know and has tabled 86 amendments—many of which, despite his remarks, are deliberate wrecking amendments that seek to knock out whole sections of a Bill that received an unopposed Second Reading and detailed scrutiny in Committee.

**Mr. Luff:** Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the amendments that I am discussing were not debated in Committee and deserve detailed scrutiny? Will he accept also that I did not attend the Bill's Second Reading and vote against it—which I might have done, if I had given the matter some thought—because I thought that it was worth

while for the Bill to be considered in Committee and for the issues to be debated, as a preparatory move to the Government bringing forward their own White Paper? Later, I shall seek assurances from my hon. Friend the Minister that a White Paper will be published before the summer recess, as was promised by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State some months ago.

**Mr. Fisher:** If the hon. Gentleman had done any homework and read the proceedings in Committee, he would know that the tribunal and the commissioner were discussed at great length.

**Mr. Thomason:** It would be helpful if the hon. Gentleman read the amendment properly rather than accuse others of not understanding it. Clause 57 places the burden on the third party, whereas new clause 2 places it on the public authority. New clause 2 is quite different, although it follows the Bill's general form. Is not the hon. Gentleman mistaken in his allegations, and will he withdraw them?

**Mr. Fisher:** No. Before the hon. Gentleman gets hot under the collar, he should read clause 57:

"In any proceedings before the Tribunal, the burden of establishing that access to a record or part of a record should not be given shall be on the authority which holds the record".

The hon. Gentleman's new clause says exactly that. The hon. Gentleman has not followed the debate and he does not understand the Bill.

**Mr. Thomason** *rose*——

**Mr. Fisher:** Before the hon. Gentleman makes a greater fool of himself, he should resume his seat. I will not give way again. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman goes outside and quietly reads the Bill. It would be for his better information if he were to do so, before trying to move new clauses.

**Mr. Thomason:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman suggested that I am a fool, and I strongly object. Some hon. Members may agree with him, but I ask whether the hon. Gentleman was using proper parliamentary language.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman's language has been in order. That matter is for the Chair.

**Mr. Fisher:** The hon. Gentleman seems to be accusing himself out of his own mouth. I am convinced that he would have been better informed if he read the Bill and the proceedings in Committee before seeking to table new clauses. He might then have thought better of his new clause. There is nothing in it to which I object, because it repeats almost word for word clause 57. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's attempt to repeat clause 57, but that is a strange way of supporting it. His support would have been better expressed in a different way.

Today's proceedings relate very much to what the hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) seeks to do with amendment No. 54 and his support for the new clause. The Government's position was made clear by the Secretary of State and by the Under-Secretary of State in Committee. They verbally support the principle of greater access to freedom of information and are to produce a White Paper. Their view is that the matter can safely be left to a more liberal attitude by Government Departments. It is sad that the Chancellor of the Duchy has not got his White Paper through the other Government Departments. It will be interesting to hear from the Minister when it will be published.

I understand that the White Paper, which has been in draft form for some time, has gone to other Departments and has been subjected to a great sheaf of objections by almost every Department. The Chancellor, his junior Minister and his civil servants, who I am convinced believe passionately in the subject and the importance of it, understand the significance of the Bill. Their good will has not been matched by other Secretaries of State and I hope that the Minister will be candid enough to recognise that and will tell us something about the difficulties and objections of other Departments.

2 pm

The Government are led by a Prime Minister who, for the first time in the history of this country, has said that there is too much secrecy in government, which is greatly to his credit. He appointed the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to get on with the job and I accept that the Chancellor of the Duchy and his former and present junior Ministers are sincere and wish to make progress. However, that verbal support does not lead them to support the Bill. Although they have not voted against it, they have criticised it on the grounds that it is legislation and it is too cumbersome. But the background of their objection—this applies to the point that the hon. Member for Worcester is seeking to address in deleting the tribunal and commissioner—is that it takes out of the hands of Ministers the power to adjudicate on whether information should be in the public domain and gives it to an independent tribunal and comissioner.

The Government, while seeking slightly to open the flow of information, do not want the Bill and do not want to lose the control of information because it is enormously powerful and enormously effective and useful for Government and civil servants. The Minister and the hon. Members who have tabled the 86 amendments know that. The hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar whose experience in local government is considerable, understands the help, especially at moments of political embarrassment, that controlling the flow of information can give.

Interestingly, almost every local authority and all the local authority associations support the Bill, even though they know that it will cause inconvenience and difficulty. They will not be able to keep some information from the public, as they have in the past, but, to their credit, local government and councillors of all political parties have seen that the game is up and that local authorities and officials cannot control information against the public's will. Only the Government seek to hold on the power of controlling information.

Every political party in the House now wants freedom of information legislation. A growing number of Conservative Back Benchers support large tracts of the Bill and only a few Ministers and civil servants do not want to lose control of information. That is why the Bill has been obstructed this morning and that is why it will not become law.

The Government cling to the embattled and unsustainable position that Ministers and civil servants should control information. That is not the view of the Governments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and most European countries. The

Governments who have changed things in those countries are of all polical parties. Indeed, Conservative Governments, trying to defend the rights of the individual against the overbearing power of the state, have often pushed through freedom of information legislation. People outside the House are amazed and appalled by the Government who are led by a Prime Minister who says that he believes that there is too much secrecy but who still seeks to hold on to power. The Government will speak the language of greater openness. I believe that the Chancellor of the Duchy, if he had his way with the White Paper, would encourage—the very word that the hon. Member for Worcester used—his Departments to open up more. However, there is a world of difference between voluntary disclosure and making disclosure compulsory for the Government, local government and other public bodies. That fundamental difference is the real test on which freedom of information hinges.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** I wish to put two points to the hon. Gentleman. First, does he agree that there is a finely tuned balance between the right to know and the right to privacy? The right to privacy is enshrined in modern democracy. Secondly, how does he equate his pursuit of freedom of information and the right know with his party's reluctance to allow schools to publish their examination results?

**Mr. Fisher:** I agree with the hon. Lady's first point, but, if she had read the Bill, she would realise that clause 22 makes an exemption of matters of personal privacy. The Bill, which has been modelled on legislation from other countries, contains five or six key exemptions. No country in the world has complete licence and freedom of information. Personal privacy is certainly very important and is covered by the Bill, as it is by freedom of information legislation in other countries.

The hon. Lady is wrong on her second and party political point. The Labour party is in favour of the full disclosure of all school records. Indeed, the Bill ensures that the records of all schools and colleges are in the public domain. What we object to is partial selection, which the Government favour. If the Government really supported freedom of information in education, and believed that all information should be in the public domain, they would support the Bill that would make education information available to parents, students and all those interested in education. Instead, the Government favour making public only a selective range of indicators which they hope will prove their own points. That is not freedom of information. If the hon. Lady believed in freedom of information, she would support the Bill and ensure that all education records were in the public domain.

**Mr. Clive Soley** (Hammersmith): If we had a freedom of information Act, would not schoolteachers and headmasters be able to release the letters that they have sent to the Secretary of State saying why they thought exam results would be grossly misleading to parents and children alike, without being threatened with action by the Secretary of State if they release that information?

**Mr. Fisher:** My hon. Friend makes a valid point, but the information that would be released under the Bill would include not only what he has identified but all other education statistics. If the Government were seriously interested in the public knowing all about our schools, colleges and universities, they would support what on Second Reading they called "blockbuster legislation" such as this. Such legislation would reveal all information and it would then be up to the public, with the help of journalists, to decide what it amounted to.

**Mr. Michael Trend** (Windsor and Maidenhead): The hon. Gentleman referred to blockbuster legislation. Some of us believe that there is a difference between rights-based legislation such as he is proposing and the discretion of the Government to allow certain matters to be opened to public scrutiny. There is, however, much common ground between the two. It appears that the hon. Gentleman and the Government agree on a mixed approach. The measures that the Government are so proud of having introduced, including those on local government and access to personal files and medical records, were introduced at their discretion, but they have established a rights-based approach for the public. It is not hard to arrive at the logical conclusion and to have a general, rights-based approach.

**Mr. Fisher:** I agree that tentative steps have been made, but I disagree in that it is not the Government who have introduced such legislation; rather, it has been pushed through by means of private Member's Bills which the Government have eventually allowed into the legislative programme.

The Government initially supported the Medicines Information Bill and agreed with Sir William Assner when he said that section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968 was thoroughly dangerous. That section makes it a criminal offence for someone such as Sir William to disclose information about the safety of drugs that he knows are unsafe and prevents the release of that information; if he released it, he would be sent to prison for two years. The Government initially supported the Bill in Committee, but, under pressure, I suspect, from outside commercial interests, they have backed off and blocked the Bill which now sits in the queue behind the Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill, promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley).

Such action is not to the credit of the Department of Health and it makes a mockery of the Government and their support for freedom of information, because everybody in the country, apart from the pharmaceutical companies, knows that the Medicines Information Bill is a thoroughly sensible, modest, but important measure which would correct something thoroughly wrong with the 1968 Act, which was passed by a Labour Government. Section 118 of that Act is idiotic and dangerous for the understanding of drugs and the health of the nation.

Why was such a good Bill blocked by the Government? That question goes to the nub of what the hon. Member for Worcester is seeking to do in questioning the tribunal and the commissioner. The reason, as I was saying earlier, concerns taking the power out of the hands of Ministers. The public and hon. Members may understand the Government's position more clearly when they consider the events of the past year. There has been a succession of public events: Matrix Churchill, the Scott inquiry, the closure of the pits, the patulin affair—which so offends constituents of the hon. Member for Worcester which, from a constituency point of view, I can understand—the question of the criteria on which Group 4 are running a privatised prison service, the whole nature of their

contracts and how they can be enforced, the channel tunnel rail link, the question of Mr. Asil Nadir and the Tory party funds, the Maastricht legal advice and the Medicines Information Bill. Almost every month this year there has been a key political crisis that has hinged around information. The crux of each of those crises has been whether the Government have the right to withhold information or whether, in a mature democracy, the public and the press should have the same access to information.

The Government are almost alone in thinking that they should control information rather than share it with the public as a matter not of voluntary means, but of right. The Government should take note of the surprising sheaf of tens of thousands of post cards that arrived at the beginning of the year addressed to my hon. Friends and to Ministers. Perhaps, more acutely, the Government should take note of the way in which every single major national newspaper, that had formerly always supported the Tory party ran leader columns in February in support of the Right to Know Bill and freedom of information.

The Government chose not to listen to the advice of its usual supporters in the press: *The Times*, the *Financial Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and others. All those newspapers said that the game was up on the Government keeping information to themselves, not just because of a desire for a balance of power, but because it is only by sharing information with the public that one improves the understanding, involvement, credibility and quality of public debate and the public scrutiny and accountability of politicians.

All hon. Members should recognise that the political process and politicians have never been held in such low esteem as they are at the moment. Regardless of party, the public are fed up with politicians and many of the things that happen in the House. The public do not trust or believe us and one reflection of that is the uniquely low standing of the Prime Minister. He is a perfectly honourable individual, but he has a lower standing in the polls than any Prime Minister has had before. The news today is that the Prime Minister has the lowest rating since opinion polls were introduced.

However, that low opinion of the public is not confined to the Prime Minister. I suspect that if there were an opinion poll about the credibility of Parliament and politicians, it would show a similar very low level. One of the reasons for that is the arrogance of the House, at the behest of the Government, in holding information to itself and saying to the public, "We don't care whether you understand: We don't have to justify what we are doing to legislation in this country. We will assert what we believe. We will tell you as much as we believe you have a right to know and you will have to be satisfied with that because you have no rights to know." That is the current position.

2.15 pm

**Mr. Trend:** Has the hon. Gentleman considered the point that if a Government were to introduce right-to-know legislation, they would be very popular? In the run up to a general election, and having introduced such legislation, they would receive popular—not populist—support. In many respects, although not in respect of reforming the Official Secrets Act 1911, the hon. Gentleman's Right to Know Bill conforms to basic Conservative principles of empowering the individual.

**Mr. Fisher:** Yes. One of the extraordinary things about freedom of information and the right to know is that they cross all political barriers. They can be supported by the libertarian far right, in the form of the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) and others, on the basis that it gives the individual power against institutions and the state. They can also be supported by liberals and socialists——

**Dr. Lewis Moonie** (Kirkcaldy): And libertarians.

**Mr. Fisher:** Yes, and libertarians. They can be supported by people of all political parties for slightly different motives. However, they can sympathise with the principle and that is why freedom of information legislation across the world has been introduced by Governments of all political persuasions. That makes it all the more baffling that this Conservative Government, almost alone in Europe, in the English-speaking world and in the Commonwealth, stand out against such legislation.

In their heart of hearts, the Government know that they cannot stand out against such legislation for very much longer. I suspect that in its next general election manifesto, if such legislation is not passed in the interim, the Conservative party will bow the knee to public opinion and join every other political party in making a commitment to freedom of information legislation.

We must then consider what kind of legislation will be introduced and how it will be enforced. Will it be enforced by a strong method or a weak method? I agree with the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar that an ombudsman is not the way to proceed. It is interesting to note that Canada has a much weaker form of enforcement through its commissioner. By general consent, the Canadian system does not work as well as the stronger form, on which we have modelled the tribunal and commissioner, to be found in Australia.

Having spent years in local government and in this place, and in spite of the integrity and hard work of the different ombudsmen, my confidence in them to deliver decisions that are constrained by the criteria and rules under which they must work, is not great. In addition, the speed with which they reach decisions is appalling. I am sure that when the hon. Member for Worcester takes cases to ombudsmen on behalf of his constituents, he finds that they take months to resolve.

Information covered by my Bill must be released within 30 days. I believe that the public have a right to that kind of response. If we leave the enforcement of their rights to an ombudsman and not to a tribunal or commissioner, that enforcement will take six months, nine months or perhaps even longer. The relevance of information will therefore be lost. When the hon. Member for Worcester considers that, I am sure that he will reconsider and agree with his hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar that an ombudsman is not the best way to enforce these matters.

The tribunal and commissioner are quick and they are not expensive methods of resolving problems. They would achieve a result in respect of whether information is covered by the Bill within a very few days. The speed and accessibility of information is often as important as the information itself. If information is sensitive enough for a local authority or a Department to want to suppress and

*[Mr. Fisher]*

to argue the toss under the legislation, it is probably because it is active in the public domain at the time. Speed of response is extremely important.

**Mr. Matthew Banks** (Southport): In view of the time, it appears that the hon. Gentleman will remain on his feet for whatever time is left to debate the amendments. Therefore, will he touch not so much on the global issues? As an hon. Member who has not spoken before on a Friday—as a conscientious constituency Member, I am usually in Southport on Fridays, and I have no interest other than in pursuing the principle that the hon. Gentleman is trying to achieve with the Bill—I ask the hon. Gentleman briefly to mention accessibility to employment records.

I am particularly concerned that industry and the Confederation of British Industry fear that this Bill is not the right way to proceed. There might be a threat to a future employer's confidential reference. Will the hon. Gentleman comment on concern that has been expressed by employers that they should be free, as long as they do not act unlawfully, to provide to and receive from organisations information which might help them in assessing the suitability of employees for certain jobs and the suitability of future or current employees to assist the business for which they work?

The method that the hon. Gentleman seeks to impose with his Bill will bring to an end the possibility of maintaining any confidential employers' references.

**Mr. Fisher:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. He is wrong. The CBI is concerned about clause 80, which is about amendments to the Companies Act 1985, and how it would work. But on employers records, it does not have strong reservations, not least because many employers—in fact, the best employers in the country—share with their employees what is on record about them, just as the medical profession is increasingly sharing its records with patients. The Bill seeks to extend that practice in respect of before 1991 and give all individuals access to their medical records.

Most good employers and most parts of the public sector, such as the armed services, are increasingly encouraging open access to employees' files. It is important that individuals should be able to see what is written about them by an employer so that they can correct factual inaccuracies. If they do not, they lose control over perhaps the most important part of their life —their sense of indentity in their work. There might be material on their records which is misinformed, out of date, partial, biased or applying to some other person and which prejudices the career development and opportunities of an individual. It might even prejudice their work.

**Mr. Matthew Banks** *rose*——

**Mr. Fisher:** I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman because I want the Minister to reply to what, sadly, has been a brief debate. It is important that the Government's views are on the record as well.

It is very sad and democratically wrong, when legislation has had an unopposed Second Reading and full scrutiny in Committee, that the Government have the power through Back-Bench Members——

**Mr. Don Foster** (Bath): My party shares the hon. Gentleman's sadness that the Bill will clearly not make further progress. On Second Reading, I said that freedom of information should be at the heart of a modern democracy, that freedom of information should exist as of right, and that freedom of information should be the norm and secrecy the exception. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those are the three key principles which we must hear from the Government today and that we must hope that they will include them in future legislation?

**Mr. Fisher:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I pay tribute to his work in Committee and to the support of his party, and indeed that of all minority parties. The marked feature is that every political party, apart from the Conservative party, formally supports freedom of information legislation. I am grateful to other political parties in that united front.

There is a wider point about the handling of private Members' Bills. Cynical blocking or use of parliamentary time is wrong because it frustrates the will of Parliament when Bills receive unopposed Second Readings and full scrutiny in Committee.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe is in his place because the way that he has worked for disabled people in society and his Bill will have support throughout the country and the House. However, his Bill has been blocked time and again by the Government. There are other examples of Bills being blocked—the Medicines Information Bill is but one.

That is not the way to defeat private Members' Bills. They should stand or fall on the quality of the arguments. We need to reform the whole process of how we organise the time for private Members' Bills during the parliamentary year so that they can either succeed or fall not on manipulation of time but on the success or otherwise of the arguments. Unless we do that, we are frustrating our democratic principles. I will resume my seat so that the Minister can speak for the last five minutes and let us know the latest position with regard to the White Paper.

Freedom of information legislation will not go away . Britain will have a Right to Know Bill in the next few years because everyone, apart from a small beleaguered handful of Ministers, know that that is the way in which the Government can be opened to scrutiny and accountability. In a modern democracy, we need the right to know.

**The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis):** I have little time and I want to allow one more speaker, so I will be brief. As the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) will appreciate, I am a late arrival on this Bill. Although the Government do not support it, the hon. Gentleman has done a public service in taking it through the Committee and airing many issues. Many matters have arisen from the Committee stage that have helped in thinking through the important methods of developing a right to know. I commend the hon. Gentleman on that.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster promised that a White Paper would be published before the recess and that will be the case. The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to preview the White Paper today and I am sure that he will understand if I do not follow him down that road. I simply commend my hon. Friends the Members for Bromsgrove (Mr.

Thomason) and for Worcester (Mr. Luff) for raising important issues. Frankly, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central was a little harsh on my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove. I simply read clause 57:

"In any proceedings before the Tribunal, the burden of establishing that access to a record or part of a record should not be given shall be on the authority which holds the record, except where the proceedings relate to information which is claimed to be exempt under section 25 above when the burden shall be on the third party."

The point raised by new clause 2, where it attempts to redress the balance, is simply that of altering that provision to ensure that, in a commercial situation, the burden falls on the applicant, not the third party

There are many circumstances that I could air at length, but, unfortunately, we are out of time today. I will try to give another hon. Member the chance to make a point today, but I am sure that I will return to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central many times during debates on the White Paper, and I look forward to that.

**Mr. Soley:** I am appalled by that short response from the Minister. He knows that he could have spoken longer if the Government Whips had not chosen to talk these Bills out—not simply this Bill but the previous ones as well.

As I have said before, the Government's attempts to talk out Bills means that they devalue democracy in the House. It has always been the principle of the House that private Members' Bill should be decided on their merits. Unfortunately, in recent years—I suppose that we must go back 30 or 40 years—it has become the normal practice for Government Whips to organise against private Members' Bills. It has happened on both sides, but it has become so institutionalised that the present Government Whips are in a position to tell Back-Bench Members when they will be able to speak. We are in the absurd position that a private Member's Bill can complete its passage through the House only if it has the stamp of Government approval. That is why I and some other Back-Benchers, including Conservative Members, have written to the Procedure Committee asking that the position be changed.

The way in which to change the position is obvious. All private Members who are drawn high in the ballot should be timetabled so that their Bill cannot be talked out. They could then be either voted for or voted against. We could not talk out the Bill that introduced the poll tax; we could not talk out the Maastricht Bill. People tried all sorts of tricks. So if the Government can have a timetable, why cannot Back-Bench Members have a timetable? Alternatively, if we can talk out private Member's Bill, let us be able to talk out Government Bills. That would give us an opportunity to exercise democracy.

*It being half-past Two o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.*

## FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRESS BILL

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [23 April] on consideration of Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee).*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Second Reading what day? No day named.

## WATER CHARGES BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

## REGISTRATION OF DOMICILIARY CARE AGENCIES BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

## SECRET SOCIETIES (DECLARATION) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 October.*

## ENERGY CONSERVATION BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

## MISUSE OF DRUGS (ANABOLIC STEROIDS) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

## PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

## VIDEO RECORDINGS BILL *[LORDS]*

*Read a Second time.*

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Pickles.]*

*Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.*

## VOLUNTARY PERSONAL SECURITY CARDS BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

## WATER (DOMESTIC DISCONNECTIONS) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

## SEXUAL OFFENCES (AMENDMENT) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

## DECLARATION OF WAR (REQUIREMENT FOR PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

## HOMICIDE (DEFENCE OF PROVOCATION) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

## WEDDINGS BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

**HARE COURSING BILL**
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

**CIVIL RIGHTS (DISABLED PERSONS) BILL *[LORDS]***
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Second Reading what day? No day named.

**ENERGY (FAIR COMPETITION) BILL**
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East): On Monday we will have a debate on coal and the Bill could well be passed then.
*Second Reading deferred till Monday 5 July.*

**REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE (AMENDMENT) BILL**
*Order read for resuming adjournment debate on Second Reading [12 February].*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Debate to be resumed on Friday 9 July.*

**PENSIONS BILL**
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 July.*

**EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION) BILL**
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

**ABORTION CLINICS (ACCESS) BILL**
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

**COASTAL WATERS (QUALITY STANDARDS) BILL**
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 July.*

**CIVIL RIGHTS (DISABLED PERSONS) (NORTHERN IRELAND) BILL**
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Second Reading what day? No day named.

**HUMAN FERTILISATION (CHOICE) BILL**
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

**CIVIL RIGHTS (DISABLED PERSONS) (SCOTLAND) BILL**
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Second Reading what day? No day named.

**YOUNG OFFENDERS (DETENTION) BILL**
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Second Reading what day? No day named.

**CIVIL RIGHTS (DISABLED PERSONS) (WALES) BILL**
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Second Reading what day? No day named.

**MEDICAL ACT 1983 (AMENDMENT) BILL**
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 October.*

**FOXHUNTING (ABOLITION) BILL**
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

**HOUSING (FITNESS STANDARDS) (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]***
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.
*Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 July.*

**NEW TOWNS (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]***
*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Second Reading what day? No day named.

## Points of Order

2.40 pm

**Mr. Alfred Morris** (Manchester, Wythenshawe): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Noting the objections to my Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill and the three related Bills for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland by the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), I should like your guidance on a procedural point.

It is argued, in justification of the power of a single hon. Member to block a Bill with the one word "object", that it stops and is only meant to stop the Second Reading of a Bill which has not been debated by the House. But that does not apply in the case of my Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, which has been debated for more than seven hours on the Floor of the House and for which there is demonstrably a clear all-party majority. Thus, a procedure that was designed to delay Bills that have never been debated is now used to obstruct a parliamentary majority.

It was suggested to me from the Chair that I should raise this issue with the Select Committee on Procedure. I have since done so and now feel strongly that it would help to end abuse of the procedure if the Chair itself asked the Committee to make urgent recommendations. That would give solace and hope to those whom the four Bills seek to help. News of today's, as it were, serial killing of these important Bills will be received by Britain's 6·5 million disabled people with anguish and anger. They feel badly cheated.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I understand that the Select Committee on Procedure is looking into that problem at present.

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with specific reference to Northern Ireland. On a day when *The Sun* has shone on the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and his Bill has been commended to the House, and given that all the parties in Northern Ireland agreed on an issue which affects disabled people in Northern Ireland, is it not unseemly that, when the principle of the Bill has been debated, because of the one word "object", we could not take the Bill through its Committee stage to explore it further and give a lead to the House? So often Northern Ireland is left in the backwaters after issues have been dealt with here.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman is at liberty to write to the Select Committee on Procedure and make those points.

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will see from today's Order Paper, under "Questions for Written Answer", that question No. 11 is due for answer to me. It asks the Home Secretary to review the cases of Sam Kulasingham and Prem Sivalingham, who are presently serving life sentences in Wormwood Scrubs. I received a written answer a few moments ago saying that the review of the case is almost complete and that the Minister expects to make a decision now. The written question was tabled in sufficient time, and Essex police have investigated the case and presented volumes of evidence to the Home Secretary and are awaiting his decision.

The urgency of the matter is that Sam Kulasingham is on hunger strike. Last year, he was on hunger strike for 54 days before Essex police were asked to investigate and look for any new evidence. He has now been on hunger strike for more than 30 days and is less than half his normal body weight.

I am concerned to get a decision from the Home Office. Is there any way in which the Home Office can be encouraged rapidly to complete its review of the matter and decide whether the Home Secretary will exercise his powers to refer this disturbing and distressing case, which I believe to be a miscarriage of justice, to the Court of Appeal so that justice can be seen to be done, and be finally done, in the case of those two unfortunate gentlemen?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman's request has been heard by those on the Government Front Bench.

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): Further to an earlier point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I as a member of the Procedure Committee emphasise that the Committee is looking at the whole process of killing Bills in the way that happens on occasions such as this? We hope to be able to make some recommendations to the House in due course.

## French Customs Fines (Prison Sentences)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

2.44 pm

**Mr. Neil Gerrard** (Walthamstow): The subject of the debate affects a fairly small number of people, but it affects them seriously. They are people who are held in French prisons for the non-payment of customs fines. According to an answer that I received in February from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, about 80 people are currently held in French prisons for that reason, and some of them will spend up to two years in prison after the expiry of the normal sentence.

I have some concerns about the provisions of the French penal code, but that is not the responsibility of the House or the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Therefore, I shall concentrate on the impact on British prisoners and deal especially with how they are treated differently from French nationals and how the Foreign and Commonwealth Office could provide assistance, either through representations and negotiations with the French Government or directly to individuals via consular officials in France.

I shall explain a little of the background to the debate. Under French law, a person convicted of a drugs-related offence suffers a customs fine in addition to, usually, a prison sentence. The amount of the fine is related to the street value of the drugs that have been seized, and we are aware of fines of up to £392,000. Therefore, large amounts can be involved. If, at the end of the prison sentence, a person is unable or unwilling to pay the customs fine, he may spend up to another two years in prison in lieu of payment. We are not debating the seizure of assets from drug trafficking. I shall draw an analogy with our own law. Earlier this week, we debated the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]* which will change the provisions for the seizure of assets from drug trafficking. It allows courts to make assumptions that assets are the proceeds of drug trafficking, and the person who holds them has to prove that they are not. That is not the question here. The debate is not about the seizure of assets.

A drug courier, who does not necessarily stand to make a large amount of money from trafficking, may face a very heavy fine that is not related in any way to his money or to profits that he may have made. I am not in any way trying to defend drugs trafficking; nor am I debating the length of prison sentences. I am certainly not saying that anyone should be able to keep the illicit proceeds of drug trafficking or that couriers do not matter—that it is only the large dealers who matter—because many hon. Members, especially those who represent London constituencies, are aware of the problems caused on their streets and council estates by small-time dealers.

My argument is that the penalty should fit the crime, people should not be doubly punished for the same offence and all prisoners should be treated alike. British prisoners should not get different—or worse—treatment from that afforded to French nationals. I intend to refer mainly to the latter issue, because it is relevant to the responsibilities of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

I shall mention certain individuals, but I do not intend to use the debate to plead their case. I do not intend, either, to name those individuals. It would be wrong to do so, for it was impossible in the short time available before this debate to obtain their permission to name them. By pointing to individual cases, however, I hope to show what is happening. Some of these cases will be known to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and consular officials.

Those cases will also be known to Prisoners Abroad, an organisation which is supported by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; prisoners in foreign prisons are referred to it. The main concern of Prisoners Abroad is to provide support for people who are in foreign prisons and for their families. It is not the organisation's concern to plead the innocence of those people. Its role is to ensure that prisoners are treated fairly and to give them advice and, where necessary, access to legal representation. In particular, its role is to help families in this country. The concerns that I shall mention are shared by Prisoners Abroad, and they have been raised on previous occasions with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

I intend to concentrate on four main areas of concern. The first relates to people's ability to pay and their ability to prove insolvency. Secondly, the question of parole may arise. Thirdly, there is the question of transfer to British prisons. Fourthly, in one or two cases, there is the question of the retrospective nature of what appears to have happened.

As for insolvency, it is generally accepted, I believe, that we tend not to imprison people for debt. We certainly imprison people who refuse to pay, but we try to avoid imprisoning people for debt. The French authorities appear to accept the principle that prisoners who are serving prison sentences in lieu of customs fines can be released on proof of insolvency. The fine is waived and they are released.

The specific problem that affects British prisoners is proof of insolvency. The documents that are normally required by the French authorities include, for example, letters from tax offices or from the mayor. To some degree, that reflects the French local government system. When British prisoners attempt to provide that documentation, they often have difficulty in obtaining the relevant documents. Tax offices do not find it easy to produce letters that meet the requirements of the French authorities. In a number of cases, British mayors have refused to have anything to do with requests to provide letters. Under our local government system, mayors are in a different position from that of mayors in France. British mayors do not want to be involved in these matters.

Even when documents are obtained, there can still be difficulties. I want to refer to a few cases. The first concerns a British woman who has served seven years in prison in France for a drugs offence. She is now faced with a customs fine. She has no money with which to pay that fine. Her only relative in this country is an elderly father who is on a state pension. She has been in prison, in lieu of the fine, since September of last year. She has assembled the documentation to prove insolvency, a task which is not easy to accomplish from inside prison.

The case of that woman—that she should be regarded as insolvent—has been heard twice. However, French customs have now changed tack. They now argue that a person who is in prison for a drugs offence is prohibited from applying for a declaration of insolvency. She has now applied to the French supreme court, but has been told that it is likely to be over a year before her case is heard. She will, therefore, have to spend another year in prison before her case is heard. When a friend offered some money, customs said, "It isn't possible to have it both

ways. If you apply for insolvency, we will not take any account of that offer of money until your case has been heard in the supreme court." That person is stuck in prison, completely unable to pay her fine, and with no prospect of being released within the year.

My second example is of a man who has served four years. He assembled the documentation to prove insolvency, went to court, and won his case last November —but, because that decision was appealed against, he remains in prison waiting for the appeal to be heard. I could quote many similar cases.

One obvious concern is whether the documentation required of British prisoners is appropriate. Another is the assistance that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office can give in helping to obtain that documentation, and in discussing with the French authorities whether it is appropriate anyway, and possible alternatives.

It seems that British prisoners are prevented from following a procedure in the French penal code. The first case that I cited is a good example, and it may be challenged at European Commission level. That issue also is one which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office should consider.

French prisoners in similar situations are often able to obtain parole. Agreement is reached that they will pay a proportion of the fine, be released, and then settle the rest of the fine over a period of time—with penalties if they do not adhere to the arrangement. I am aware of only one case in which such an arrangement has been agreed in respect of a British prisoner. In general, such agreements are refused—and British subjects remain in prison and unable to secure parole, when it is granted to French nationals.

A convention exists for the transfer of sentenced prisoners from a foreign country to their own country. That is often in their interests and in the interests of their families, with whom they are then able to maintain proper links. Serious difficulties arise with France. The Foreign Office knows of only one such transfer from a French prison since 1985—and I do not believe that it related to a case that involved a customs fine. Anyone with outstanding fines is not usually allowed to transfer—the convention makes some reference to that. It could be argued that the convention prevents such transfers.

I know of a case of a British national with an outstanding fine who was allowed to transfer from a prison in the United States after signing a promisory note that the fine would be paid in due course. The British Government have a role to play in actively pursuing with the French arrangements such as those available in the United States, which allow prisoners to transfer to this country. They do not in any way let prisoners off their sentences, but permit them to be in prison nearer their families and relatives.

My final point is whether recognised canons of justice are being followed. I believe that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office argues that it cannot interfere if a trial was conducted in accordance with the normal canons of justice.

Last year, Prisoners Abroad wrote to Lord Donaldson about customs fines. It suggested that European law forbids the imposition of a customs fine for the trafficking of illegal drugs and that France has already been censured twice by the European Court of Justice for breaking that law. The first question is whether customs fines are legal, and whether what is happening is a back-door attempt to levy duty, in the way that a levy is imposed on legal goods. Clearly, narcotics are not legal and one would not expect duties to be levied on illegal goods.

There is also the issue of the restrospective nature of some sentences. I raised with the Minister in May the case of a British prisoner who had been sentenced to 10 years. At the time that he was sentenced, he had been told that there would be a customs fine and, in lieu of payment of the fine, a sentence of four months' imprisonment. During the period of his sentence, French law changed and the period in lieu of customs fines was increased from four months to two years.

The Foreign Office appears to believe that that did not constitute a retroactive step. In a letter dated 20 May, the Minister said:

"As our consular staff have already explained . . . the change in the law . . . was not retroactive and did not apply to those persons whose sentences were final. As"
his
"case was still under appeal his sentence was not final and the new law therefore applied."

I draw the Minister's attention to article 7 of the European convention on human rights, which says:

"Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the criminal offence was committed"—
not whether the sentence had been passed or whether the case was still being considered but
"at the time the criminal offence was committed."
I argue that, in this case, there was a breach of article 7 of the European convention and that a retroactive penalty was imposed. In addition, the person concerned was not informed of the change in time to be able to pursue an appeal.

I am now aware of another case concerning not a British prisoner but a Brazilian who is in prison in France. His case is now going to the European Court of Human Rights, which will consider the retroactive nature of the change.

In essence, the argument that I should like the Minister to address is that customs fines have an impact on British nationals; that British nationals are treated differently from French nationals; and that there are questions about whether the system is even legal—certainly questions about whether the retroactive nature of the sentence is a breach of the European convention on human rights.

**Mr. Harry Cohen** (Leyton): My intervention will be brief. I congratulate my hon. Friend on raising this important issue. I draw his attention to the case of my constituent, Mr. Humphries of Onra road, who has been in a French prison since 14 October. I have received letters from the Foreign Office saying that the case involves a very protracted investigation, which it supports. In the meantime, my constituent can get no urgent legal representation. His wife is, of course, extremely distressed and is convinced that her husband is innocent. She wants justice to be done, but she can get no support from the Foreign Office. Is that common in the cases to which my hon. Friend is referring?

**Mr. Gerrard:** Delay is certainly a common element to many cases. I mentioned the British woman who may end up finishing her sentence, or getting close to it, before the case is decided. I ask the Foreign Office to take a more active role to confront the problems in the cases that I have mentioned and that to which hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) has drawn attention. The

*[Mr. Gerrard]*

Government should be prepared to discuss the general issues with the French Government, such as the questions of transfer, parole and documentation, and should give as much help as possible to the individual involved, through consular officials.

3.5 pm

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg):** I know that some hon. Members would like to leave the House at 3.10 pm to catch a train and I shall do my best to facilitate that. It means that I shall have some difficulty in responding to all the points, and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will be writing to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) on matters not covered by me.

I wish to make two preliminary points. First, as the House may know, three years ago, I was a Minister in the Home Office where I had responsibility for the conduct and co-ordination of policy on drugs. I have also been a barrister for some 25 years. In both capacities, I have developed a very unsympathetic approach to those who are convicted of drug offences. That is especially true where the conviction involves trafficking in hard drugs.

Secondly, as a general proposition, the criminal law in France is a matter for the French Parliament, not for us. There are only a very few circumstances in which I would be ready to interfere, and I shall give some examples. First, in circumstances where there is a reason to suppose that the conviction may be unfair or that a sentence is disproportionate, the Government might want to intervene.

Secondly, there may be cases where there are special reasons—for example, humanitarian reasons—in which it would be right to ask the French authorities to take a lenient and compassionate view. That said, however, the general proposition must be that where people infringe the law of a democratic and civilised country with which we have friendly relations, and are punished in accordance with the law of that country, they have no one to blame but themselves, and they must not expect us to bail them out. Indeed, it is for them and their legal advisers to determine the courses of action that are appropriate for them.

We are, of course, aware of the problems to which the hon. Gentleman referred, such as the requirement in certain circumstances to serve civil imprisonment in lieu of payment of customs fines in respect of various offences. That proposition applies to French prisoners as it does to British prisoners. The fines are based on the street value of the drugs involved and can attract civil imprisonment of periods from five days up to a maximum of two years if they are not paid. In our experience, anyone convicted of a drugs trafficking or smuggling offence receives a fine as part of his sentence, whatever his nationality.

Prisoner transfer can be arranged under international agreement between the United Kingdom and other signatory countries. The Council of Europe convention on the transfer of sentenced persons was ratified by the United Kingdom in April 1985 and by France in February 1985. The intention is that, if certain conditions are met, prisoners can apply to serve the remainder of their sentences in their own countries, close to their families and in a familiar environment.

There are two British prisoners in France whose applications for transfer to prisons in the United Kingdom are outstanding. Both were convicted for drug-related offences invólving substantial quantities. Both have settled their outstanding customs fines, including the negotiation of a substantial reduction in at least one of the cases. Their transfer applications are being considered by the French authorities. Under the terms of the convention, the sentencing or the receiving state can withhold agreement to transfers and need not give the reason why.

When prisoners cannot get a hearing, our consular authorities in Paris will, of course, take the matter up with the Ministry of Justice. That is appropriate. Prisoners Abroad will help with the documentation. Towards the end of a prisoner's criminal sentence, it is, in practice, usually possible for considerable reduction in the fine to be negotiated with the customs authorities. If a prisoner can prove insolvency, it is sometimes possible for civil imprisonment to be waived entirely. However, it is for the prisoner in question to prove the insolvency, which he or she can do by taking appropriate legal advice.

The hon. Gentleman raised a range of other issues. I have dealt with the generality of the matter. People should respect the domestic laws of the countries in which they are, especially if those countries are democratic and friendly. They must not come to us if they are convicted of substantial offences and expect us to bail them out, because we will not.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Three o'clock.*

# Written Answers to Questions

*Monday 21 June 1993*

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Sunday Trading

**Dame Angela Rumbold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the compatibility of the tribunal of Sunday trading legislation policy proposed by the Keep Sunday Special campaign and Retailers for Shop Act Reform with the Government's policy on reducing bureaucracy and burdens on business; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** We shall publish in the next few weeks a draft Sunday trading Bill, together with a covering text explaining the options for reform. Hon. Members will no doubt weigh the effect of each of the options on businesses before choosing from among them.

### Greyhound Racing

**Mr. Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much of the quarter per cent. betting duty reduction announced in the Budget in 1992 has been received by the British Greyhound Racing Trust Fund for the 1992-93 financial year; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I understand that the British Greyhound Racing Trust fund has, to date, received voluntary payments from the betting industry totalling £1,058,504 for the financial year 1992-93.

### Terrorists

**Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of IRA terrorist bombings in Great Britain in each year since 1985; and what is his estimate for 1993 up to 31 May.

**Mr. Howard:** The information is not available.

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women at present serving prison sentences in England and Wales for terrorist offences.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated June 1993.*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of (a) men and (b) women at present serving prison sentences in England and Wales for terrorist offences.

Readily available information on the number of prisoners serving sentences in England and Wales whose offences were related to terrorism is limited to those classified as Category A.

There were 37 such men and 2 such women on 14 June 1993.

**Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of killings by IRA terrorists in Great Britain in each year since 1985.

**Mr. Howard:** Since 1 January 1985, 26 people have been killed in Great Britain as a result of terrorist activity attributed to the Provisional IRA. The numbers of people killed in each year are as follows:

*Number of people killed by the Provisional IRA*

| *Year* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1985 | 0 |
| 1986 | 0 |
| 1987 | 0 |
| 1988 | 1 |
| 1989 | 11 |
| 1990 | 3 |
| 1991 | 3 |
| 1992 | 5 |
| 1993[1] | 3 |

[1] To date.

### Appeals

**Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had of possible reforms to the appeal system.

**Mr. Maclean:** Various aspects of the appeal system fall within the remit of the Royal Commission on criminal justice, to which my predecessor gave evidence. We shall consider whether any changes may be needed in the light of the commission's report.

### Tobacco Sales (Children)

**Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions there were in the last year for which figures are available for selling tobacco products to under-age children.

**Mr. Maclean:** In 1991, in England and Wales there were 101 prosecutions for the offence of selling tobacco to juveniles.

1992 data will not be available until the autumn.

### Police Batons

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will agree to institute an extended pilot project on the use of the expandable side-handled baton.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** On 16 June, my right hon. and learned Friend agreed to a scientific evaluation of the expandable side-handled baton. Decisions about trialling this piece of equipment will be taken following the evaluation.

### Crown Court Cases

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the number and *(b)* the proportion of triable-either-way cases committed to the Crown court in 1979, 1983 and in each year from 1987 to 1992.

**Mr. Maclean:** The numbers and proportions of persons aged 17 and over committed to the Crown court for triable-either-way offences for 1979 and 1983 and 1987-1991 are given below. Data for 1992 are unavailable until the autumn.

*Persons aged 17 and over committed for trial at the Crown court for triable-either-way offences in England and Wales*

| Year | Committed for trial | |
|---|---|---|
| | Number (thousands) | Percentage |
| 1979 | 55·3 | 15 |
| 1983 | 79·6 | 18 |
| 1987 | 93·5 | 23 |
| 1988 | 93·1 | 22 |
| 1989 | 80·4 | 21 |
| 1990 | 80·4 | 20 |
| 1991 | 81·3 | 19 |

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Citizens Charter

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give details of the initiatives taken under the citizens charter programme to develop user consultation, representation and participation in public services.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The citizens charter calls on all public services to consult their customers on a regular and systematic basis. Survey programmes are being carried out across the public sector, and many organisations recognise and consult groups who represent their customers. There are numerous initiatives nationally and locally. These include:

*Charter Mark Scheme:* organisations that apply must demonstrate that they consult customers on a regular and systematic basis and take their views into account when service standards are set or revised. Thirty-six awards were made in 1992.

*Inland Revenue:* has conducted a major survey of taxpayers to find out views on their service and are also surveying employers. Inland Revenue is considering how to improve services in response to these results.

*Customs and Excise:* work is in hand on two national surveys of travellers and VAT traders. Results of a qualitative survey of travellers carried out last year were used when redrafting the travellers charter.

*London Underground:* customers are surveyed on a four-weekly basis on over 20 performances indicators, including the five key targets set out in the customer charter.

*Police:* the results of a survey of public satisfaction with police services were published in December 1992. A number of police services also use local customer satisfaction surveys or questionnaires.

*National Health Service:* the patients charter encourages all health authorities to seek the views of local people on local services in a variety of ways. In Scotland, an independent survey of NHS users was undertaken to measure progress towards the achievement of charter commitments and identity problems and priorities for further action. In Wales, health authorities regularly carry out consumer research through patient satisfaction surveys, focus groups and local consultations.

*Education:* all school governing bodies are required to have elected parental governors. Since 1986, school governors are required to produce an annual report for parents and hold annual parents' meetings where parents can pass resolutions concerning the school. The parents charter has extended these rights to require schools to provide parents with annual reports on children, including exam and test results.

*Benefits Agency:* carries out an annual independent customer survey to ask customers what they think of services, and publishes the results; holds regular meetings with customer representative groups; and has received nearly 600 written submissions on its discussion paper "One Stop" about service delivery.

*Employment Service:* conducts an independent national customer satisfaction survey, and has piloted local surveys.

Under the *Council Tenants Charter*, tenants have the following rights to: be consulted on changes to the management of their homes; annual information on how the council has managed its housing stock; attend meetings of the housing committee and to see the records of its meetings; transfer to a new landlord, and increased opportunities to get involved in the management of estates, for example, through tenant management co-operatives. The *Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Bill* includes a right to manage for council tenants.

*United Kingdom Passport Agency:* surveys customers by post and in person to find out their views and satisfaction levels. A consultative panel of users is planned for the future.

*Land Registry:* users' customer views obtained from a programme of: meetings with user groups, surveys of regular customers, open days, visits and exhibitions to review targets to reflect customers' needs and wishes.

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The market tests completed since November 1992 by the Office of Public Service and Science, including its agencies, HMSO and the Central Office of Information and the outcome of these tests are as follows:

| *Activity tested (and area)* | *Outcome* |
|---|---|
| Bristol distribution centre (HMSO) | Retained in-house |
| Distribution of College 1993-94 prospectus (Civil Service College) | Contracted out |
| Elements of payroll development (Chessington computer centre) | Contracted out |
| Manchester forms centre (HMSO) | Retained in-house |
| Reprographic unit Basildon (HMSO) | Part contracted out, part retained in-house |
| Reprographic unit Manchester (HMSO) | Retained in-house |
| Security guarding (Recruitment and Assessment Services) | Retained in-house |
| Stationery store (COI) | Service abandoned |
| Telephonist service for Downing street (OPSS) | Contracted out |
| Typing services at publications centre (HMSO) | Contracted out |

## ENVIRONMENT

### Warren Spring Laboratory

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the impact on his budgets for research into air quality, marine pollution, and waste management of the recent announcements relating to Warren Spring Laboratory.

**Mr. Gummer:** The transitional costs of the merger of WSL with the Atomic Energy Authority to form the National Environment Technology Centre will not fall on

my budgets in these areas of research. In the longer term, the Government believe that the merged organisation will be able to offer better value for money to all its customers.

### Housing (Elderly People)

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what procedures he has introduced to ensure that the housing needs of elderly people are fully met by local social services departments.

**Mr. Baldry:** Circular 10/92 "Housing and Community Care", issued jointly by my Department and the Department of Health on 24 September last year, advises social services and housing authorities of their roles under community care. Social service authorities have a statutory duty to assess an individual's needs for community care services and are advised to co-operate with housing authorities where appropriate, in making that assessment.

### Air Pollution (Standing Conference)

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to continue meetings of the investigation of the air pollution standing conference following the closure of Warren Spring Laboratory.

**Mr. Yeo:** I intend to continue meetings of the investigation of air pollution standing conference.

### Benlate

**Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce measures to ban the pesticide Benlate; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP), the independent statutory committee which advises Ministers on the approval of pesticides, has examined data relating to benomyl—the active ingredient in the product Benlate—on two occasions in the past 15 months. On both occasions, the ACP advised that there was no need for concern over its continued use in the United Kingdom. A ban would, therefore, not be appropriate.

### House Renovation Grant

**Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make changes to the private house renovation grant system; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir George Young:** I have placed in the Library copies of a consultation paper published today discussing the performance and effectiveness of present private house renewal programmes, including the renovation grant system, and outlining a variety of options for change. These include both changes that might be made in the short term, by adjustments to secondary legislation, and those that could be introduced longer term, subject to primary legislation.

The Government are keen that there should be a full public dialogue on how policies in this area should develop and, accordingly, the consultation paper has been given wide distribution with three months for comment.

I am also publishing today a preliminary report from the 1991 English house condition survey providing information on the number of unfit dwellings in the English housing stock. Between 1986, the date of the last survey, and 1991 there has been a welcome decline in the number of unfit dwellings whether measured against the fitness standard in force in 1986 or against the new, higher standard introduced under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Under the old standard, 3·9 per cent. of dwellings—0·753 million—were unfit in 1991 compared with 4·8 per cent.—0·909 million—in 1986; under the new standard, 7·4 per cent. of dwellings—1·456 million—were unfit in 1991 compared with 8·8 per cent.—1·643 million —in 1986.

The report also reveals that most progress has been made in those sectors of the stock which have the highest proportions of unfit dwellings, namely pre-1991 housing and the private rented sector. It further shows that, under the new standard, over half of all unfit dwellings fail to meet only one requirement in the standard. Many of these may be remedied relatively easily.

We also plan to publish during the consultation period the first main report from the survey, which will give fuller information about the condition of the stock and household characteristics.

### Building Research Establishment

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish key performance targets for the Building Research Establishment.

**Mr. Baldry:** The Building Research Establishment is working to the following provisional key targets for 1993-94 in its strategic plan:

- £96,000 net contribution to the Exchequer.
- Income to cover full economic costs of a trading basis.
- Non-Exchequer component to be 10·9 per cent. of total net research commissions.
- An improvement of 5 per cent. in the unit cost ratio of research output on the target for 1992-93.

The strategic plan is subject to further discussion with my Department. If, as a result, there are any changes to these targets, revised targets will be published.

### Local Government Finance

**Sir Rhodes Boyson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total amount of revenue expenditure by local authorities in *(a)* England, *(b)* Greater London and *(c)* the south-east, excluding Greater London, for each year from 1982-83 to 1992-93, estimated.

**Mr. Curry:** The latest information is:

*Local authority revenue expenditure*[1]

*£ million*

| *Year* | *England* | [2]*Greater London* | *South East (excluding Greater London)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1982-83 | 19,737 | 4,111 | 3,541 |
| 1983-84 | 20,809 | 4,677 | 3,691 |
| 1984-85 | 21,312 | 5,000 | 3,768 |
| 1985-86 | 21,661 | 4,676 | 3,933 |
| 1986-87 | 23,760 | 5,128 | 4,201 |
| 1987-88 | 25,686 | 5,408 | 4,582 |
| 1988-89 | 27,667 | 5,553 | 5,162 |
| 1989-90 | 29,404 | 5,969 | 5,395 |
| 1990-91 | 32,493 | 6,371 | 6,041 |
| [3]1991-92 | 36,416 | 6,956 | 6,999 |
| [3]1992-93 | 38,945 | 7,392 | 7,628 |

[1]Total expenditure figures are given for 1982-83 to 1989-90. Net revenue expenditure figures are given for 1990-91 to 1992-93. Although both are net of spending met by specific and supplementary grants, direct comparisons cannot be made as figures derive from two different financial systems.
[2]Includes Metropolitan police, which covers small areas outside Greater London.
[3]Revised estimates.

**Sir Rhodes Boyson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total amount of *(a)* net and *(b)* gross capital expenditure by local authorities in (i) England, (ii) Greater London and (iii) the south-east, excluding Greater London, for each year from 1982-83 to 1992-93, estimated.

**Mr. Curry:** The available information is as follows:

*Capital expenditure by local authorities in England*

*£ million*

| Year | Net expenditure | | | Gross expenditure | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Total England* | *Greater London* | *South East (excluding GL)* | *Total England* | *Greater London* | *South East (excluding GL)* |
| 1986-87 | 3,033 | 522 | 285 | 5,846 | 1,362 | 1,147 |
| 1987-88 | 2,488 | 470 | 120 | 6,224 | 1,433 | 1,265 |
| 1988-89 | 1,964 | 145 | 106 | 7,206 | 1,592 | 1,648 |
| 1989-90 | 4,837 | 1,215 | 910 | 9,822 | 2,593 | 2,103 |
| 1990-91 | 3,755 | 695 | 691 | 6,924 | 1,473 | 1,542 |
| 1991-92 | 4,316 | 776 | 882 | 6,571 | 1,306 | 1,401 |
| 1992-93[1] | 4,977 | 665 | 1,030 | 6,921 | 1,267 | 1,449 |

[1] Local authority forecast.
*Source:* Local authority capital outturn and capital payments returns.
(a) Outturn (provisional).
(b) Estimate.

**Mr. Straw:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate has been made of the amount of transitional relief each authority will pay in 1993-94; and if he will express this figure as *(a)* a percentage of total provision for transitional relief and *(b)* an amount per council tax payer.

**Mr. Gummer** *[holding answer 18 June 1993]:* I am arranging for the available information to be placed in the Library of the House.

## Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

**Mr. Baldry:** Only one of the projects in the Department's market-testing programme which involves exposing in-house functions to competition has yet reached the stage where a contract or service level agreement has been awarded. The market testing of a research project commissioned by the Department from the Building Research Establishment has resulted in the award of a contract to an outside bidder.

## New Age Travellers

**Mr. Aspinwall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total estimated cost of establishing a site of 15 pitches for new age travellers at Gipsy lane, Burnett, Avon.

**Mr. Baldry:** The cost of providing an authorised site for gipsies, as defined in section 16 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968, has been estimated by Avon county council as £795,500.

## Liverpool Housing Action Trust

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what factors were taken into account in determining which tenders were acceptable for shortlisting for the housing management contracts for the Liverpool HAT; what *(a)* guidelines and *(b)* procedures were used for evaluating the tenders; and if he will publish them;

(2) what information will be given to those organisations or individuals who submitted tenders for management contracts for Liverpool HAT which were rejected as to why they were not acceptable;

(3) if he will list those organisations or individuals which have been shortlisted for the management contracts for Liverpool HAT, indicating which are black-based associations.

**Mr. Baldry** *[holding answer 18 June 1993]:* Responsibility for awarding the contracts rests with the Liverpool housing action trust. The HAT board is evaluating tenders received in accordance with standard public procurement procedures and against the criteria in the information pack sent to prospective tenderers and in the tender document. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

Any future discussion between the HAT and tenderers on tenders not selected for shortlisting is a matter for the HAT board.

I shall write to the hon. Member with the names of those shortlisted organisations which agree to the release of their names. Information was not sought in the tender process on the ethnic backgrounds of tenderers.

# EDUCATION

## Access Funds, Liverpool University

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from Liverpool university about access funds; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Boswell:** One, from the assistant registrar of Liverpool university. I announced on 14 June that a total of £23·8 million will be available for access funds in England for the 1993-94 academic year. This represents an increase of over £2 million—nearly 10 per cent.—over 1992-93. We believe that if properly targeted to genuinely needy students, this should be sufficient for the purpose of supplementing an already generous student support package of grants and loans.

### Grant-maintained Schools

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* county primary schools and *(b)* voluntary-aided primary schools have applied for and been granted grant-maintained status; and what percentage these are of all schools in these categories.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The information requested is given in the table.

| | *Primary schools operating/approved for self-governing governing status* | *As a percentage of all schools in the category* |
|---|---|---|
| TOTAL | 139 | 0·7 |
| of which | | |
| county or former county | 96 | 0·8 |
| voluntary or former voluntary | 43 | 0·7 |
| of which | | |
| VA[1] or former VA and SA[2] or former SA | 23 | 0·6 |
| VC[3] or former VC | 20 | 0·7 |

[1] Voluntary aided.
[2] Special agreement.
[3] Voluntary controlled.

### School Governors

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will bring forward proposals to clarify the legal liabilities of individual governors of *(a)* local education authority maintained schools, *(b)* voluntary-aided schools and *(c)* grant-maintained schools; and what plans he has to underwrite the legal liabilities of school governors.

**Mr. Forth:** The Education Bill currently before Parliament provides for the incorporation of governing bodies of LEA-maintained schools. This will ensure that governors do not incur any personal liability for decisions taken in good faith. Subject to Royal Assent, the Department will be issuing guidance on incorporation later this year. A separate fact sheet on legal liabilities is available on request to governing bodies of self-governing —grant-maintained—schools.

It is for local education authorities and governing bodies to cover legal liabilities with their own insurers.

### Assisted Places

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the lowest, highest and average sum of money paid for an assisted place in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Forth:** In 1991-92, the lowest fee charged by a school participating in the scheme was £2,025. However, assisted places are subject to a means-tested contribution from parents. Hence the lowest cost to the Exchequer is nil where the parental contribution exceeds the fees charged. The highest cost to the Exchequer would be a pupil at the school charging the highest fee—£8,595—accepted under the scheme, who for reasons of low parental means was entitled to full fee remission. The average cost to the Exchequer for an assisted place was £3,100. These figures relate to England only.

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children received assisted places at schools in 1990, 1991, 1992 and the current year to date.

**Mr. Forth:** There were 26,740 children on assisted places in the academic year 1990-91, 27,641 in academic year 1991-92 and an estimated 28,670 assisted pupils in the current academic year 1992-93. These figures relate to pupils in England only.

### First-choice Schools

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of parents secured the school of their first choice for their children in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* the last year for which figures are available (i) nationally and (ii) for each local education authority, and for (1) primary and (2) secondary schools.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** This information is not collected centrally.

### National Curriculum

**Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he intends to extend the national curriculum and tests to the private education sector.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** My right hon. Friend has no plans to extend the national curriculum and the associated testing and assessment arrangements to schools in the independent sector. It is for independent schools themselves to decide whether to implement the national curriculum. Some have already decided to do so. As the arrangements become better established, I expect many more to follow.

### Religious and Physical Education

**Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the principal religions in Great Britain for the purposes of section 8(3) of the Education Reform Act 1988.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** It is not for my right hon. Friend, but for each local agreed syllabus conference, to determine the religions to be included in its syllabus for religious education in the light of the requirements of the law.

### Youth Service

**Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has to provide local authorities with appropriate guidelines on providing a youth service; and if he will make a statement on the policy and the priority to be attached to a youth service by local authorities.

**Mr. Boswell:** The Department's circular 1/93 of 5 January 1993, "The Further and Higher Education Act

1992", made it clear that local education authorities have a duty to secure the provision of adequate facilities for further education, including the youth service. The duty is placed on LEAs, and it is primarily for them to decide on their policies and the priority to be given to their local youth services in the light of local needs and circumstances.

**Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the expenditure on the youth service for *(a)* 1990-91, *(b)* 1991-92 and *(c)* 1992-93; and what is his forecast for expenditure in 1993-94.

**Mr. Boswell:** Expenditure by LEAs in England on the youth service in 1990-91 was £241·7 million (cash). For 1991-92, the provisional total is £248·8 million (cash). This total includes provisional figures for six LEAs and excludes one outstanding LEA return. Outturn figures are not yet available for 1992-93, and forecasts are not made for future years' expenditure on the youth service.

### Disabled Students

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students in each of the universities and institutions of higher education in England and Wales are registered disabled; and what proportion they represent of the student population in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* England and *(c)* Wales and England combined.

**Mr. Boswell:** Disability is not currently recorded on the statistical records of higher education students.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Mr. Asil Nadir

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answers to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) on 8 June, *Official Report*, column 138, when and where the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates), met Mr. Asil Nadir during the 10 days prior to Mr. Nadir travelling to northern Cyprus.

**The Prime Minister:** That is a matter for my hon. Friend.

### Registration Campaigns

**Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister what the budgets are or were for the operation of the most recent registration campaigns for *(a)* the sale of British Telecom shares, *(b)* overseas voters and *(c)* electoral registration by United Kingdom residents.

**The Prime Minister:** Details of the costs of the BT3 share offer will be reported to Parliament in due course, following completion of the sale. These will include, and separately identify, the costs of marketing and the share information office. The sum of £672,000 was spent in the 1992-93 financial year in Great Britain on advertising to encourage people to register to vote. Advertising in support of electoral registration is not carried out in Northern Ireland. A publicity campaign to make British citizens living abroad aware of their new voting rights wasd carried out in 1990 only, at a cost of £705,000.

### Teaching Company Scheme

**Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Prime Minister what proportion of the teaching company scheme budget is being transferred from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Office of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* None.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Value Added Tax

**Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the total official revenue that will accrue to the Exchequer in a full year of the imposition of VAT at the rate of 5 per cent. on *(a)* domestic fuel and power and *(b)* categories one, three, six, seven, eight, 10, 11, 12 and 13 contained in annex H of directive 92/77/EEC.

**Sir John Cope:** Estimates of the effect on VAT revenue that would occur in a full year from a 5 per cent. rate are as follows:

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| *(a)* Domestic fuel and power—yield | 740 |
| *(b)* Annex H selected items—cost | −450 |

These estimates are for 1992-93 and, unlike those published in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", make no allowance for behavioural change.

### Invalidity Benefit

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his best estimate of the number of recipients of invalidity benefit who would have an increased tax bill if invalidity benefit was taxed as income; and what would be the average increase;

(2) what is his best estimate of the number of recipients of invalidity benefit who would pay tax whose only income was invalidity benefit if that benefit was taxed as income; and what the average tax bill would be for that group;

(3) what is his best estimate of the yield to the Treasury in a full year of taxing invalidity benefit as income.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Approximate estimates are that the yield at 1993-94 levels, from making invalidity benefit taxable would be about £500 million.

The estimated number of recipients who would have an income tax liability and the average increase in tax is shown in the table:

| | *Number of taxpayers with invalidity benefit liable to tax* | *Average increase in tax with invalidity benefit liable to tax (£ a year)* |
|---|---|---|
| All recipients of invalidity benefit | [1]900,000 | 550 |
| Invalidity benefit recipients with no other income | 200,000 | 100 |

[1] Of which some 250,000 already have an income tax liability.

### Child Benefit

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his best estimate of the yield to the Treasury in a full year of treating child benefit as income for income tax purposes.

**Mr. Dorrell:** At 1993-94 levels the revenue yield would be about £600 million, assuming that the benefit was taxed as the mother's—or lone father's—income.

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate what the saving would be of taxing child benefit as part of the woman's income in 1993-94 and 1994-95;

(2) if he will estimate what the saving would be of taxing child benefit as part of the man's income in 1993-94 and 1994-95.

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* The revenue yield at 1993-94 levels would be about £1·3 billion if child benefit was taxed as the father's—or lone mother's—income and about £0·6 billion if taxed as mother's—or lone father's—income.

Estimates for 1994-95 will depend on the levels of child benefit and on tax rates and allowances for that year.

### Government Employees (Holidays)

**Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many privilege holidays in addition to bank holidays are enjoyed by employees in central Government.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Civil servants receive 2½ days' holidays, in addition to the eight public and bank holidays in the calendar year. These holidays are fixed by tradition and taken as follows: a half-day on Maundy Thursday afternoon, a day for the Queen's birthday and an additional day at Christmas.

### Workplace Nurseries

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further representations he has received on tax relief for workplace nurseries.

**Mr. Dorrell:** We have received a number of representations on this subject, as we have on many other tax reliefs. They have ranged from suggestions to give tax relief for all child care to representations that there should be no change.

### Privatisation Revenue

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he estimates privatisation revenue will be in 1993-94.

**Mr. Dorrell:** In his autumn statement of 12 November 1992, the former Chancellor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Lamont), announced that the privatisation proceeds for 1993-94 are estimated to be £5·5 billion.

### Income Tax

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the estimated full-year costs or savings of changing income tax by *(a)* raising the upper limit of the 20p band to £2,750, *(b)* raising the 25p rate by 1p, *(c)* introducing a 35p in the pound rate for taxable income from £23,700 to £28,700, *(d)* raising the 40p in the pound rate to 45p on taxable income over £35,000 and *(e)* introducing a 50p in the pound rate on taxable income over £45,000.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Latest estimates of the cost or savings of each measure compared with the regime announced in the March 1993 Budget are as follows:

*Direct revenue yield ( + ) or cost ( − ) in full year at 1993-94 income levels*

| | £ million |
|---|---|
| *(a)* Increasing width of the lower rate band to £2,750 | −240 |
| *(b)* Raising the basic rate of tax by 1 per cent. | 1,500 |
| *(c)* Charging 35 per cent. tax rate on taxable income between £23,700 and £28,700 | −330 |
| *(d)* Charging 45 per cent. tax rate on taxable income in excess of £35,000 | 1,000 |
| *(e)* Charging 50 per cent. tax rate on taxable income in excess of £45,000 | 1,500 |

The estimates do not allow for any behavioural effect that might result from such changes to the tax system and do not include capital gains tax.

### Forward: Civil Service Catering

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for the future of Forward: Civil Service Catering.

**Mr. Nelson:** My right hon. Friend the former Chancellor told the House on 27 March 1991, *Official Report*, columns *410-11*, that he had decided that the Civil Service Catering Organisation—as it was then known—should be reorganised with the aim of transferring it into the private sector.

Since the announcement, substantial changes have been made, including renaming the organisation as Forward: Civil Service Catering, and I believe it is now ready for privatisation. Financial advisers have been appointed to assist in this process. Parliamentary approval to this new service will be sought in a supplementary estimate for Her Majesty's Treasury vote—class XVII, vote 1. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure of up to £400,000 on preliminary expenses will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Forward is profitable and has shown its ability to win business in a fully competitive situation. Privatisation will open the way for it to compete for business outside the public sector.

On privatisation, Forward staff would transfer on their existing terms and conditions in accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings (Employment Protections) Regulations 1981.

There will be full consultation with the trade unions involved.

### Pensioners (Income Tax)

**Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the number of pensioners above income support level who do not pay income tax.

**Mr. Dorrell:** About 4·5 million at 1993-94 levels.

### Sterling

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *613*, what estimates his Department has made of the effect of the depreciation of sterling against the ecu since September 1992 in terms of the level of sterling receipts; and if he will list those receipts, by European Community programme.

**Sir John Cope:** The level of sterling receipts which the United Kingdom will receive as a result of the depreciation of sterling against the ecu since September 1992 cannot be estimated with any precision. It depends on various uncertainties, including continuing exchange rate changes, the timing of receipts from the Community and the availability of projects providing value for money.

### Lottery Duty

**Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the direct effect on revenue in the years 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 of introduction of the clauses in chapter II of part I of the Finance (No. 2) Bill had they come into effect from 6 April.

**Sir John Cope:** The revenue yield depends on the turnover of the national lottery, which is difficult to estimate. Annual turnover in the region of £1·5 billion would provide a duty yield of £180 million. This would be broadly offset by reductions in the yield of other taxes including those on other forms of gambling.

### Gross Domestic Product

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the gross domestic product per capita for *(a)* Hong Kong and *(b)* the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Nelson:** Figures for Hong Kong are published in the United Nations "Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific".

Figures for the United Kingdom are published in table 8 of "Economic Trends". Copies of both publications are available from the Library of the House.

### Excise Duty

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the operation of the new rules governing the calculation of excise duty on beer.

**Sir John Cope:** The first indications from official and trade sources are that the new beer duty system, which was introduced on 1 June, is working well. Customs is continuing to liaise closely with the trade to ensure that the new arrangements are implemented as smoothly as possible. At a late stage, the Brewers Society has claimed that the new rate is not likely to prove fiscally neutral and Customs is studying its submissions. In the meanwhile, we have no reason to alter the estimate that the change involves a shortfall of duty to the Exchequer, for 1993-94 only, of about £200 million.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### "Unfinished Business"

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what amount of funding was given by the Community Relations Council to the film "Unfinished Business".

**Mr. Ancram:** £6,000.

### Library Services (Charges)

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what representations he has received in connection with the proposed introduction of charges for library services;

(2) what steps he will take to review article 45 from the Library Services (Northern Ireland) Order in relation to the charges for library services.

**Mr. Ancram:** Following publication, for consultation purposes, of the draft Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, nine responses were received about article 45, together with a letter from the hon. Gentleman. For the most part, these representations sought to ensure that the basic library lending service would remain free of charge and I am happy to give that assurance.

I have no plans to review article 45 at present.

### Cattle (Tuberculosis)

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current situation regarding additional or alternative cattle tuberculosis tests in Northern Ireland; and what steps he has taken to secure derogation powers under EC directives to use such tests.

**Mr. Ancram:** The Department of Agriculture is currently seeking to develop a blood test suitable to detect bovine tuberculosis. A pilot trial was carried out in 1990-91 with encouraging results and a larger scale field trial is now under way.

This trial will be completed later this year and until the results of the trial have been fully analysed it will not be possible to seek EC agreement to the use of a blood test to detect TB.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cattle were slaughtered in each of the last five years as reactors to tuberculosis testing; and if he will show how many of these were subsequently shown to actually have tuberculosis.

**Mr. Ancram:** The information is as follows:

| *Year* | *Number of reactor cattle slaughtered* | *Number of cattle confirmed to have tuberculosis*[1] |
|---|---|---|
| 1988 | 1,470 | 731 |
| 1989 | 2,493 | 1,337 |
| 1990 | 3,124 | 1,409 |
| 1991 | 4,108 | 1,586 |
| 1992 | 4,601 | 1,653 |

[1] Post-mortem findings and/or laboratory examination.

While all the slaughtered cattle were given a post-mortem examination, only visible lesions indicating

an advanced stage of TB can be detected in this way. The presence of TB is more readily detected in live animals by the tuberculin test.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what significance is given to badgers as a factor in the epidemiology of cattle tuberculosis in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Ancram:** Badgers are not believed to be a significant source of TB infection in cattle in Northern Ireland.

### Mr. Samuel Devenney

**Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will now re-open inquiries into the death of Mr. Samuel Devenney, following information forwarded to him by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West.

**Mr. Mates:** This is a matter for the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, to whom I have passed the correspondence received from the hon. Member.

### Phosphorus Flares

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many phosphorus flares or incendiary devices have been washed up on the Northern Ireland coastline in the past year; and what action he has taken to identify the source of these phosphorus flares and to prevent more being deposited on Northern Ireland beaches.

**Mr. Mates** *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* I am advised that up to 7 June 1993, a total of 205 phosphorus flares had been washed up on the Northern Ireland coastline. A contract has been let to a waste disposal company for the collection and disposal of any of these flares which are identified and notified to the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland). It is believed that the majority of the flares are from private vessels and merchant shipping which have been washed or thrown overboard; in addition, a proportion may have been illegally dumped.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### World Service

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the number of listeners to the World Service expressed per kilowatt of transmitter power.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The latest information indicates that some 4,895 people listen to World Service direct broadcasts for every kilowatt of power transmitted. This figure does not include listeners to World Service programmes transmitted by other broadcasters under rebroadcasting arrangements.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many FCO staff working for the communications engineering department at transmitter sites in the United Kingdom and overseas have been transferred to the World Service; and what was the impact on the grant in aid of the transfer of CED transmitter sites and Ascension island services.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** No FCO staff were transferred to the World Service, but four engineering and two industrial staff employed by the FCO were transferred to BBC Transmission, a separate body. The impact on the grant in aid of these and other transfers was cost neutral since, where necessary, funds to cover the costs of the additional responsibilities were transferred from the FCO to the World Service grant in aid. The total amount transferred was £6·43 million.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the World Service increase in budget since 1980 has been spent on upgrading and replacing old transmitters.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The amount spent by the World Service on such projects under the 1981-1991 audibility improvement programme was £96·4 million—at outturn costs. Between 1980-81 and 1991-92 the annual total World Service grants in aid rose from £55 million to £159·6 million.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on hours broadcast per employee in the World Service.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The latest information available indicates that the World Service achieved 15·3 hours of broadcasting output per employee in 1992-93.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on audience figures for World Service broadcasting in *(a)* China, *(b)* eastern Europe, *(c)* Africa and *(d)* the rest of the world.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The latest audience figures for World Service broadcasts for these areas are as follows:

(a) Eastern Europe, excluding countries of the former Soviet Union: 4·5 million
(b) Africa (South of Sahara): 26 million
(c) Rest of the world: 93·5 million, of which 50·5 million are in the sub-continent and 12 million in the middle east and north Africa.

No data are available for mainland China.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which language services it is presently planned to cease broadcasting from the World Service.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** There are no plans at present for the World Service to discontinue any language services.

### Turkey

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Kurdish information centre regarding the subject of human rights in Turkey; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office recently received a copy of a circular letter from the "Kurdistan Information Centre", a London-based organisation. The letter listed Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) conditions for an extension of its March ceasefire in Turkey.

We regret the PKK's decision to end its unilaterally declared ceasefire and the subsequent escalation of

violence in Turkey's southeast. We frequently make clear to the Turkish Government the importance we attach to combating terrorism within a legal framework and with full respect for human rights.

### East Timor

**Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Indonesian Government on the implementation of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights resolution calling for the United Nations special rapporteur on torture and extrajudicial executions and the United Nations working groups on arbitary detention and on enforced and involuntary disappearances to be allowed to conduct investigations in East Timor.

**Mr. Goodlad:** We have urged the Indonesians—most recently during the visit to Indonesia in April by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—to co-operate with the United Nations in implementing the resolution.

### Seal Culls (Russia)

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence or information his Department has received on the number of baby seals culled in the Arklane region of Russia for *(a)* the current year to date, *(b)* 1992 and *(c)* 1991; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 15 January, *Official Report*, column *822*.

### Gibraltar

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to secure for Gibraltar a place on the European Committee of the Regions.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Final decisions on the allocation of seats on the European Committee of the Regions have yet to be taken. Nomination of representatives will be made in good time before the coming into force of the Maastricht treaty.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### EC Assistance, London

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he supports the proposal for European Community assistance for inner London.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Negotiations on the Commission's proposed amendments to the current regulations of the European structural funds, including the eligibility criteria and method of selection of objective 2 areas, are unlikely to be agreed before the end of July. Only when revised regulations have been agreed by the Council of Ministers can consideration be given to the designation of particular areas for assistance in the subsequent period.

### Fuel Cell Research

**Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total amount invested in fuel cell research by his Department for 1993-94; and what are the totals invested in such research (i) in the European Community, and (ii) for all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development members.

**Mr. Eggar:** My Department's expected expenditure of about £0·8 million this year on advance fuel cell research provides a focus for United Kingdom activity and assists companies to participate in European programmes. Under the last EC Joule round, about £10 million of public funding was allocated to 17 projects on fuel cells recommended for support of which 10 involved at least one United Kingdom participant.

The total research expenditure—industry and government—on fuel cell research is estimated to be about £50 million a year for the EEC and about £100 million a year for all OECD countries.

### National Welsh Omnibus Services Ltd.

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 21 April, *Official Report*, column *118*, if he will make a statement on the progress of consideration by the Insolvency Service of the national Welsh bus company.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The report on the conduct of the directors of National Welsh Omnibus Services Ltd. is still under consideration. The Secretary of State has until 2 January 1994 to bring proceedings should it be decided that it is in the public interest to do so.

### Warren Spring Laboratory

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the economic and public expenditure effects, and effects on research expertise in environmental technology in Britain, of closing Warren Spring Laboratory.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's pursuant reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) on 10 June 1993, *Official Report*, column *303*. My right hon. Friend made a long-term assessment of all these matters and concluded that they favoured the creation of the National Environmental Technology Centre as announced on 10 June.

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration he gave to PA consultancy group's position as a business rival to Warren Spring Laboratory at the time PA consultancy group was appointed to review the future of Warren Spring Laboratory.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The PA consultancy group was selected after a process of competitive tendering and with the knowledge that it is a company with an international reputation which could be relied upon to act with complete integrity.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many staff, and what present Warren Spring Laboratory functions, he proposes to transfer to Harwell.

**Mr. McLoughlin** *[holding answer 15 June 1993]*: My aims with regard to both the staff and the business activities of the Warren Spring Laboratory were given in my right hon. Friend's pursuant reply to my hon. Friend

the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) on 10 June 1993, *Official Report*, column *303*. The precise details and numbers are still being decided.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what plans he has for the revenue received from Glaxo for the sale of the former site of Warren Spring Laboratory in Stevenage;

(2) if he will make a statement on *(a)* the sum paid by Glaxo for the Warren Spring Laboratory site in Stevenage and *(b)* if the revenue will be used to secure the future of the laboratory's expertise and staff.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's pursuant reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), on 10 June 1993, *Official Report*, column *303*.

### Eastern and Central Europe

**Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *485*, (1) if he will list those institutions currently receiving funding or other assistance from his Department for work undertaken in eastern and central Europe; if he will specify the nature of the assistance involved; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the assistance programmes available to British institutions involved in work in eastern and central Europe;

(3) what assistance his Department is currently providing to the British engineering sector involved in work in eastern and central Europe; if he will specify the nature of the assistance involved; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** My Department provides a comprehensive range of services to assist the very many United Kingdom companies and other bodies which are interested in the region, including support for outward missions—sometimes led ministerially—and participation in overseas trade fairs as well as the provision of general and specific information about the markets and the opportunities in them. Information about export and consultancy projects under bilateral, EC and multilateral-funded assistance programmes is also available and my Department encourages United Kingdom bodies to exploit such opportunities.

The major reorganisation of the DTI's export services which was recently announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will enhance the service provided by the Department.

A detailed list of all DTI assistance for exporters is included in the latest British Overseas Trade Board annual report 1992-93. A copy of the report has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

A large number of British engineering companies are already active in central and eastern Europe and avail themselves of the services already mentioned.

Information on the number of individual British institutions which receive funding or assistance from the Department is not available, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Electricity

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's latest estimate of total electricity generating capacity for the year 2000.

**Mr. Eggar:** The Department does not prepare estimates of future generating capacity. The National Grid Company is required by its licence to prepare each year a statement known as the seven-year statement. The most recent statement includes an assessment of electricity demand up to the year 2000 and several scenarios of generation capacity.

### Softwood Imports

**Mr. Gallie:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of current United Kingdom imports of timber is of softwoods.

**Mr. Needham:** In 1992, 76·5 per cent. of United Kingdom imports of timber were softwoods.

### Saudia Arabia

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the total value of United Kingdom exports to Saudi Arabia for each year from 1980, broken down into civil and defence-related exports.

**Mr. Needham:** Information on United Kingdom visible trade is published in "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library.

For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it has been the consistent policy of successive Governments not to disclose particulars of defence trade with other countries. It is therefore not possible to provide a breakdown into civil and defence-related exports.

### Bilateral Trade Agreements

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what monitoring his Department is doing into the extent of bilateral trade agreements by individual EC member states with the United States of America; if he will make it his policy to enter into such agreements separately from the European Commission negotiating rounds; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Needham:** There is an annual decision by the Council of the European Community listing previous bilateral agreements between individual member states and third countries which remain in operation to the extent that their provisions do not conflict with Community law. The European Commission is responsible for negotiating the Community's trade agreements—in consultation with the member states, which approve the outcome—since such matters fall within the Community's common commercial policy. The United Kingdom cannot deviate from Community law in this respect.

### Beer Orders

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to publish his Department's response to the fourth report of the Agriculture Select Committee of the current Session on the "Effects of the Beer Orders on the Brewing Industry and Consumers", HC 402; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** My Department is considering this report carefully and intends to respond to the Agriculture Select Committee within the usual two-month period, that is, by 20 July. It will be for the Committee to decide whether to make that response public.

### Atomic Energy Authority

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the ability of the Atomic Energy Authority at Harwell to provide a full environmental intergrated research service covering physical, biological, chemical and engineering subjects.

**Mr. McLoughlin** *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's pursuant reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) on 10 June 1993, *Official Report*, column *303*. I expect the new National Environmental Technology Centre to provide such services.

### Inntrepreneur Estates Ltd.

**Mr. Tyler:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will arrange for the publication of an interim report of his Department's investigation of the pub leasing policies and practices of Inntrepreneur Estates Ltd. as soon as possible, and thereafter consider initiating a full and public inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton** *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* My right hon. Friend, the President of the Board of Trade and I have received a number of representations about Inntrepreneur Estates Ltd. pub leasing arrangements. My Department has been looking into the specific points raised and I expect replies to be sent shortly.

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, columns *161-62*, what investigations he has initiated into the Inntrepreneur scheme operated by Grand Metropolitan Enterprises within the brewery industry; upon what basis these investigations were begun; who is being consulted; to whom evidence can be submitted; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton** *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I have received a number of representations about Inntrepreneur Estates Ltd. pub leasing arrangements. My Department has been looking into the specific points raised and I expect replies to be sent shortly.

### Libyan Technicians

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action his Department is taking to ensure that United Kingdom companies do not breach the UN embargo on Libya by training Libyan technicians to maintain airframes, engines and avionics which have significant military as well as civil potential.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* The Libya (United Nations Sanctions) Order—"the order"—1992, which came into effect from 15 April, prohibits the provision of any technical advice, assistance or training related to the supply, delivery, manufacture, maintenance or use of any goods specified in part A of Schedule 1 to the order to any persons connected with Libya except under the authority of a licence granted by the Secretary of State.

Any applications to undertake training courses or seminars for Libyan nationals whether within the United Kingdom or elsewhere are considered on a case by case basis. It is not our practice to disclose details of licence applications.

### Departmental Company Reports

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his Department expects to publish their report on the Atlantic and B and C companies.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton** *[holding answer 18 June 1993]:* Inspectors were appointed on 15 June 1990 under section 432 of the Companies Act 1985 to investigate and report on the affairs of Atlantic Computers plc and Atlantic Computer Systems, plc, both major companies in the British and Commonwealth group. The inspectors are in the final stages of their investigation but have not yet submitted their report; I will consider publication when it is received.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Western Sahara

37. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further plans there are to provide aid for the people of the Western Sahara.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We have no plans to provide bilateral aid for the people of the Western Sahara, but continue to contribute finance and personnel to the United Nations mission responsible for organisation and conduct of the referendum which we hope will take place this year.

### Vietnam

38. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on aid to Vietnam.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We have committed some £8 million in aid to Vietnam since our programme resumed in 1990. It is focused on reintegration of the returning migrants and support for economic reform. We are sending a mission to Vietnam next month to discuss an expansion of technical co-operation.

### Bosnia

40. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what limitations have been placed on humanitarian aid to Bosnia following the Washington agreement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The joint action programme agreed in Washington on 22 May 1993 has placed no limitations on humanitarian aid to Bosnia.

### Forestry

41. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the forestry implications of aid projects.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We have received representations on the forestry aspects of the aid programme from Members of Parliament, agencies and individuals.

### Environmentally Sustainable Projects

42. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are taken by his Department to ensure that its aid projects are environmentally sustainable.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** All Overseas Development Administration projects are subject to environmental assessment according to the guidelines and procedures described in the Overseas Development Administration's "Manual of Environmental Appraisal".

### AIDS (Africa)

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what additional resources he plans to make available to combat the spread of AIDS in Africa.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** To date, over £16 million has been spent in support of programmes in Africa to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS. We have committed a further £2 million this year and we are ready to do more. Other initiatives are being considered.

### Nigeria

**Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what United Kingdom assistance has been given to the construction of Abuja, Nigeria; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** No United Kingdom assistance has been given to the construction of Abuja.

### Indonesia and Tanzania

**Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the amount of aid granted to *(a)* Indonesia and *(b)* Tanzania in each of the last 10 years; and what proportion was used to finance the purchase of British goods.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** United Kingdom gross bilateral aid to Tanzania and Indonesia from 1983 to the end of the financial year 1991-92 was as follows:

*£'000*

| | *Tanzania* | *Indonesia* |
|---|---|---|
| 1983 | 30,384 | 12,358 |
| 1984 | 33,033 | 28,292 |
| 1985 | 17,967 | 33,649 |
| 1986 | 12,715 | 8,898 |
| 1987 | 28,789 | 12,223 |
| 1987-88 | 33,617 | 14,660 |
| 1988-89 | 31,956 | 17,366 |
| 1989-90 | 20,060 | 21,616 |
| 1990-91 | 41,403 | 24,600 |
| 1991-92 | 32,454 | 34,425 |

The basis on which these figures are recorded was changed from calendar to financial years with effect from 1992; the previous four financial years have been included above for ease of comparison.

Statistics on the proportion used to finance the purchase of British goods and services are not available on a country basis.

### Soviet Union (Contamination)

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent initiatives have been taken by the overseas development administration to assist countries of the former Soviet Union in cleaning up environmental contamination.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The know-how fund has financed two projects in Ukraine; the first to study environmental clean up priorities in the Kiev region post Chernobyl; and the second to provide equipment and training to help measure radioactivity levels in food products in the Kiev region.

In May 1993, we financed a study visit to Britain by Russians involved in radioactive waste management. The know-how fund hopes to begin several further environmental projects in Russia in the coming months.

### Sudan

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom's contribution to the international relief effort in south Sudan; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Britain has committed almost £21 million in humanitarian assistance to southern Sudan since the international relief effort, Operation Lifeline Sudan was established in 1989. More than £2 million of this has been committed this year.

A senior ODA official is participating in an EC troika visit to the area from 18 to 23 June to assess the situation and consider how further help can best be provided.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

**Mr. Sproat:** Since November 1992, my Department has contracted out a range of new central services, including mailroom services, minor maintenance, office cleaning, reprographics, security, central typing and secretarial cover. The Department has also contracted out the provision of computer equipment and new associated services.

Subject to a tendering exercise, the Historic Royal Palaces agency will contract out unskilled ground maintenance work at Hampton Court palace. The manning of vehicle entrances, ticket checking and security control room at the Tower of London has been contracted out and staff redeployed.

The other agency, the Royal Parks, is currently market testing building works services and estates management and an announcement on the outcome will be made shortly.

### Non-terrestrial Broadcasting

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding the ownership regulations on non-terrestrial broadcasting.

**Mr. Brooke:** The subject has been raised at meetings with broadcasters and in letters this year from two hon. Members and from members of the public.

### Television Licence Fee

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are his plans for setting future increases in the television licence fee.

**Mr. Brooke:** In January 1991, following a study by Price Waterhouse, the Home Secretary announced a five-year television licence fee strategy: the licence fee increase for April 1991 would be set at retail prices index (RPI) minus 3 per cent., followed by increases at RPI for the next four years. In addition, the Government gave an undertaking to reassess the position before the increase due in April 1994.

Today I have appointed Touche Ross to assess the BBC's progress in achieving the efficiency and revenue gains identified by Price Waterhouse in 1990; to advise me on the scope for any further gains; and to advise whether RPI linkage is appropriate for the licence fee increases in the next three years until the renewal of the charter.

The longer-term future of the television licence fee will be considered as part of the review of the BBC's royal charter.

## HEALTH

### Birth Statistics

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of live births per year in each of the last five years; and what percentage of live births required special care in a neo-natal unit in each of those years.

**Mr. Sackville:** Live births in England 1988-92.

| *Year* | *Live births* |
|---|---|
| 1988 | 654,363 |
| 1989 | 649,357 |
| 1990 | 666,920 |
| 1991 | 660,806 |
| 1992 | 651,784 |

Approximately 6 to 10 per cent. of new-born babies require care exceeding normal routine care at some stage.

### Consultants

**Ms Primaraolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the numbers of *(a)* consultants in neonatology and *(b)* neo-natal intensive care beds in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Sackville:** The available information is shown in the tables.

Consultant neonatologists are not identified separately in the Department's census of medical staff, but are included under paediatrics.

*Consultants employed during the past 5 years England (whole-time equivalent) 30 September 1987 to 1991.*

| *Year* | *Paediatrics* |
|---|---|
| 1987 | 571·5 |
| 1988 | 597·2 |
| 1989 | 678·8 |
| 1990 | 699·1 |
| 1991 | 723·0 |

*Neo-natal cots in regionally designated intensive care wards and non-maternity wards.*

| *Year* | *Cots* |
|---|---|
| 1987-88 | 3,567 |
| 1988-89 | 3,512 |
| 1989-90 | 3,451 |
| 1990-91 | 3,374 |
| 1991-92 | 3,424 |

*Note:*—Figures include cots used for various levels of care; from the most intensive level for seriously ill babies to special care—which is needed for babies who need attention exceeding normal routine care.

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 18 March, *Official Report*, column *347*, what is the mean age at which doctors achieve consultant status in England.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The mean age of consultants appointed during the year ending 30 September 1991 in England was 39.

### Intensive Care Cots

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are her Department's recommendations on the number of nurses needed per cot, and the number of neo-natal intensive care cots required nationally.

**Mr. Sackville:** This is a matter for local decision, taking account of professional guidelines and particular local circumstances.

### Nurses

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the evidence for the statement in a Department of Health press release (H93/707) of 20 April that the turnover rate among nurses has dropped substantially.

**Mr. Sackville:** Better pay and better conditions have resulted in a more stable workforce, which in turn enhances quality of care. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's statement that there is recent encouraging evidence which shows that the turnover rate amongst nurses has dropped substantially, to less than 10 per cent. overall and to as low as 3 per cent. in some areas, was based on information exchanged during the normal course of meetings and discussions with regional health authorities.

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the numbers of qualified, unqualified and learner nursing staff who joined the NHS in 1991 and 1992.

**Mr. Sackville:** The available information is shown in the tables.

| | *1991* | *1992* |
|---|---|---|
| Qualified | [1]20,230 | [1]16,540 |
| Unqualified | 15,390 | Not collected |

*Notes:*

[1] Year ending 31 March 1991 excludes 27 data suppliers—regional health authority headquarters, district health authorities and the London ambulance service who either did not supply data or whose data were unusable. Data for 1992 excludes three regions where complete information was not available.

[2] 39 per cent. (1991) of all unqualified joiners and 27 per cent. (1991) of all qualified joiners were recorded as "source of recruitment not known". 19 per cent. (1992) of all joiners were recorded as "Others".
*Source of data:* KM45 return 1991 and 1990. KM48 1992.

*Pre-registration nursing*
*Initial entries and re-entries, years ending 31 March*

| *Level 1* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|
| Traditional | 10,618 | 7,623 |
| P2000[1] | 4,834 | 9,241 |

[1] Project 2000 learners are regarded as supernumerary and are not included in work force numbers.

*Source:* English National Board annual reports 1990-91 and 1991-92.

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the total number and whole-time equivalent number of health care assistants or health care support workers employed wholly or primarily in nursing roles by the NHS in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

**Mr. Sackville:** This information is not available centrally.

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the numbers of qualified nursing or midwifery staff joining the NHS in 1990, 1991 and 1992 who *(a)* were newly qualifying student nurses with employed status, *(b)* were newly qualifying project 2000 students, *(c)* were registered nurses entering the NHS after a period of non-employment, *(d)* joined NHS units directly after being employed by another NHS unit and *(e)* joined NHS units directly after being employed in other nursing, such as general practitioner nursing, nursing homes, independent hospitals, etcetera.

**Mr. Sackville:** The available information is shown in the table.

*Qualified Nursing and Midwifery Staff joining NHS: Years ending 31 March*

| | *1990* | *1991* | *1992* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *(a)* Newly qualified student nurses with employed status | Not separately identifiable | Not separately identifiable | 6,610 (not possible to separate *(a)* and *(b)*) |
| *(b)* Newly qualifying project 2000 students | Not separately identifiable | Not separately identifiable | See *(a)* |
| *(c)* Registered nurses entering the NHS after a period of unemployment | Not separately identifiable | Not separately identifiable | 2,050 |
| *(d)* Joined NHS units directly after being employed by another NHS unit | 21,600 | 18,490 | Not separately identifiable |
| *(e)* Joined NHS units directly after being employed in nursing | 6,790 | 5,350 | Not separately identifiable. This would come under the categories of other |

*Notes:*
1. For year ending 31 March 1990 information was not available from 11 data suppliers—regional health authority headquarters, district health authorities and the London ambulance service. Information for 1991 excludes 27 data suppliers who either did not supply data or whose data were unusable. Data for 1992 exclude three regions where complete information was not available.
2. 32 per cent. (1990) and 39 per cent. (1991) of all joiners were recorded as sources not known. 19 per cent. (1992) of all joiners were recorded as "others". Data for 1992 exclude three regional health authorities where full recording was not possible.
*Source of data:* KM45 return 1991 and 1990. KM48 1992.

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the average gross weekly earnings and make-up of pay by type of pay or allowances for each of the clinical grades for nursing and midwifery staff in 1991 and 1992.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information is shown in the table:

*Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors estimated average weekly gross earnings of full time staff*

| *Grade* | *1991-92* | | | *1992-93* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Total*[1] *£* | *Basic pay £* | *Allowances £* | *Total*[1] *£* | *Basic pay £* | *Allowance £* |
| Clinical Grade A | 169·3 | 137·0 | 32·3 | 186·0 | 151·3 | 34·7 |
| Clinical Grade B | 194·4 | 155·3 | 39·1 | 203·8 | 163·4 | 40·4 |
| Clinical Grade C | 230·0 | 198·4 | 31·6 | 256·4 | 220·1 | 36·3 |
| Clinical Grade D | 234·8 | 201·1 | 33·7 | 250·3 | 215·0 | 35·3 |
| Clinical Grade E | 272·4 | 232·2 | 40·2 | 294·2 | 250·7 | 43·5 |
| Clinical Grade F | 320·2 | 275·3 | 44·9 | 340·8 | 294·6 | 46·2 |
| Clinical Grade G | 354·7 | 324·1 | 30·6 | 381·3 | 349·3 | 32·0 |
| Clinical Grade H | 376·6 | 356·1 | 20·5 | 397·9 | 378·8 | 19·1 |
| Clinical Grade I | 428·7 | 408·3 | 20·5 | 459·9 | 439·3 | 20·6 |

[1] Totals may not add up due to rounding.

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the numbers of unqualified NHS nursing staff joining the NHS in 1990, 1991 and 1992, who were *(a)* joining directly after completing full-time education, *(b)* aged under 21 years, *(c)* joining from other

NHS units, *(d)* joining from other care sector employment, *(e)* joining from other employment, *(f)* joining from non-activity in the labour market and *(g)* joining from unemployment.

**Mr. Sackville:** The available information is shown in the table.

*Unqualified nursing staff joining the National Health Service; years ending 31 March.*

| | *1990* | *1991* | *1992* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Joining from other NHS units | 2,680 | 2,340 | [1]— |
| Joining from other care sector employment | 3,370 | 2,810 | [1]— |
| Joining from other employment | 4,070 | 3,130 | [1]— |

[1] Not collected.

*Notes:*

1. For year ending 31 March 1990 information was not available from 11 data suppliers—regional health authority headquarters, district health authorities and the London ambulance service. Information for 1991 excludes 27 data suppliers who either did not supply data or whose data were unusable.
2. Some 32 per cent. (1990) and 39 per cent. (1991) of all joiners were recorded as "source of recruitment not known".

*Source of data:* KM45 return 1991 and 1990.

## Prescribed Items (Cost)

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated percentage of prescribed items dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors which cost less than 20p.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Approximately 5 per cent.

## Dental Health

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of dentists by family health services authority and in total who have given notice of their intention to deregister adults and children in the last two years.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information available centrally is the number of dentists, by family health services authority and in total, who have given notice to deregister patients since 3 July 1992. This is shown in the table. We are advised by family health services authorities that they are able to assist patients who seek their help in obtaining national health service dentistry. Since July 1992 total registrations have increased by 2·63 per cent. from 27,314,952 to 28,034,677 as at 30 April 1993.

Deregistration can occur for a number of reasons for example, patients moving away from the area, or dentists retiring and can be instigated by dentists or patients.

*Number of dentists who have given notice to deregister adult and child patients—week ending 3 July 1992 to week ending 11 June 1993*

| *Family health services authority* | *Number of dentists[1] at 30 June 1992* | *Number of dentists* *Adults* | *Children* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cleveland | 176 | 7 | 0 |
| Cumbria | 150 | 23 | 10 |
| Durham | 170 | 5 | 0 |
| Northumberland | 99 | 5 | 0 |
| Gateshead | 81 | 4 | 2 |
| Newcastle-upon-Tyne | 125 | 0 | 0 |
| North Tyneside | 75 | 0 | 0 |
| South Tyneside | 51 | 0 | 0 |
| Sunderland | 88 | 0 | 0 |
| Humberside | 223 | 47 | 6 |
| North Yorkshire | 259 | 46 | 0 |
| Bradford | 175 | 0 | 0 |
| Calderdale | 65 | 13 | 5 |
| Kirklees | 135 | 23 | 0 |
| Leeds | 293 | 61 | 14 |
| Wakefield | 95 | 2 | 0 |
| Derbyshire | 286 | 35 | 0 |
| Leicestershire | 253 | 15 | 1 |
| Lincolnshire | 133 | 0 | 0 |
| Nottinghamshire | 300 | 77 | 17 |
| Barnsley | 74 | 0 | 0 |
| Doncaster | 102 | 6 | 0 |
| Rotherham | 84 | 6 | 1 |
| Sheffield | 204 | 0 | 0 |
| Cambridgeshire | 183 | 14 | 0 |
| Norfolk | 225 | 51 | 7 |
| Suffolk | 215 | 7 | 2 |
| Bedfordshire | 154 | 4 | 0 |
| Hertfordshire | 438 | 23 | 2 |
| Barnet | 176 | 25 | 2 |
| Brent and Harrow | 222 | 4 | 2 |
| Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow | 320 | 1 | 0 |
| Hillingdon | 98 | 0 | 0 |
| Kensington, Westminster and Chelsea | 268 | 5 | 0 |
| Essex | 456 | 40 | 5 |
| Barking and Havering | 112 | 8 | 1 |
| Camden and Islington | 197 | 2 | 0 |
| City and East London | 214 | 16 | 0 |
| Enfield and Haringey | 214 | 3 | 2 |
| Redbridge and Waltham Forest | 183 | 8 | 1 |
| East Sussex | 291 | 26 | 1 |

| Family health services authority | Number of dentists[1] at 30 June 1992 | Number of dentists Adults | Children |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kent | 526 | 206 | 20 |
| Greenwich and Bexley | 170 | 19 | 0 |
| Bromley | 142 | 38 | 1 |
| Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham | 351 | 28 | 0 |
| Surrey | 496 | 63 | 0 |
| West Sussex | 298 | 21 | 0 |
| Croydon | 146 | 18 | 0 |
| Kingston and Richmond | 146 | 5 | 0 |
| Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth | 289 | 30 | 1 |
| Dorset | 235 | 34 | 0 |
| Hampshire | 531 | 51 | 1 |
| Wiltshire | 179 | 15 | 0 |
| Isle of Wight | 47 | 12 | 0 |
| Berkshire | 274 | 55 | 1 |
| Buckinghamshire | 256 | 67 | 0 |
| Northamptonshire | 144 | 0 | 0 |
| Oxfordshire | 208 | 35 | 2 |
| Avon | 375 | 14 | 0 |
| Cornwall and Isles of Scilly | 146 | 65 | 11 |
| Devon | 373 | 151 | 19 |
| Gloucestershire | 211 | 48 | 1 |
| Somerset | 152 | 0 | 0 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 237 | 14 | 0 |
| Shropshire | 138 | 6 | 0 |
| Staffordshire | 268 | 17 | 5 |
| Warwickshire | 142 | 5 | 0 |
| Birmingham | 344 | 7 | 0 |
| Coventry | 94 | 13 | 1 |
| Dudley | 89 | 0 | 0 |
| Sandwell | 97 | 0 | 0 |
| Solihull | 70 | 6 | 1 |
| Walsall | 71 | 0 | 0 |
| Wolverhampton | 69 | 0 | 0 |
| Cheshire | 371 | 17 | 2 |
| Liverpool | 176 | 54 | 1 |
| St. Helens and Knowsley | 107 | 7 | 0 |
| Sefton | 116 | 1 | 0 |
| Wirral | 140 | 15 | 1 |
| Lancashire | 446 | 155 | 53 |
| Bolton | 93 | 7 | 2 |
| Bury | 77 | [illegible] | 2 |
| Manchester | 226 | [illegible] | 0 |
| Oldham | 91 | 0 | 0 |
| Rochdale | 73 | 0 | 0 |
| Salford | 95 | 4 | 0 |
| Stockport | 123 | 4 | 0 |
| Tameside | 81 | 1 | 0 |
| Trafford | 100 | 14 | 5 |
| Wigan | 109 | 0 | 0 |
| ENGLAND—TOTAL | 17,400 | 1,941 | 211 |

[1] Includes dentists who have a contract with more than one family health services authority.

## Dryburn Hospital

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the fulfilment of the statutory consultation period in respect of the scheme by Dryburn hospital to convert one of two paediatric wards into a day ward; how much money has so far been spent; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** We understand that the North Durham district health authority is considering the future of these wards and will consult the community health council on any proposals for substantial variations to sevices, as required by the Community Health Council Regulations 1985.

## Voluntary Organisations

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the awards given to voluntary organisations under the section 64 general scheme of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 during the financial year 1992-93.

**Mr. Bowis:** In 1992-93, grants totalling £18·3 million were awarded under the section 64 general scheme to 312 voluntary organisations in England. This represents a real terms increase of nearly 8 per cent. over 1991-92 and of 47·5 per cent. over 1978-79. Details are given in the table.

*Grants to voluntary organisations under S64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968—General Scheme (1992-93 Provisional Outturn)*

| Organisation | £ |
|---|---|
| Access Committee (England) | 155,000 |
| Action for Dysphasic Adults | 30,000 |
| Action for Sick Children | 70,000 |
| Action for Victims of Medical Accidents | 20,000 |
| Action on Disability and Development | 13,000 |
| Action on Smoking and Health | 241,700 |
| Action Resource Centre | 5,000 |
| ADFAM (Families and Friends of Drug Misusers) | 22,700 |
| Age Concern | 355,000 |
| Age Exchange Theatre Trust | 18,000 |
| Aid for Children with Tracheostomies | 9,930 |
| AIDS Ahead | 40,000 |
| AIDS and Housing Project | 29,000 |
| AIDS Care Education and Training (ACET) | 150,000 |
| AIDS Education and Research Trust | 10,000 |
| Alcohol Concern | 618,000 |
| Alzheimer's Disease Society | 168,000 |
| Amarant Trust | 9,000 |
| Amnesia Association | 6,000 |
| Angel Project | 6,500 |
| Arthritis Care | 15,000 |
| Association for All Speech Impaired Children | 5,000 |
| Association for Prevention of Drug Addiction | 7,878 |
| Association for Professionals in Services for Adolescents | 48,700 |
| Association for Residential Care | 42,635 |
| Association for Stammerers | 17,000 |
| Association of Breastfeeding Mothers | 6,000 |
| Association of Disabled Professionals | 3,000 |
| Association to Aid the Sexual and Personal Relationships of People with a Disability | 39,500 |
| Babylife Support Systems (BLISS) | 11,000 |
| Barnados | 105,000 |
| Black HIV/AIDS Network (BHAN) | 40,000 |
| Blackliners | 40,050 |
| Bobath Centre | 18,000 |
| Body Positive | 50,000 |
| Brandon Centre | 15,000 |
| Breakthrough Trust | 40,000 |
| Breastcare and Mastectomy Association of GB | 25,000 |
| Bridge | 80,834 |
| Bridges | 5,000 |
| British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering | 300,000 |
| British Association for Services to the Elderly | 12,000 |
| British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (BASPCAN) | 27,500 |
| British Association of Cancer United Patients (BACUP) | 16,000 |
| British Association of the Hard of Hearing | 55,000 |
| British Council of Organisations of Disabled People | 45,000 |
| British Deaf Association | 10,000 |
| British Fluoridation Society | 33,000 |
| British Institute of Industrial Therapy | 25,000 |
| British Institute of Mental Handicap | 30,000 |
| British Kidney Patient Association | 15,000 |
| British Organ Donor Society (BODY) | 5,000 |
| British Red Cross Society | 54,750 |
| Brook Advisory Centres | 111,550 |
| Cancer Relief MacMillan Fund | 30,050 |
| Cancer Research Campaign | 15,000 |
| Cancerlink | 43,900 |
| Care Resources for People Affected by AIDS/HIV (CARA) | 15,000 |
| Carers National Association | 220,000 |
| Catholic Child Welfare Council | 3,000 |
| Catholic Marriage Advisory Council | 44,310 |
| Centre for Accessible Environment | 70,000 |
| Centre for Applied Psychology of Social Care | 37,020 |
| Child Accident Prevention Trust | 103,000 |
| Child Care | 231,957 |
| Child Poverty Action Group | 18,000 |
| Child Psychotherapy Trust | 28,417 |
| Childline | 82,200 |
| Children's Legal Centre | 50,000 |
| Choices in Childcare | 17,996 |
| College of Occupational Therapists | 4,000 |
| Community Drugs Project | 6,500 |
| Community Hygiene Concern | 10,000 |
| Community Network | 10,000 |
| Compassionate Friends | 22,000 |
| Contact | 32,000 |
| Contact a Family | 80,000 |
| Continence Foundation | 26,250 |
| Coronary Prevention Group | 87,500 |
| Cot Death Society | 4,000 |
| Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People | 60,000 |
| Council for Disabled Children | 60,000 |
| Counsel and Care | 60,000 |
| Crohns in Childhood Research Association | 5,000 |
| Crossroads Care Attendant Schemes Ltd. | 130,000 |
| Crusaid | 10,000 |
| Cruse | 114,000 |
| Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust | 18,000 |
| Dark Horse Venture | 4,500 |
| David Hobman Charitable Trust | 5,000 |
| Daycare Trust | 30,000 |
| Dial UK | 45,000 |
| Disability Alliance | 30,000 |
| Disabled Housing Trust | 17,000 |
| Disabled Living Centres Council | 57,000 |
| Disabled Living Foundation | 337,000 |
| Disablement Income Group | 45,000 |
| Downs Syndrome Association | 15,000 |
| Dystonia Society | 2,304 |
| Dystrophic Epidermolysis Bullosa Research Association (DEBRA) | 11,000 |
| East London Asian Counselling | 24,000 |
| Eating Disorders Association | 29,000 |
| Elizabeth Fitzory Homes | 20,000 |
| Endometriosis Society | 15,000 |
| Enuresis Resource and Information Centre | 30,000 |
| Excel Employment | 20,000 |
| Exploring Parenthood | 14,000 |
| Extend | 20,000 |
| Family Heart Association | 27,400 |
| Family Planning Association | 120,000 |
| Family Policy Studies Centre | 140,000 |
| Family Rights Group | 48,995 |
| Family Service Units | 290,000 |
| Family Welfare Association | 106,000 |
| First Key | 118,832 |
| Foundation for Conductive Education | 20,000 |
| Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths | 34,500 |
| Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development (FORWARD) | 30,000 |
| Friends for the Young Deaf | 10,000 |
| Genetic Interest Group | 11,000 |
| Gingerbread | 78,000 |
| Globe Centre | 31,500 |
| Good Practices in Mental Health | 60,000 |
| Greater London Association of Alcohol Services | 6,196 |
| Guillain-Barre Syndrome Support Group | 9,000 |
| Haemophilia Society | 24,000 |
| Headway Association | 55,000 |
| Health Information for Nottingham Teenagers (HINT) | 36,000 |
| Heartline Association | 5,000 |
| Herpes Association | 18,500 |
| High/Scope UK | 8,000 |
| Holiday Care Service | 35,000 |
| Home Farm Trust | 20,000 |
| Home Start Consultancy | 100,000 |
| Homes for Homeless People | 48,000 |
| Hornsey Trust for Handicapped Children | 15,000 |
| Horticultural Therapy | 57,000 |
| Housing Campaign for Single Homeless | 36,500 |
| Hyperactive Childrens Support Group | 7,000 |
| Impact Foundation | 20,000 |
| In Touch | 3,000 |
| Independent Representation of Children in Need (IRCHIN) | 30,000 |
| Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence | 424,155 |

| *Organisation* | £ |
|---|---|
| Institute of Transcultural Health Care | 22,000 |
| International Social Service | 53,500 |
| ISSUE (was National Association for the Children) | 47,250 |
| Joint Committee on Mobility for the Disabled | 1,110 |
| Jubilee Sailing Trust | 20,000 |
| Kids | 15,000 |
| Kids Club Network | 97,000 |
| Kings Fund Centre for Health Services Development | 129,500 |
| La Leche League of Great Britain | 10,000 |
| Landmark South London HIV Centre | 60,000 |
| Leisure Link | 15,000 |
| Leonard Cheshire Foundation | 75,000 |
| London Chinese Health Resource Centre | 45,840 |
| London East AIDS Network | 25,000 |
| London Lighthouse | 300,000 |
| London Voluntary Service Council | 31,000 |
| MacFarlane Trust | 155,233 |
| Mainliners | 40,000 |
| Manic Depression Fellowship | 16,000 |
| Marfan Association | 3,000 |
| Marie Curie Memorial Foundation | 20,000 |
| Maternity Alliance | 37,695 |
| MENCAP | 250,000 |
| Menieres Society | 8,000 |
| Mental After Care Association | 50,000 |
| Mental Health Foundation | 347,500 |
| Mental Health Media Council | 30,000 |
| Merseyside Drugs Council (Wirral) | 10,000 |
| Migraine Trust | 10,000 |
| Mildmay Mission Hospital | 150,000 |
| Miscarriage Association | 15,000 |
| Mobility Information Service | 13,000 |
| Motor Neurone Disease Association | 15,000 |
| Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association | 15,000 |
| NAFSIYAT (Intercultural Psychiatry) | 15,000 |
| National Aids Manual Charitable Trust | 25,000 |
| National AIDS Trust | 225,000 |
| National Association of Children with Congenital Abnormalities of the Lower Limbs | 11,000 |
| National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare | 17,000 |
| National Association for Mental Health (MIND) | 475,000 |
| National Association for Patient Participation | 7,000 |
| National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) | 302,400 |
| National Association for the Limbless Disabled | 22,500 |
| National Association of Family Based Respite Care | 13,000 |
| National Association of Leagues of Hospital Friends | 20,000 |
| National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries | 55,000 |
| National Association of Young People in Care (NAYPIC) | 20,900 |
| National Asthma Campaign | 15,000 |
| National Back Pain Association | 21,000 |
| National Childbirth Trust | 65,826 |
| National Childminding Association | 127,000 |
| National Children's Bureau | 414,800 |
| National Citizens Advocacy | 10,000 |
| National Community Health Resource | 8,000 |
| National Council for one Parent Families | 150,000 |
| National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) | 125,000 |
| National Counselling and Welfare Service for Sick Doctors | 2,650 |
| National Development Team | 567,000 |
| National Federation of Kidney Patients | 12,500 |
| National Food Alliance | 31,000 |
| National Fostercare Assocation | 105,000 |
| National Information for Parents of Prematures (NIPPERS) | 11,000 |
| National Information Forum | 16,000 |
| National Institute for Social Work | 100,000 |
| National Meningitis Trust | 15,000 |
| National Organisation for Counselling Adoptees & Parents (NORCAP) | 8,000 |
| National Osteoporosis Society | 40,000 |
| National Playbus Association | 54,000 |
| National Schizophrenia Fellowship | 204,000 |
| National Self Help Support Centre | 47,500 |

| *Organisation* | £ |
|---|---|
| National Society for Phenileketonuria (United Kingdom) Ltd. | 6,000 |
| National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) | 150,000 |
| National Society for Non Smokers (QUIT) | 85,380 |
| National Stepfamily Association | 20,000 |
| Naz Project | 27,000 |
| Neurofibromatosis Association (LINK) | 14,000 |
| New Horizons Trust | 7,000 |
| New Parent Infant Network (NEWPIN) | 60,000 |
| North Regional Association for the Blind | 69,391 |
| One to One | 15,000 |
| Outset | 25,000 |
| Overseas Doctors Association | 17,000 |
| Parent Network | 10,000 |
| Parent to Parent Information on Adoption Services | 6,500 |
| Parentline Opus | 40,000 |
| Parents against Injustice (PAIN) | 35,000 |
| Parents for Children | 12,000 |
| Parkinsons Disease Society | 25,162 |
| Partially Sighted Society | 10,000 |
| Patients Association | 20,000 |
| People First | 17,000 |
| Phobic Action | 20,000 |
| Phobics Society | 7,500 |
| Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied (PHAB) | 30,000 |
| Positively Women | 70,000 |
| Post Adoption Centre | 5,000 |
| Post Adoption Services | 5,000 |
| Prader Willi Syndrome Association UK | 4,000 |
| Pre-Retirement Association | 20,000 |
| Pre-School Playgroups Association | 570,000 |
| Primary Immunodeficiency Association | 8,000 |
| Prince of Wales Advisory Group on Disability | 112,500 |
| Queen Elizabeth Foundation for the Disabled | 54,000 |
| Rainer Foundation | 18,700 |
| Rape Counselling and Research Project | 20,000 |
| Relatives Association | 13,000 |
| Release | 2,958 |
| Remap Great Britain | 12,000 |
| Repetitive Strain Injury Association | 6,000 |
| Rescare | 15,000 |
| Research Trust for Metabolic Diseases in Children | 10,000 |
| Restricted Growth Association | 10,000 |
| Richmond Fellowship | 97,000 |
| Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR) | 225,000 |
| Royal National Institute for the Blind | 246,600 |
| Royal National Institute for the Deaf | 105,870 |
| Royal Philanthropic Society | 6,000 |
| Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) | 53,000 |
| Samaritans | 160,000 |
| Save the Children Fund | 20,000 |
| Schizophrenia A National Emergency (SANE) | 67,849 |
| Scoliosis Association UK | 2,000 |
| Sense (NADBRH) | 95,000 |
| Sequal | 25,000 |
| Sickle Cell Society | 30,000 |
| Skills for People | 11,000 |
| Society for Mucopolysaccharide Diseases | 4,000 |
| South Regional Association for the Blind | 145,000 |
| St. John Ambulance | 53,000 |
| Standing Committee on Sexual Abuse of Children (SCOSAC) | 20,000 |
| Standing Conference Ethnic Minority Senior Citizen (SCEMSC) | 20,000 |
| Standing Conference on Drug Abuse (SCODA) | 310,730 |
| Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS) | 61,000 |
| Streetwise Youth | 20,000 |
| Stroke Association | 46,562 |
| Strutton Housing Association | 12,000 |
| Support After Termination for Abnormality (SATFA) | 21,250 |
| Tacade | 8,500 |
| Tavistock Clinic Foundation | 6,030 |
| Tay Sachs and Allied Diseases Association | 3,000 |
| Terence Higgins Trust | 450,000 |

| Organisation | £ |
|---|---|
| Tibble Trust | 1,500 |
| Toxoplasmosis Trust | 10,000 |
| Tracheo Oesophageal Fistula Support (TOFS) | 2,000 |
| Tripscope | 4,000 |
| Tuberous Sclerosis Association | 9,000 |
| Turning Point | 148,200 |
| Twins and Multiple Births Association (TAMBA) | 18,000 |
| UK Association for the International Year of the Family 1994 | 20,000 |
| UK Health for All Network | 30,000 |
| UK Rett Syndrome Association | 20,000 |
| UK Thalassaemia Society | 28,000 |
| United Response | 29,845 |
| Values Into Action | 15,000 |
| Vietnamese Mental Health Project | 10,000 |
| Vision Aid | 13,000 |
| Vocal | 28,750 |
| Voluntary Organisations Liaison Committee for Under Fives (VOLCUF) | 62,000 |
| Voluntary Aid Societies Emergency Committee | 23,901 |
| Walsingham Community Homes | 10,000 |
| Westminster Pastoral Foundation | 70,000 |
| Widows Advisory Trust | 18,000 |
| Winged Fellowship Trust | 10,000 |
| Women's Aid Federation (England) | 154,200 |
| Women's Health Concern | 22,000 |
| Women's Nationwide Cancer Control Campaign | 34,200 |
| Women's Therapy Centre | 25,000 |
| Working Mothers Association | 35,000 |
| Young Minds | 10,000 |
| Total Paid | 18,298,241 |

## Residential Care

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will raise the capital or savings limit of £8,000 over which a person must pay the full cost of a place in residential care; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Bowis:** The capital limit is kept under review, but we have no current plans for change.

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have had to sell their homes in order to pay for the costs of care in a residential or nursing home since the implementation of community care on 1 April; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Bowis:** This information is not available centrally.

## Cancer and Diet

**Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the setting up of a Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) committee on cancer and diet, giving details of the terms of reference and the name of the chairman and members.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Kenneth Calman, in his role as chairman of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food (COMA), has asked Professor Alan Jackson, from the department of human nutrition at the university of Southampton, to chair a new working group. Its terms of reference are

"To advise on the relationship between nutrition and the development of cancer and to make recommendations."

Members of the COMA working group on diet and cancer will include:

Dr. Sheila Bingham—Medical Research Council Dunn Clinical Nutrition Centre, Cambridge

Professor Nicholas Day—Professor of Public Health, University of Cambridge

Professor Anthony Dayan—Department of Toxicology, St. Bartholomew's Hospital Medical School, London

Dr. Michael Kemp—Medical Research Council, London (representing the secretariat of the UK Cancer Co-ordinating Committee)

Dr. Barrie Margetts—Department of Human Nutrition, University of Southampton

Professor James Parry—Department of Genetics, University of Swansea

Dr. Stanley Vennit—Institute of Cancer Research Sutton

Dr. Christine Williams—Nutritional Metabolism Group, School of Biological Sciences, University of Surrey

The first meeting of the working group will be in July and the chairman hopes that the report will be ready in 1996.

## NHS Trusts

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, columns *483-84*, what information on NHS trusts her Department intends to include in the summarised accounts; and when she expects them to be published.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The summarised accounts of national health service trusts in England for 1991-92 comprise an income and expenditure account, a balance sheet and a cash flow statement together with notes to the accounts.

Responsibility for the audit and publication of the accounts lies with the National Audit Office.

## GP Fund Holders

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *620*, if she will list those GP fund-holding units in the Yorkshire region which overspent their budgets in 1991-92; and what consequent action was taken by her Department.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** This information is not available centrally. It is for the Yorkshire regional health authority to take any action it considers appropriate.

## Anophthalmia and Microphthalmia

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what research is being carried out into the existence of clusters of anophthalmic and microphthalmic suffering children in areas where Benomyl, Carbendazim or related products are being used; how many clusters of anophthalmic children have been located in the United Kingdom and in what areas; and how many children are affected;

(2) what surveys she has commissioned as to what proportion of cases of anophthalmia and microphthalmia are caused by environmental factors.

**Mr. Sackville** *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* On the basis of available data, the evidence does not suggest an increase in anophthalmia or confirm the existence of clusters; nor is there any evidence to link Benomyl or similar products to these conditions. I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Minister for Health gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 20 May at column *259*, for details of the research proposal. As designed, the research proposal will seek to examine cases of anophthalmia in Great Britain over the last five years so that an assessment can be made

about any differences between urban and rural areas and the geographical distribution of cases. The proposed study is restricted to anophthalmia because of the extreme difficulty in diagnosing the severity of microphthalmia in early life. The researchers intend to keep in close contact with colleagues at Moorfields eye hospital, who see a large proportion of these cases and are carrying out their own study into anophthalmia and microphthalmia, including geographical factors. This is due to be completed in October. This information will provide a sampling frame for any further studies which may be necessary.

These studies will help us to find out more about these rare and tragic conditions, including any possible environmental factors.

Information obtained from the register of congenital malformations maintained by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS), which maintains a record of congenital malformations registered in the first seven days of life, is contained in the table.

*Registrations of anophthalmia and microphthalmia in the first seven days of life*
*(England and Wales)*

| *Year* | *Anophthalmia* | *Microphthalmia* |
|---|---|---|
| 1976 | 22 | 17 |
| 1977 | 19 | 10 |
| 1978 | 22 | 11 |
| 1979 | 15 | 7 |
| 1980 | 26 | 8 |
| 1981 | 13 | 15 |
| 1982 | 15 | 12 |
| 1983 | 11 | 11 |
| 1984 | 20 | 14 |
| 1985 | 15 | 17 |
| 1986 | 9 | 9 |
| 1987 | 15 | 9 |
| 1988 | 13 | 5 |
| 1989 | 14 | 13 |
| 1990 | 7 | 8 |
| 1991 | 5 | 10 |

*Source:* OPCS congenital malformations register, unpublished.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Prosecutions

28. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will initiate a review of the Crown Prosecution Service guidelines on whether or not to prosecute.

**The Attorney-General:** The guidelines are set out in the code for Crown prosecutors. They are regularly reviewed by the Director of Public Prosecutions in consultation with the Law Officers.

**Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the extent to which the CPS consults the police before it decides to discontinue a case.

**The Solicitor-General:** When considering discontinuance, Crown Prosecution Service lawyers are instructed to consult the police in all save the most exceptional circumstances.

### Police (Paperwork)

29. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Attorney-General what steps he is taking to reduce the volume of paperwork imposed on the police by the Crown Prosecution Service.

**The Solicitor-General:** The Crown Prosecution Service is committed to requiring from the police only such paperwork as the interests of justice dictate.

### Mr. Asil Nadir

30. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Attorney-General how many representations he has had from other hon. Members about the case of Mr. Asil Nadir.

**The Attorney-General:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 10 June, column *334*.

### Lenient Sentences

31. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about the use of his power to appeal against lenient sentences.

**The Attorney-General:** Since 1989, when the power to refer unduly lenient sentences was introduced, 117 references have been made to the Court of Appeal, which has increased just over 82 per cent. of the sentences it has reviewed.

## SCOTLAND

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

**Mr. Lang:** No market tests involving in-house bids have been completed since November 1992. Work is continuing on the market tests in my 1992-93 programme and I expect to make an announcement on the results of the programme later in the year.

### Drug Dealing (Evictions)

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on how many persons since 1980 have been evicted from local authority or other public sector housing because of drug-dealing activities.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** This information is not held centrally.

### Science and Technology

**Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will designate one of his Ministers to be responsible for his Department's contribution to the Government's science and technology "Forward Look".

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* Paragraph 2·37 of the recent White Paper "Realising Our Potential —A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" describes the preparation of the "Forward Look" by the Office of Science and Technology. Government Departments will participate through the existing, well-established machinery of the official and ministerial Cabinet committees on science and technology.

## WALES

### Tourism

6. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the income from tourism in Wales in 1992: and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** About £1·3 billion.

### Drug Misuse

12. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his assessment of the success of the World Health Organisation/Council of Europe initiatives to reduce drug misuse in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The fight against drug misuse in Wales is carried out on many fronts including the European Drug Prevention Week last November, which I judge to have made a very worthwhile contribution to all our efforts.

### Economy

13. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on prospects for the Welsh economy during 1993-94.

**Mr. Redwood:** The prospects are good: unemployment has started to fall, output is up and business confidence is high. The recovery is under way in Wales.

### Hospital Treatment

14. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* in-patients and *(b)* out-patients were treated in NHS hospitals in Wales in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what the figures were in 1979.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** In 1991-92, the NHS in Wales treated 500,340 in-patients and 554,680 new out-patients compared to 349,700 and 428,740 respectively in 1979.

### NHS Trusts

15. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress is being made in the setting up of NHS trusts in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** There are currently 14 operational NHS trusts in Wales. My right hon. Friend has today initiated formal public consultation on 10 applications which he has received seeking NHS trust status from 1 April 1994.

### Hospital Beds

16. **Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of area health authorities in Wales to discuss future provision of hospital beds.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** I am in continual contact with representatives of all health authorities in Wales and the former Secretary of State for Wales, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt), and I met all chairmen on 15 April.

### Assisted Areas

17. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received on alterations to assisted areas in Wales.

**Mr. Redwood:** Since taking office, I have received several representations on the assisted areas review. We hope to make an announcement before the parliamentary recess, following the necessary clearance by the European Commission.

### Youth Training

18. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to meet the chairman of Targed to discuss the need to improve youth training opportunities in north-west Wales.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The former Secretary of State met the chairmen of the Welsh training and enterprise councils regularly to discuss a range of issues and my right hon. Friend intends to continue that practice.

### Inward Investment

19. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for inward investment from overseas into Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** Wales continues to attract high levels of inward investment. In the 12 months to 31 May 1993, the 195 projects recorded promise in excess of 13,500 jobs, and a capital investment of almost £900 million.

### Welsh Development Agency

20. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to increase the financial resources of the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** Decisions on the agency's resources for future years will be decided in the course of the public expenditure survey in the usual way.

### Beach Pollution

21. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the awards by the Tidy Britain Group to Welsh resorts; and what steps are being taken to reduce sewage pollution on Welsh beaches which have failed to comply with mandatory EC coliform standards.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Over 90 per cent. of beaches nominated by Welsh local authorities were credited with national seaside awards by the Tidy Britain Group. This is a significant increase over the number of awards made last year and represents a substantial achievement requiring exacting standards of water quality and beach management.

The large majority of bathing waters in Wales identified under the European Commission bathing waters directive already meet the directive's mandatory standards. A major investment programme is in hand by Dwn Cymru, most of which will be in place by the end of 1995, to enable all designated bathing waters in Wales regularly to meet these standards.

### Constitutional Change

22. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received about constitutional change.

**Mr. Redwood:** None.

### Ponty Brenin Primary School

23. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Ponty Brenin primary school in Gorseinon, Swansea to meet pupils and teachers to discuss his education policies.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to do so, but I shall bear the suggestion in mind in considering my next programme of school visits.

### Labour Statistics

24. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the Welsh unemployment figures.

**Mr. Redwood:** I welcome the four consecutive months of falling unemployment in Wales.

### National Eisteddfod

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to visit the national eisteddfod in Builth Wells; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** I have received an invitation to the eisteddfod and will decide whether to attend nearer the time.

### Sex Discrimination

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many claims were made to tribunals in Wales under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 for each year since 1979; how many separate employers were involved; how many of these claims were successful; and what was the average amount of compensation awarded in each year.

**Mr. Redwood:** The information requested is not available prior to 1991-92. That which is available is given in the table:

*Claims made to tribunals under Sex Discrimination Act 1975 in Wales*[1]

| | *1991-92* | *1992-93* |
|---|---|---|
| Applications registered | 78 | 106 |
| Number of respondents[2] | 70 | 58 |
| Number of successful cases | 4 | 0 |
| Average award | £3,535 | — |

[1] Provisional.
[2] The number of firms or individuals named in a case. There may be more than one per claim.

*Source:* Central Office of the Industrial Tribunals.

### Head Injuries

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many deaths have occurred in each year since 1979 in Wales where the underlying cause of death was recorded as being from a head injury.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The number of deaths to residents of Wales in each year since 1979 where the underlying cause of death was recorded as being from a head injury are shown in the following table:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1979 | 295 |
| 1980 | 276 |
| 1981 | 231 |
| 1982 | 232 |
| 1983 | 210 |
| 1984 | 223 |
| 1985 | 242 |
| 1986 | 252 |
| 1987 | 227 |
| 1988 | 191 |
| 1989 | 236 |
| 1990 | 230 |
| 1991 | 218 |
| 1992 | 225 |

*Source:*—Office of Population Censuses and Surveys
ICD 800-804 Fracture of skull
ICD 850-854 Intracranial injury, excluding those with skull fracture
International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision)

### Hepatitis C

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of hepatitis C have been recorded *(a)* amongst registered drug users and *(b)* in total in Wales in each year since 1989.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The information requested is not available. Cases of hepatitis C are not separately notifiable.

### Infant Mortality

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing *(a)* the infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births and *(b)* the perinatal mortality rate per 1,000 total births in (i) Wales and (ii) each district health authority in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The information requested is published for the years 1986 to 1991 in the Welsh Office publication "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for Wales", No. 19 1992, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

### Council of Ministers

**Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, together with the respective dates, those meetings of the EC Council of Ministers which were attended by ministers in his Department in the latest 12 months.

**Mr. Redwood:** Over the last year Welsh Office interests have been represented at EC meetings by ministerial colleagues from the lead department in the subject area concerned, and where relevant by senior officials from the Welsh Office to advise those Ministers. I will be visiting Commissioners in Brussels soon to pursue Welsh interests.

### NHS Staff

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will give details of the number of unqualified NHS nursing staff joining the NHS in 1990,

1991 and 1992, who were *(a)* joining directly after completing full-time education, *(b)* aged under 21 years, *(c)* joining from other NHS units, *(d)* joining from other care sector employment, *(e)* joining from other employment, *(f)* joining from non-activity in the labour market or *(g)* joining from unemployment;

(2) if he will give details of the number of qualified nursing or midwifery staff joining the NHS in 1990, 1991 and 1992 who were *(a)* newly qualifing student nurses with employment status, *(b)* newly qualifying Project 2000 students, *(c)* registered nurses entering the NHS after a period of non-employment, *(d)* joining NHS units directly after being employed by another NHS unit or *(e)* joining NHS units directly after being employed in other nursing;

(3) how many qualified, unqualified and learner nursing staff joined the NHS in 1991 and 1992.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The information requested is not held centrally.

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will give details of the distribution of average gross weekly earnings per person for each of the NHS clinical nursing and midwifery grades, listing the percentages of each grade earning under *(a)* £140, *(b)* £150, *(c)* £170, *(d)* £180, *(e)* £190, *(f)* £200, *(g)* £210, *(h)* £220, *(i)* £230, *(j)* £240, *(k)* £250, *(l)* £275, *(m)* £300 and *(n)* those earning £300 and over, in 1991 and 1992;

(2) what were the average gross weekly earnings and make-up of pay by type or allowance for each of the clinical grades for nursing and midwifery staff in 1991 and 1992.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The information requested is not held centrally.

**Mr Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many qualified NHS nurses and midwives, unqualified NHS nursing staff, nursing learners there were in 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992 in *(a)* numbers and *(b)* as a percentage of the total NHS nursing and midwifery staff.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The information requested is in the following table:

*Nursing and midwifery staff in post (whole-time equivalents (WTE)) as at 30 September*

| Year | Qualified | | Unqualified | | Learners | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | WTE | Per cent. | WTE | Per cent. | WTE | Per cent. |
| 1989 | 17,850 | 63·7 | 7,069 | 25·2 | 3,118 | 11·1 |
| 1990 | 17,986 | 64·0 | 7,031 | 25·0 | 3,075 | 10·9 |
| 1991 | 18,010 | 64·4 | 7,019 | 25·1 | 2,934 | 10·5 |
| [1]1992 | 18,096 | 65·8 | 7,355 | 26·7 | 2,069 | 7·5 |

[1]Unqualified staff are staff paid as grade A, B or nursery nurses. The 1992 figures exclude about 64 whole-time equivalent nursing and midwifery staff employed by Pembrokeshire NHS trust for whom details of grade are not known centrally. In addition there are about 1,000 student nurses who have been reclassified as students following the introduction of Project 2000 nursing education reforms.

## Junior Doctors

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of junior doctors working an average of more than 83 hours a week in Wales on 1 April.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** No junior doctors were contracted to work more than 83 hours per week on average, on 1 April 1993.

## River Pollution

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to ensure that disused coal and metal mines do not leak dangerous chemicals into Welsh rivers; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The National rivers Authority has been reviewing the extent of the problem of pollution from abandoned mines in England and Wales. The Government are, at the same time, considering the framework of legal responsibility for this pollution. Separately the authority's Welsh region is undertaking a survey, to which the Welsh Office is contributing, the objectives of which are to identify all ferruginous discharges emanating from or connected with abandoned coal mines in the region and to determine their impacts on the water quality, biological quality and fishery status of the receiving waters.

## Disused Quarries

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken in Wales to encourage the owners of disused quarries to restore them to a natural state; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** Advice on the reclamation of mineral workings is given in the joint Department of the Environment/Welsh Office minerals planning guidance note 7 (MPG7). MPG7 refers to the derelict land grant scheme, administered by the Welsh Development Agency, which encourages the reclamation of derelict land to bring it back into beneficial use or to improve its appearance. The grant is available to private individuals and others.

## Council Tax

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the average council tax payment due in each district council area in Wales in the current financial year.

**Mr. Redwood:** The average council tax set in each district council area in 1993-94 is given in the following table. The average amount due to be paid in each area will be reduced by the average council tax benefit granted for that area. Information on district benefit levels is not held centrally.

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 366 |
| Colwyn | 352 |
| Delyn | 370 |
| Glyndwr | 355 |
| Rhuddlan | 354 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 343 |
| Carmarthen | 342 |
| Ceredigion | 356 |
| Dinefwr | 327 |
| Llanelli | 334 |
| Preseli Pembrokeshire | 326 |
| South Pembrokeshire | 315 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 230 |
| Islwyn | 254 |
| Monmouth | 363 |
| Newport | 285 |
| Torfaen | 268 |
| Aberconwy | 322 |
| Arfon | 283 |
| Dwyfor | 301 |
| Meirionnydd | 308 |
| Ynys Mon | 319 |
| Cynon Valley | 218 |

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Merthyr Tydfil | 214 |
| Ogwr | 261 |
| Rhondda | 203 |
| Rhymney Valley | 235 |
| Taff Ely | 277 |
| Brecknock | 322 |
| Montgomeryshire | 296 |
| Radnorshire | 301 |
| Cardiff | 283 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 316 |
| Port Talbot | 291 |
| Lliw Valley | 311 |
| Neath | 325 |
| Swansea | 334 |
| Total Wales | 301 |

**Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what local authorities in Wales he intends to cap in respect of council tax.

**Mr. Redwood:** I have today laid before the House a draft order, under section 57 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, setting out my decision on the final cap for Aberconwy borough council.

On 26 April my predecessor announced that he proposed to designate Aberconwy borough council for capping. He proposed a cap of £8,566,950, a reduction of £167,745 on the authority's budget of £8,734,695. On 21 May, Aberconwy wrote to challenge the proposed cap and suggested an alternative amount of £8,734,695—the same as its original budget.

In taking my decision, I have considered all the available relevant information, including the case made by the authority in support of a higher cap, and the impact of the flooding in the borough as a result of the severe weather between 10 June and 12 June 1993.

As a result, I have decided that in the current circumstances of the authority it would not be reasonable to proceed with the cap proposed by my predecessor and I have therefore decided to set the cap at £8,734,695—the level of Aberconwy borough council's original budget.

My decision arises from wholly exceptional circumstances in Aberconwy because of the flooding and the substantial unforeseen costs which the authority will have to bear, even allowing for assistance under the Bellwin scheme which I announced on 14 June. In the absence of the flooding, I would have proceeded to cap the borough council's budget at the proposed level and on the basis of the estimates it has given me, I still expect the council to draw on its reserves and make savings on its original budget to pay for the extra expenditure and revenue loss caused by the floods. The council and other authorities in Wales should be clear therefore that I am determined to ensure that all local authorities in Wales budget in line with my plans in future years.

## Local Government Finance

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing *(a)* the budget requirement, including parish precepts of all local authorities in Wales, *(b)* the income per council from non-domestic rates as a total figure and as a percentage figure and *(c)* the income in respect of council tax.

**Mr. Redwood:** The information requested is given in the table:

*Local Authority Budget Requirements, Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax Income, 1993-94*

| | *Budget requirement* | *Income[1] from non-domestic rates* | *as a percentage of Budget requirement* | *Income[1] from Council Tax* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *£000* | *£000* | *%* | *£000* |
| Alyn and Deeside | 10,240 | 2,256 | 22 | 1,784 |
| Colwyn | 7,709 | 1,769 | 23 | 1,056 |
| Delyn | 9,016 | 2,066 | 23 | 1,653 |
| Glyndwr | 5,347 | 1,306 | 24 | 731 |
| Rhuddlan | 8,795 | 1,721 | 20 | 1,226 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 16,453 | 3,530 | 21 | 2,616 |
| Carmarthen | 7,818 | 1,737 | 22 | 1,108 |
| Ceredigion | 10,063 | 2,101 | 21 | 1,611 |
| Dinefwr | 5,675 | 1,211 | 21 | 753 |
| Llanelli | 13,807 | 2,331 | 17 | 2,471 |
| Preseli Pembrokeshire | 10,844 | 2,161 | 20 | 1,157 |
| South Pembrokeshire | 7,034 | 1,286 | 18 | 529 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 15,004 | 2,339 | 16 | 988 |
| Islwyn | 11,133 | 2,026 | 18 | 967 |
| Monmouth | 9,725 | 2,351 | 24 | 1,932 |
| Newport | 22,929 | 4,068 | 18 | 2,664 |
| Torfaen | 13,811 | 2,742 | 20 | 1,594 |
| Aberconwy | 8,890 | 1,709 | 19 | 1,434 |
| Arfon | 9,519 | 1,713 | 18 | 1,117 |
| Dwyfor | 5,958 | 859 | 14 | 613 |
| Meirionnydd | 6,175 | 1,029 | 17 | 1,086 |
| Ynys Mon | 11,490 | 2,117 | 18 | 1,954 |
| Cynon Valley | 12,992 | 1,983 | 15 | 909 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 11,986 | 1,785 | 15 | 754 |
| Ogwr | 20,603 | 4,056 | 20 | 1,988 |
| Rhondda | 17,225 | 2,406 | 14 | 914 |
| Rhymney Valley | 15,707 | 3,079 | 20 | 1,437 |
| Taff Ely | 14,977 | 2,960 | 20 | 2,157 |
| Brecknock | 6,279 | 1,282 | 20 | 1,123 |

| | Budget requirement | Income[1] from non-domestic rates | | Income[1] from Council Tax |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | as a percentage of Budget requirement | |
| | £000 | £000 | % | £000 |
| Montgomeryshire | 6,863 | 1,638 | 24 | 1,136 |
| Radnorshire | 3,346 | 744 | 22 | 506 |
| Cardiff | 45,949 | 8,809 | 19 | 6,153 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 15,981 | 3,482 | 22 | 2,988 |
| Port Talbot | 8,817 | 1,567 | 18 | 688 |
| Lliw Valley | 8,638 | 1,923 | 22 | 914 |
| Neath | 10,693 | 2,030 | 19 | 1,578 |
| Swansea | 32,839 | 5,774 | 18 | 3,267 |
| Clwyd | 278,044 | 54,972 | 20 | 42,305 |
| Dyfed | 254,100 | 47,060 | 19 | 36,586 |
| Gwent | 298,182 | 58,790 | 20 | 35,172 |
| Gwynedd | 166,715 | 32,285 | 19 | 23,310 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 384,800 | 70,710 | 18 | 36,533 |
| Powys | 91,966 | 15,927 | 17 | 11,031 |
| South Glamorgan | 271,855 | 53,424 | 20 | 31,576 |
| West Glamorgan | 255,681 | 49,089 | 19 | 34,847 |
| Total Districts | 460,330 | 87,944 | 19 | 57,556 |
| Total Counties | 2,001,343 | 382,256 | 19 | 251,360 |
| Total Wales | 2,461,673 | 470,200 | 19 | 308,916 |

[1]Including community council precepts.

### Housing Management

**Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by what date he plans to implement compulsory competitive tendering of local authority housing management in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) on 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *313-14*.

### Toxic Waste

**Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what further representations he has made to the German Government over the proposed transport of toxic waste from Germany to the ReChem incineration plant at Pontypool.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The Government have made no further representations.

### NHS Trusts (Chief Executives)

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the advertisements placed in the press by his Department for each of the positions of NHS trust chief executives in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The responsibility for the placing of any such advertisement rests with the individual NHS trust.

### Local Government Reorganisation

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to assess the views of the public on the extent of the historical and community links between Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr in relation to the proposed new unitary authority combining the two district boroughs.

**Mr. Redwood:** I shall give very careful consideration to all the views that have been received.

### M4

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures of traffic flows on the M4 from *(a)* New House roundabout to Coldra, *(b)* Coldra to Malpas interchange, *(c)* Malpas to Tredegar park and *(d)* Tredegar park to Tongwynlais; and what they were for the previous four years.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** Traffic flows on the M4 between Newhouse and Coryton are as follows:

| | | Annual average daily flows | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Road | Section | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 |
| M4 | Newhouse to Magor | 39,200 | 44,000 | 44,300 | 43,400 | 45,100 |
| M4 | Magor to Coldra | — | 45,900 | 45,800 | 45,200 | 47,000 |
| M4 | Coldra to Caerleon | — | 64,650 | 71,600 | 66,700 | 67,500 |
| M4 | Caerleon to Malpas | 67,200 | 74,900 | 76,900 | 76,950 | 77,500 |
| M4 | Malpas to Tredegar Park | — | 78,900 | 81,100 | 81,000 | 81,800 |
| M4 | Tredegar Park to Castleton | — | 66,000 | 71,400 | 68,500 | 74,200 |
| M4 | Castleton to Coryton | 35,000 | 38,000 | 43,000 | 40,850 | 42,700 |

*Note:* All flows 24 hour annual average daily flows.

## DEFENCE

### RAF Flying Hours

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the figures for the average number of hours flown by RAF crews indicating time spent at *(a)* low-level flying and *(b)* medium-level flying in each year since 1985; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Nuclear Test Veterans

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received on the subject of compensation for members of the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** About 40 representations have been received on this matter from hon. Members since the beginning of the year.

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his Department's policy to compensate those veterans who were exposed to damaging levels of radiation during testing between 1952 and 1967; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** The Government would consider sympathetically a claim for compensation on behalf of any ex-service man who suffered illness from radiation through participation in the British atmospheric nuclear test programme. Not a single case of illness, however, has ever been shown to have been so caused. Almost all the personnel involved received little or no radiation from the nuclear tests. There is no evidence of increased mortality or of increased overall cancer incidence among British nuclear test veterans.

### Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to amend the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987 so that claims would be permissible for accidents that occurred before 15 May 1987; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** The Government have no plans to amend the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987.

The question of whether the change made in 1987 should be retrospective was fully debated in the House at the time. It was decided that the new Act would not be retrospective. I see no reason to take a different view now.

### Intellectual Property Rights

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what response he has made to requests to protect intellectual property rights after contractorisation.

**Mr. Aitken:** Any information transferred to a contractor is subject to a standard obligation of confidence which limits the use of the information to the purposes of the contract.

### Anti-Missile Systems

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what projects he is engaged in, and with which partners, to explore the possibility of theatre anti-missile protection systems.

**Mr. Aitken:** We are currently engaged in a NATO ballistic missile defence (BMD) study based on a postulated risk of accidental or deliberate ballistic missile attack against NATO in the post-cold war era. We are also defining an internal pre-feasibility study into possible BMD systems to counter potential threats against the United Kingdom and our forces deployed overseas.

### Upholder Submarine

**Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence upon what date it was decided not to proceed with the planned expenditure of £3·5 million on moving the Upholder class of submarine from Gosport to Devonport.

**Mr. Hanley:** No such decision has been taken, but no further expenditure will be committed until the future of the Upholder class has been decided.

### Apprenticeships

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officially recognised apprenticeships have been completed by persons employed by his Department in each of the past 10 years.

**Mr. Aitken:** The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, over the past 10 years the Ministry of Defence has recruited some 8,300 civilian apprentices into disciplines recognised by the national trade unions.

The intake numbers were as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1983 | 1,257 |
| 1984 | 1,260 |
| 1985 | 1,034 |
| 1986 | 1,025 |
| 1987 | 674 |
| 1988 | 691 |
| 1989 | 683 |
| 1990 | 708 |
| 1991 | 574 |
| 1992 | 393 |

### Aircraft Incident (Taunton)

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ensure that the hon. Member for Taunton is sent a report on the outcome of the inquiry into the incident over the Taunton area on 15 June, when a Royal Navy aircraft dropped its fuel tanks; and if he will make an interim statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** I can confirm that a Navy Sea Harrier operating in the Taunton area on 15 June suffered an electrical fault which caused its two external fuel tanks to be released. The tanks landed in fields. There were no injuries. An investigation is currently in hand and my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member when this has been completed.

### Gulf Trust Fund

**Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money has been released to date from the Gulf Trust fund; and to how many recipients.

**Mr. Hanley:** Total expenditure to date from the Gulf Trust is £753,857, some of which has been in the form of loans on beneficial terms. Recent payments made by the benevolent funds have yet to be reimbursed from the Gulf Trust. 161 beneficiaries have so far been provided with assistance from the trust together with four charitable bodies and three charitable funds.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Training

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to review the supervision of the advice given on training to clients of his Department by departmental offices and by agencies to whom clients are recommended for training.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Employment Service (ES) advisers are trained in techniques to diagnose client need so that they may suggest a suitable job or training opportunity. If a client feels they have been misinformed, the ES operates an easy to use complaints system.

Someone who is interested in training and enterprise council (TEC) provided training will be given more detailed guidance by the training body or an independent guidance agency appointed by the TEC. TECs are required to operate quality control procedures and will take up any complaint made to them by a client.

I have been advised that these procedures are working in a broadly satisfactory way and there is no need for a fundamental review. Guidance can, however, be a complex area and clients are occasionally misinformed. Where these cases are brought to our attention the matter is always investigated.

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to increase the allowances paid to young people on the youth training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

**Miss Widdecombe:** There are no plans to increase minimum youth training (YT) allowances. Minimum YT allowances are set at levels which reflect the fact that trainees are involved in the learning process and I believe current levels are sufficient to meet the normal requirements of trainees living in the parental home.

Trainees who live independently may apply for income support if they consider their income is insufficient to meet their needs. Employers are the main beneficiaries of the Government's investment in training and are strongly encouraged to supplement trainee incomes—an estimated 30 per cent. of YT trainees are employed and receive wages.

### Training and Enterprise Councils

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to ensure that representatives of district and borough councils are appointed to the boards of the TECs; and if he will make a statement.

**Miss Widdecombe:** It is for TECs themselves to decide the membership of their boards within the broad framework set out in their contract with my Department. I am satisfied that TEC boards have adequate representation of their local authorities.

### Apprenticeships

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar), of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *452*, what definition of apprenticeships was used in in his answer; and if he will make a statement.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Respondents to the Labour Force Survey self-classify themselves when answering appropriate questions about apprenticeships. However, if clarification is needed interviewers are provided with the following guidance note:

'Normally an apprenticeship commences at the age of 16 or 17 and is usually completed by the age of 21 after a minimum of three years.

Include:

Indentured apprenticeships;

Those registered with a national body, eg. National Joint Council for the Building Industry;

Persons with an employer's certificate of completion;

Those recognised by an industrial training board or by a trade union for membership purposes;

Articled clerks—those serving a period of training as accountants, solicitors etc;

Hairdressers who are undergoing a planned training programme.

Exclude:

Persons who have been upgraded through informal (or formal) training and/or experience;

Architectural draughtsmen.'

Apprenticeships are only part of the system of delivering vocational training. The 1980s saw the introduction, and expansion, of training for young people through the youth training initiatives. In addition, many young people opt to acquire vocational training through the further education system.

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many fully indentured apprenticeships have been completed in each of the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many of those persons who are recognised by the labour force survey as having completed an apprenticeship in 1992 had taken in excess of two years' training to achieve it.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The information is not available.

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in what circumstances TECs finance apprenticeships which take in excess of two years to complete; and how many such apprenticeships were funded by TECs during 1991.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Training and enterprise councils (TECs) provide training opportunities under youth training (YT) for young people leading to approved qualifications at or above national vocational qualification level 2 standard. A TEC may support a young person undergoing apprenticeship training for the duration of the apprenticeship period, subject to the trainee remaining under 25 years of age. The Labour Force Survey shows that some 52,000 apprenticeships were operating under YT in the spring of 1991.

### Federation of Economic Development Authorities

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has now replied to the letter dated 20 May to his Department from the Federation of Economic Development Authorities in relation to each of the points raised with him in that letter; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Yes. I replied on 3 June.

## TRANSPORT

### East London River Crossing

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the European Commission's reasoned opinion on the environmental impact of the proposed east London river crossing and its effect on Oxleas wood.

**Mr. MacGregor:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) on 18 May 1993, *Official Report*, columns *92-93*.

### Underground Rail Systems

**Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to which other major European cities have underground rail systems which either break even or make an operating profit.

**Mr. Norris:** Detailed information on the financial performance of underground railway systems outside Britain is not collected by the Government. In any case, direct comparisons between complex systems operating under very different financial regimes are extremely difficult to make.

### Public Transport Demand

**Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration in his evaluation of the potential application of road pricing to inner London has been given to the impact on public transport demand, particularly on London Underground; and if road pricing assessments will include an evaluation of how far the public transport system can cope with the additional demand without significant modernisation.

**Mr. Norris:** The likely impacts on public transport demand will be estimated as part of the evaluation exercise on city congestion charging in London.

### West Coast Line

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the plans for the upgrading of the west coast line.

**Mr. Freeman:** Re-equipping the west coast main line is an investment priority. I understand that British Rail has set aside funds for design work and plans to begin renewing the infrastructure next year. Decisions on the precise phasing of the renewal programme will need to have regard to public expenditure constraints.

### Channel Tunnel Rail Link

**Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that contractors constructing the channel tunnel rail link use main arterial routes only;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that contractors constructing the channel tunnel rail link locate their work sites so as to avoid disturbance to homes.

**Mr. Freeman:** Union Railways is currently preparing a code of practice for construction as part of its environmental handbook, which will be published in due course.

### Motor Cycles

**Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will continue to resist proposals for outlawing motor-cycles by the European Community where the power is in excess of 100 brake horse power.

**Mr. Key:** The EC Council of Ministers adopted on 14 June a common position on the proposal for a directive on motor cycle power, which will permit higher powered motor cycles up to a limit of 94kW (125bhp) to be approved for registration in the United Kingdom until the end of the century. The proposal will now go to the European Parliament for Second Reading. It would be premature to speculate on the outcome.

### Traffic Regulation Conditions (Buses)

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many traffic regulation conditions involving bus services have been recommended by the traffic commissioners, and how many he has refused, in each year since 1985;

(2) what factors he takes into account when determining his response to a traffic regulation condition involving bus services.

**Mr. Freeman:** Traffic regulation conditions are determined without reference to the Secretary of State, by traffic commissioners, who are quasi-judicial independent bodies. They may only be imposed if commissioners are satisfied that they are required to prevent danger to road users or to reduce severe traffic congestion.

An appeal may be made to the Secretary of State against the determination of the traffic commissioner. Factors to be taken into account in deciding the appeal will vary according to the nature of the appeal, but a pre-condition is that the traffic commissioner has acted within his powers.

The number of traffic regulation conditions imposed each year since 1985 is as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1985 | Nil |
| 1986 | 2 |
| 1987 | 9 |
| 1988 | 5 |
| 1989 | 1 |
| 1990 | 1 |
| 1991 | 1 |
| 1992 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 22 |

There have been five appeals against traffic regulation conditions made to the Secretary of State since 1985. Three were dismissed; one was allowed; and one was allowed in part, but the traffic regulation condition was varied.

### Heavy Goods Vehicles

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what consideration he has given to the financial and environmental benefits of increasing weight limitations on heavy goods vehicles;

(2) what plans he has to increase weight limitations on heavy goods vehicles.

**Mr. Key:** We are considering the responses to a consultation paper we issued on a proposal to increase the maximum gross weight to 44 tonnes for six-axle articulated lorries and drawbar trailer combinations carrying goods to and from railheads. Some respondents have argued that there are benefits in allowing such a weight increase more widely. The financial and environmental factors are among those that we shall take into account in coming to a decision.

### Transport Council

**Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the result of the Transport Council held in Luxembourg on 7 and 8 June 1993.

**Mr. MacGregor** *[pursuant to his reply, 11 June 1993, c. 383-84]:* The Transport Council resumed on 19 June the meeting that it had held on 7 and 8 June. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council resolved the long-standing issues of road freight vehicle taxation and charging of road freight cabotage. This agreement was fundamentally based, as the Danish presidency acknowledged, on work carried out by the United Kingdom presidency. I am delighted to say that this completes the single market in transport and that British interests were fully protected. This agreement will provide a significant opportunity for British hauliers in European markets.

The Council agreed that the definitive Community arrangements on road haulage cabotage—the right to carry loads within another country—will come into force on 1 July 1998. The present Community cabotage authorisation and quota system will continue until then, with the total quota for the Community for two month cabotage authorisations being increased on 1 January 1994 to 30,000, and annually from 1 January 1995 by 30 per cent.

The Council agreed on a broad framework to be applied by all countries in introducing permits, as indicated as one option in our Green Paper "Paying for Better Motorways". The details of this are entirely consistent with the options I set out in the Green Paper.

The Council agreed that the maximum annual user charge for road freight vehicles should be 1,250 ecu, to be reviewed every two years, with the first review by 1 January 1997. The definition of roads that may be covered is essentially motorways and similar roads, with a possible extension to other roads under a Community procedure.

The Belgian, Danish, German, Luxembourg and Netherlands delegations announced that they had reached an agreement on a common user charge system for their territories, under which one permit will cover the use of roads in all five countries. This will be better for British hauliers than individual charges in each of the member states. The agreement provides for charging to start from 1 January 1995, with reduced charges for the first three years for Greek transport operators and for the first two years for Irish and Portuguese.

The Council agreed on minimum rates of vehicle tax, and that until the end of 1997 five member states can apply rates up to 50 per cent. below the minimum rates.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Pensioners (Mortgages)

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has of the number of pensioners who own their own homes and have repaid their mortgage.

**Mr. Hague:** In 1989, the latest year for which figures are available, over half of all pensioners owned their own homes. Of these, 94 per cent—or 3·5 million—owned their own homes outright with no mortgage commitments.

### Unemployment

**Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to re-include 16 to 18-year-olds who are out of work and not in education into unemployment registers.

**Mr. Burt:** None. All 16 to 18-year-olds have available to them either employment, further education or a guaranteed training place.

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

**Mr. Hague:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on 24 February at column *618*. There have been no further market tests completed by this Department since that date.

### Independent Living Fund

**Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) whether sufferers from Huntington's disease, motor neurone disease and ataxia are to be excluded from eligibility for assistance by the independent living (1993) fund; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what criteria will be used to identify those terminally ill disabled people who are to be excluded from assistance by the independent living (1993) fund.

**Mr. Scott:** Questions of eligibility for assistance from the independent living (1993) fund are a matter for the trustees of the fund.

**Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he will take to provide support for severely disabled people who are terminally ill following the decision to exclude them from assistance by the independent living (1993) fund.

**Mr. Scott:** Support for people who are terminally ill is already provided in many forms by statutory, voluntary and charitable agencies.

### Pensions

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many married women between the ages of *(a)* 60 to 65 years, *(b)* 65 to 75 years and *(c)* 75 to 85 years do not qualify for a retirement pension or occupational pension;

(2) how many married men between the ages of *(a)* 60 to 65 years, *(b)* 65 to 75 years and *(c)* 75 to 85 years are receiving a retirement pension or an occupational pension;

(3) how many married couples over 65 years are dependent on the husband's retirement or occupational pension.

**Mr. Hague:** The information is not available. Neither the retirement pension statistics nor the family expenditure survey—upon which the pensioner income series is based—provide reliable information on both the state retirement pension and the occupational pension received by members of married couples.

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the cost of raising the basic state retirement pension to a level at which income support and housing benefit would cease to be payable to pensioners; and by how much the standard rate of income tax would have to be raised to raise the same sum.

**Mr. Hague:** The additional cost of increasing the basic retirement pension to the higher pensioner rate of income support would be £3·4 billion. This represents a full-year extra cost in 1993-94 net of savings made by the consequent reduction in spending on income related benefits.

The basic rate of income tax would have to be increased by 8p to raise this amount.

It is not possible to estimate a level of retirement pension at which all pensioners cease to be eligible for housing benefit as entitlement depends on the level of rent paid, and rents vary widely. As an illustration of the cost involved I estimate that it would cost £11·2 billion net in 1993-94 to increase retirement pensions to a level where income support and housing benefit entitlement would cease for pensioners paying the average local authority weekly rent paid by pensioners in receipt of housing benefit—£26·64 in May 1991, the latest available figures.

### Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will revise the current disability handbook on myalgic encephalomyelitis to reflect *(a)* its severe disabling nature and *(b)* recent research findings;

(2) if he will transfer the entry on myalgic encephalomyelitis in the disability handbook from the chapter on chronic fatigue syndromes to the chapter on certain neurological disorders.

**Mr. Scott:** The entry on myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) in the "Disability Handbook" is currently being revised and will be transferred to the chapter on "Certain Neurological Disorders", when the revision is complete. It will reflect the consensus view of the nature and severity of the condition, taking into account recent research evidence.

### National Insurance

**Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many employed earners paid national insurance contributions at the contracted-out standard rate; and how many people earned above that year's upper earnings limit for national insurance purposes, in the latest year for which figures are available.

**Mr. Hague:** About 9·6 million employed earners paid some national insurance contributions at the standard contracted-out rate in 1990-91.

In the same year, 1·8 million of all contributors who paid class 1 contributions had earnings at or above the annual earnings limit.

*Source:* DSS internal sample of 1 per cent. of national insurance contributors.

### State Earnings-related Pension Scheme

**Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many individuals currently *(a)* contribute towards a state earnings-related pension, *(b)* do not pay SERPS because they are in an occupational scheme, and *(c)* do not pay SERPS because they are in a personal pension scheme.

**Mr. Hague:** During 1990-91, the latest year for which information is available, employed earners paid national insurance contributions as follows:

| | *Great Britain millions* |
|---|---|
| (i) At the standard not contracted out rate | 11·6 |
| (ii) At the contracted out rate because of membership of an occupational pension scheme | 8·2 |
| (iii) A mixture of both (i) and (ii) above | 1·4 |
| (iv) At the standard not contracted out rate (included in (i) and (iii)) but subsequently had a rebate of contributions paid into an appropriate personal pension | 4·1 |

*Source:* 1 per cent. sample of national insurance contribution records.

**Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many members of personal pension schemes who have opted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme he expects to opt back into SERPS over the next five years;

(2) how many members of personal pension schemes who opted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme have opted back into SERPS.

**Mr. Hague:** It is not possible to estimate the numbers of people likely to opt back into the state earnings-related pension scheme (SERPS), since the decision as to whether or not to opt back depends on an individual's particular circumstances.

We estimate that some 76,500 United Kingdom personal pension holders had rejoined SERPS by the end of 1990-91, the latest year for which figures are available. This estimate is based on a 1 per cent. sample of national insurance contributors and may include people who have left and rejoined SERPS more than once.

### Social Fund (Rent Deposits)

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the pilot scheme enabling people to receive payments from the social fund for rent deposits to report on the pilot project.

**Mr. Scott:** There is no such scheme. However, the Department of the Environment is currently funding a pilot rent deposit scheme as part of the rough sleepers initiative in central London.

### Housing Benefit

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to study the implications of the transfer of housing benefit administration from local authorities to the Benefits Agency.

**Mr. Burt:** There are no proposals for such a transfer. In March this year the Department issued guidelines designed to help individual local authorities to make informed decisions about whether or not to contract out those aspects of benefit administration which the law permits.

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps his Department are taking to increase the take-up of housing benefit.

**Mr. Burt:** Information on housing benefit is available at all Benefits Agency and unemployment benefit offices, although, as responsibility for the administration of housing benefit lies with individual local authorities, they are in the best position to undertake local publicity and initiatives to improve local take-up.

Latest estimates of housing benefit take-up, for 1989, which were published earlier this year, show 91 per cent. of available benefit being claimed.

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to introduce compensation to tenants when local authorities do not issue interim payments for housing benefit purposes.

**Mr. Burt:** We have no such plans. Local authorities are responsible for the administration of housing benefit and it is for them to decide whether any recompense should be made following their investigation of individual complaints. In addition, if the local government ombudsman finds maiadministration and injustice in a particular case, the judgement can include a recommendation about financial compensation.

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to issue a national form for reporting change of circumstances for housing benefit.

**Mr. Burt:** We have no such plans. Full statutory responsibility for the administration of the housing benefit scheme rests with local authorities. That responsibility extends to the design and production of appropriate claim forms. Authorities may produce supplementary forms where they consider it would help to streamline benefit administration.

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out in a table for every year since 1984 the amount of housing benefit going to tenants *(a)* in local authority housing, *(b)* in housing association properties and *(c)* in private rented housing; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hague:** The available information is in the table.

| | [1] [2] *Rent Rebates £ million* | [1] [3] *Rent Allowance £ million* |
|---|---|---|
| 1983-84 | 1,980 | 536 |
| 1984-85 | 2,146 | 687 |
| 1985-86 | 2,296 | 881 |
| 1986-87 | 2,419 | 996 |
| 1987-88 | 2,506 | 1,030 |
| 1988-89 | 2,718 | 1,055 |
| 1989-90 | 2,946 | 1,337 |
| 1990-91 | 3,345 | 1,396 |
| 1991-92 | 3,659 | 2,399 |
| [4]1992-93 | 4,445 | 2,903 |

*Source:*—The source of the data is the departmental report.

[1] Rent rebates are housing benefit in respect of local authority tenants; rent allowances are housing benefit paid to tenants in privately rented accommodation.

[2] Includes transitional payments introduced when the responsibility for housing benefit was fully transferred from supplementary benefit to housing benefit. (1983-84)

[3] Separate information for housing associations is not available; information for these properties is included with rent allowance.

[4] Estimated outturn.

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the average council rent is the maximum non-dependant deduction for housing benefit.

**Mr. Burt:** The maximum non-dependant deduction in 1993-94 is estimated to represent approximately 65 per cent. of the average local authority rent in Great Britain.

### Fraud

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress his Department has made in encouraging local authorities to reduce council tax and housing benefit fraud; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Burt:** The Department has recently undertaken several initiatives to heighten fraud awareness amongst local authority staff and to encourage local authorities in their anti-fraud work:

From April 1993 authorities will not only receive an increase in benefit subsidy, from 25 per cent. to full rate, for overpayments resulting from fraud but authorities will also share in benefit savings they achieve above specific baseline figures.

In May 1993, a model national fraud service level agreement was signed, which had been prepared by the Department, in consultation with the local authority associations and the Benefits Agency. The agreement provides a framework for effective two-way liaison between fraud sections in local authorities and Benefits Agency sector fraud.

In 1992-93, the Department, in conjuction with the Benefits Agency training unit, offered free fraud training to authorities and funds have now been secured for further training in 1993-94.

The Department will be involved in and do all it can to support the newly formed London-wide team of local authority specialists which has been set up to co-ordinate authorities' anti-fraud efforts across borough boundaries.

### Local Authorities (Rents)

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to implement the Audit Commission's recommendation that local authorities should be able to apply to the rent officer every six months.

**Mr. Burt:** Under current arrangements, local authorities cannot normally refer to the rent officer for a fresh

determination within a period of 12 months, but there are circumstances in which referral within this period is permitted. We have no plans to amend the general 12-month referral period.

## Income Support (Mortgage Interest)

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants were paid income support for mortgage interest in each year since 1988 *(a)* as a total, *(b)* who were pensioners, *(c)* who were unemployed and *(d)* who were disability premium recipients; and if he will provide an annual cost for each category in both current prices and 1988 prices.

**Mr. Burt:** The information is in the table.

*Income support recipients with mortgage interest considered in their assessments*

| | *Number of cases* | *Annual equivalent amount of mortgage interest* £ |
|---|---|---|
| *1988* | | |
| Total | 300 | 285,600 |
| Pensioners | 75 | 37,300 |
| Unemployed | 125 | 138,200 |
| Disability premium recipients | 26 | 25,700 |
| Others | — | — |
| | *1988-89 prices* | |
| Total | 300 | 285,600 |
| Pensioners | 75 | 37,300 |
| Unemployed | 125 | 138,200 |
| Disability premium recipients | 26 | 25,700 |
| Others | — | — |
| | *1993-94 prices* | |
| Total | 300 | 372,906 |
| Pensioners | 75 | 48,702 |
| Unemployed | 125 | 180,447 |
| Disability premium recipients | 26 | 33,556 |
| Others | — | — |
| *1989* | | |
| Total | 281 | 353,000 |
| Pensioners | 74 | 51,200 |
| Unemployed | 91 | 135,700 |
| Disability premium recipients | 31 | 38,100 |
| Others | 85 | 128,000 |
| | *1988-89 prices* | |
| Total | 281 | 331,2270 |
| Pensioners | 74 | 48,042 |
| Unemployed | 91 | 127,330 |
| Disability premium recipients | 31 | 35,750 |
| Others | 85 | 120,105 |
| | *1993-94 prices* | |
| Total | 281 | 432,480 |
| Pensioners | 74 | 62,728 |
| Unemployed | 91 | 166,254 |
| Disability premium recipients | 31 | 46,678 |
| Others | 85 | 156,820 |
| *1990* | | |
| Total | 310 | 553,400 |
| Pensioners | 88 | 81,200 |
| Unemployed | 87 | 194,500 |
| Disability premium recipients | 37 | 62,600 |
| Others | 99 | 215,100 |
| | *1988-89 prices* | |
| Total | 310 | 480,772 |
| Pensioners | 88 | 70,543 |
| Unemployed | 87 | 168,974 |
| Disability premium recipients | 37 | 54,384 |
| Others | 99 | 186,870 |
| | *1993-94 prices* | |
| Total | 310 | 627,740 |
| Pensioners | 88 | 92,108 |
| Unemployed | 87 | 220,628 |
| Disability premium recipients | 37 | 71,009 |
| Others | 99 | 243,995 |
| *1991* | | |
| Total | 411 | 949,200 |
| Pensioners | 87 | 93,100 |
| Unemployed | 161 | 442,000 |
| Disability premium recipients | 45 | 94,700 |
| Others | 118 | 319,500 |
| | *1988-89 prices* | |
| Total | 411 | 773,104 |
| Pensioners | 87 | 75,828 |
| Unemployed | 161 | 360,000 |
| Disability premium recipients | 45 | 77,131 |
| Others | 118 | 260,226 |
| | *1993-94 prices* | |
| Total | 411 | 1,009,436 |
| Pensioners | 87 | 99,008 |
| Unemployed | 161 | 470,049 |
| Disability premium recipients | 45 | 100,710 |
| Others | 118 | 339,775 |
| *1992* | | |
| Total | 499 | 1,143,200 |
| Pensioners | 90 | 94,100 |
| Unemployed | 216 | 596,800 |
| Disability premium recipients | 53 | 104,600 |
| Others | 141 | 347,800 |
| | *1988-89 prices* | |
| Total | 499 | 899,627 |
| Pensioners | 90 | 74,051 |
| Unemployed | 216 | 469,644 |
| Disability premium recipients | 53 | 82,314 |
| Others | 141 | 273,697 |
| | *1993-94 prices* | |
| Total | 499 | 1,174,635 |
| Pensioners | 90 | 96,688 |
| Unemployed | 216 | 613,211 |
| Disability premium recipients | 53 | 107,476 |
| Others | 141 | 357,364 |

*Source:* Income Support Statistics Annual Inquiries, May 1988 to 1992.

*Notes:*

1. The figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand. Cost figures are given to the nearest hundred thousand pounds.
2. Figures are given for the numbers of income support recipients who have mortgage interest considered in their assessment. The annual costs have been estimated from the weekly amount of mortgage interest considered in the assessment. In practice the amount of income support paid to the recipient may be reduced due to assumed contributions from non-dependants living in the household.
3. Some "Pensioners" may also receive a disability premium. These people have been counted as "Pensioners" rather than "Disability premium recipients".
4. Costs at 1988 prices have been calculated using the gross domestic product deflator.

### Walsall Council (Bus Passes)

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 10 June, *Official Report*, column *333*, when he expects to conclude his discussions with Walsall council over its refusal to comply with legislation allowing blind people in receipt of the disability living allowance to have the concessionary bus pass; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** We remain engaged in discussions with the council and hope to conclude them in the near future. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as the discussions are completed to let him know their outcome.

### Industrial Deafness

**Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were in receipt of *(a)* invalidity pension and *(b)* invalidity allowance owing to being incapable to work because of industrial-induced deafness in each year since 1979.

**Mr. Scott:** The information requested is not available.

### Invalidity Benefit

**Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claimants of invalidity benefit in each constituency in the London borough of Brent are aged to *(a)* 18 to 30 years, *(b)* 31 to 40 years, *(c)* 41 to 50 years and *(d)* 51 to 65 years;

(2) how many claimants of invalidty benefit there were in *(a)* the London borough of Brent and *(b)* the Brent, South parliamentary constituency at the latest available date.

**Mr. Scott:** I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many male and female claimants of invalidity benefit there were in Pendle in each year since 1990.

**Mr. Scott:** I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants of invalidity benefit in Pendle are aged *(a)* 18-30 years, *(b)* 31-40 years, *(c)* 41-50 years and *(d)* 51-65 years.

**Mr. Scott:** I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people currently in residential care are in receipt of invalidity benefit.

**Mr. Scott:** The information requested is not available.

**Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the proportion of registered disabled persons currently in receipt of invalidity benefit.

**Mr. Scott:** The information requested is not available.

**Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were in receipt of *(a)* invalidity pension and *(b)* invalidity allowance for each year since 1979.

**Mr. Scott:** The information is in the table.

*Numbers receiving invalidity pension and invalidity allowance*

| *Date* | *Invalidity pension* | *Invalidity allowance* |
|---|---|---|
| 2 June 1979 | 609,900 | 505,100 |
| 31 May 1980 | 614,500 | 512,100 |
| 30 May 1981 | 632,600 | 533,000 |
| 29 May 1982 | 683,100 | 575,400 |
| 2 April 1983 | 736,800 | 364,000 |
| 31 March 1984 | 797,000 | 665,500 |
| 30 March 1985 | 848,900 | 708,200 |
| 5 April 1986 | 899,200 | 516,400 |
| 4 April 1987 | 967,900 | 508,400 |
| 2 April 1988 | 1,047,500 | 509,100 |
| 1 April 1989 | 1,126,000 | 518,100 |
| 31 March 1990 | 1,208,900 | 523,300 |
| 30 March 1991 | 1,306,000 | 534,600 |

*Notes:*

1. Based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants; the latest date for which information is available is 30 March 1991.

2. The estimated average number of people receiving invalidity benefit at any one time during 1992-93 is 1,490,000 (source: departmental report).

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give for each benefit office the number of claimants in receipt of invalidity benefit in May 1979 and at the most recent date for which figures are available.

**Mr. Scott:** I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not available.

### Industrial Disablement Pension

**Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people received industrial disablement pension in each year since 1979.

**Mr. Scott:** The information requested is in the table:

*Estimated average numbers of recipients[1] at any one time*

*Thousands*

| *Period* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 270 |
| 1980-81 | 265 |
| 1981-82 | 260 |
| 1982-83 | 265 |
| 1983-84 | 265 |
| 1984-85 | 260 |
| 1985-86 | 265 |
| 1986-87 | 285 |
| 1987-88 | 290 |
| 1988-89 | 295 |
| 1989-90 | 295 |
| 1990-91 | 305 |
| 1991-92 | 295 |
| 1992-93 | 295 |

[1] The information is taken from departmental reports. The figures include recipients of industrial injuries disablement pension and/or reduced earnings allowance.

### DSS Employees (Fraud)

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many DSS employees have been charged with fraud in each year since 1979; what was the value of this fraud; and what is the estimated total value of frauds committed by DSS employees for each of those years.

**Mr. Hague:** The information is in the table.

Information is not available for the period 1979 to 1983, and only partial details are available for the period 1984 to 1987. There is no basis on which to estimate the total value of unknown fraud committed. The figures in column 4 relate to the value of fraud on the part of DSS employees detected each year. Where criminal prosecution was not considered to be appropriate the incidents were dealt with by internal disciplinary measures.

| *Year* | *Number of staff prosecuted* | *Amount of fraud involved (£)* | *Known total value of internal fraud* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1984 | 9 | 35,816·39 | — |
| 1985 | 4 | 41,484·88 | — |
| 1986 | 3 | 13,563·27 | — |
| 1987 | 10 | 22,911·09 | — |
| 1988 | 1 | 4,206·05 | 7,802·33 |
| 1989 | 1 | 42,924·80 | 57,628·31 |
| 1990 | 1 | 34,084·90 | 55,933·91 |
| 1991 | 1 | 46,649·07 | 160,040·53 |
| 1992 | 3 | 106,961·35 | 160,276·76 |
| 1993 | 3 | 93,617·25 | 195,635·93 |

### Mr. Terry Green

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what consideration he gave in deciding to appoint Mr. Terry Green as a non-executive director with the Benefits Agency to his immediately preceding status as a civil servant in the agency;

(2) if he will publish the terms and conditions relating to the recent appointment of Mr. Terry Green as a non-executive director of the Benefits Agency.

**Mr. Hague:** The appointment of non-executive members of the Benefits Agency management team is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. John McAllion, dated 18 June 1993:*

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what consideration he gave in deciding to appoint Mr. Terry Green as a non-executive director with the Benefits Agency to his immediately preceding status as a civil servant in the Agency and if he will publish the terms and conditions relating to his appointment of Mr. Terry Green as a non-executive director of the Benefits Agency.

We have recently been looking, within the Benefits Agency, at the roles and responsibilities of the directors who form the Benefits Agency Management Team. We concluded that it would be appropriate to reduce the number of full-time executive directors from six to five, but that it would also be desirable to appoint two part-time non-executive members of the Team, particularly to contribute to the strategic thinking of the Agency. I have been very pleased to appoint Terry Green as a non-executive member of the Management Team with a special interest in customer service issues. In that role he will be able to develop the work he led on customer service when he was employed by the Agency.

The terms and conditions relating to this appointment are not yet the subject of a formal contract but it has been agreed that Mr. Green will work for three days a month. Details of an individual's remuneration are regarded as confidential, but the daily fee payable to Mr. Green is well within the normal range for this type of appointment. He will also be reimbursed travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with the normal Benefits Agency rules. His immediately preceding status as a civil servant was relevant only to the extent that he is able to bring to our deliberations considerable knowledge of customer services issues in the Benefits Agency. The normal rules of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme relating to re-employment will be applied.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Comfrey

**Mr. Hain:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if individuals may import comfrey products for their private use; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Soames:** The advice of the Government's independent expert committees is that consumption of comfrey products containing high levels of pyrrolizidine alkaloids may give rise to toxic effects in humans. With the co-operation of the principal health food trade associations, I have taken action to protect consumers by securing the removal of relevant products from sale. However, this is not a legislative prohibition.

### Tobacco Subsidy

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the EC subsidy for tobacco growing in ecu and sterling for 1991 and 1992; and what is the estimated level for 1993.

**Mr. Jack:** Community expenditure on tobacco amounted to 1,330 mecu (£931 million)[1] in 1991 and 1,233 mecu (£873 million)[2] in 1992. For 1993, the last year in which the unreformed regime applies, it is forecast at 1,401 mecu (£1,110 million)[3].

[1] £1 = 1·4291 ecu
[2] £1 = 1·4130 ecu
[3] £1 = 1·2617 ecu

### Agriculture Council (Voting)

**Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 27 May, *Official Report*, columns *687-88*, what were the voting figures for each decision taken at the Agriculture Council held in Brussels on 24 and 25 May; and if she will make it her policy to include in future statements on council meetings information on whether formal votes were taken.

**Mr. Jack:** The Agriculture Council, which met from 24 to 27 May, reached agreement in principle on the 1993 price proposals and related measures; no formal vote was taken. The various measures were adopted at the subsequent Council on 14 June. No formal vote was taken

but five member states registered votes against a measure increasing milk quotas and one against a measure extending the sugar regime. My right hon. Friend and I will in future indicate in statements on Council meetings whether formal votes were taken.

### Coastal Protection

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the current criteria for grant-aiding coast protection and sea defence works; what changes she is expecting to make in the criteria; how much of the East Anglian coastline she expects to meet the criteria in the next two years; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Jack:** The basic criteria for grant-aiding coast protection and sea defence works are that they should be technically sound, economically worth while and environmentally acceptable. The protection of life is the paramount objective, but in considering applications for grant aid, there is a presumption that natural coastal processes should not be disrupted except where life or important natural or man-made assets are at risk. In recent months, the Ministry has published revised and expanded guidance on project appraisal and new guidance on environmental aspects of coastal defences, so that operating authorities are aware of how the criteria are applied. Application of the criteria is kept under review, but no changes are foreseen at present.

The need for improvements to some coastal defences in East Anglia is recognised. Several major grant-aided schemes are already under way or in the course of preparation. It is not possible to say how much of the East Anglian coastline will meet the critera for grant aid in the next two years, as it is for the local operating authorities, in the first instance, to decide what schemes to bring forward for approval. However, it is likely that a major part of the Ministry's grant provision will continue to be directed to the Anglian region.

### Sea Level

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies her Department has conducted in the last five years into the impact to the British coast which would be caused by a rise in the sea level of a quarter of a metre; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Jack:** The Ministry continues to fund a number of flood and coastal defence research projects relating to climate change and possible sea level rise, designed to ensure that we are in a position to assess the likely impact on the coast and to plan our response. These include the assessment of changes in the probability of sea levels in storms and of the impact of any changes in wave and storm climate on beaches. In addition, the Ministry funds a national system of tide gauges and recent work has been carried out to relate these to a global reference system so that changes in sea level and geological movements can be separately identified.

A further item of research the Ministry has sponsored in the period mentioned involved an economic appraisal of the consequences of climate-induced sea level rise for the East Anglian coast between Hunstanton and Felixstowe, which was carried out by the university of East Anglia. The research indicated that a strategy of raising defences as required would be economically worth while and current Ministry advice is that new or improved defences should include an allowance for future sea level rise based on estimates by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

### Equine Viral Arteritis

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) of 10 June, *Official Report*, columns *307-8*, whether national provisions in force at the time the stallion which was possibly infected with equine viral arteritis was imported into the United Kingdom afford the same degree of protection to the United Kingdom as the provision set out in article 20(2) of the EC directive 90/496/EEC, *(a)* against inadequate third country veterinary certification and *(b)* when equidae are, or are suspected of being, infected with or contaminated by an infectious or contagious disease.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** The animal health rules applicable to the import of horses into Great Britain at the time the stallion was imported were of at least equivalent effect to those now required under EC rules. Where there is evidence of inadequate veterinary certification, this is always taken up with the country concerned.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, when regulation No. 3295 implementing Council directive 90/496/EEC came into force; on what date article 27 of that directive stipulates that it should have been brought into force in the United Kingdom; what are the reasons for the difference in dates; and if she will make a statement.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** The Animals and Animal Products (Import and Export) Regulations 1992 (SI 1992 No. 3295) came into force on 1 January 1993.

Article 27 of directive 90/426/EEC required member states to bring into force implementing laws, regulations and administrative procedures from 1 January 1992. The provisions were implemented in Great Britain under existing legislation pending the coming into force of SI 1992 No. 3295.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when her Ministry first received representations from the Animal Health Trust that a relaxation in the rules governing the import of horses and farmed livestock would make the United Kingdom vulnerable to equine viral arteritis.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** As soon as it was realised that specific provisions in relation to EVA were not to be included in the EC animal health rules of equidae, the industry was advised to strengthen the existing voluntary code of practice designed to guard against the introduction of disease into the breeding stock.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what effect the timing of the implementation of directive 90/496/EEC, on animal health conditions governing the movement and import from third countries of equidae, had with respect to the importation of horses infected with equine viral arteritis and farmed livestock testing sero-positive to foot and mouth.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** The timing of implementation of directive 90/426/EEC, which does not apply to farmed livestock, has had no effect on the importation of horses infected with EVA.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what measures are presently in place, or are due to be implemented, which might restrict the United Kingdom's ability to halt the importation of animals infected with equine viral arteritis or other non-notifiable diseases;

(2) whether the United Kingdom is able to act independently of other EC nations within the context of the European single market, to protect against the importation of equidae infected with equine viral arteritis and farmed livestock testing sero-positive to foot and mouth.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** EC rules require that animals entering the Community or moving between member states must be certified as free from clinical signs of disease. Member states may return animals not complying with this requirement.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action the Government are taking to ensure that equine viral arteritis is included on the list of notifiable diseases listed in schedule 5 to the Animals and Animal Products (Import and Export) Regulation 1992.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** None, because EVA is not required under EC rules to be notifiable in member states.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a vaccine will be available to tackle equine viral arteritis virus; and why stocks were not available in the United Kingdom for immediate use.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** An application for an inactivated vaccine has recently been received by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate and is being assessed as quickly as possible.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the most recent figures on the number of premises and horses known to have been infected with equine viral arteritis.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** According to information provided by the Animal Health Trust, active infection has been found on six of 14 premises currently under voluntary movement restrictions. Eighty-eight horses have, to date, tested seropositive.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what national rules have been in force pending the implementation of directive 90/496/EEC; and what protection these rules provided against the importation of equidae infected with equine viral arteritis.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** National rules in force prior to impiementation of directive 90/426/EEC required horses to be tested seronegative to equine viral arteritis prior to importation.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action her Department is taking to assist in the eradication of equine viral arteritis from the United Kingdom; and by when she expects eradication to have been achieved.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) on 10 June 1993, columns *307-308*.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research her Ministry has financed towards the development of a genetically engineered killed vaccine for equine viral arteritis.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** None, although research into the equine viral arteritis virus is currently taking place at the Central Veterinary Laboratory, Weybridge and the Animal Health Trust, Newmarket for which a total of £0·25 million has been allocated over three years.

### Animal Imports

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list each country from which horses and cattle cannot be imported into the United Kingdom until a quarantine requirement has been fully met.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** Current animal health rules for imports of horses and cattle into the United Kingdom do not include any quarantine requirements, although imports from a number of countries are subject to pre-export or post-import isolation.

### Animal Diseases

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list those animal diseases currently present in the EC but not in the United Kingdom, which are not listed as notifiable diseases, and against which the United Kingdom is, or will be, prevented by EC legislation from imposing import restrictions on horses and farmed livestock.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** Member states are only required to report to the Commission and each other outbreaks of diseases which are notifiable under EC rules. Information on non-notifiable diseases is only available from a variety of sources and is not comprehensive or necessarily current.

### Food From Britain

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the level of funding given to Food From Britain for each of the last five years and the projected funding for each of the next three years.

**Mr. Jack** *[holding answer 18 June 1993]:* The information is as follows:

*Government grant to Food From Britain*

| | *£000* |
|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 4,186 |
| 1989-90 | 4,500 |
| 1990-91 | 4,500 |
| 1991-92 | 4,500 |
| 1992-93 | 4,757 |
| 1993-94 | [1]5,010 |
| 1994-95 | [2]5,249 |
| 1995-96 | [2]5,400 |

[1] Estimate.
[2] Provision.

## Sheep Quotas

**Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what financial support she plans to provide for those farmers deprived of sheep quota after the national reserve is exhausted; and if she will make a statement;

(2) when she expects to announce details of the distribution of reserve sheep quotas;

(3) if she will publish, on a regional basis, the number of farmers deprived of quota as a result of the new sheep quota regulations.

**Mr. Jack** *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* Producers who received sheep annual premium in 1991 and claimed in 1992 have an automatic entitlement to sheep quota. Where producers are not covered by the automatic rules, they will be able to apply for quota to the national reserve, if they fall into certain priority categories. All farmers, including those who are unsuccessful in obtaining quota from the national reserve, will be able to acquire quota through the transfer and leasing provisions the Government have negotiated. It is expected that details of the distribution of the national reserve quota for sheep will be made available later in the summer.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Tuesday 22 June 1993*

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Judges

**Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many judges aged 70 years or over are sitting on the circuit bench *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time; and how many of these are recorders or assistant recorders.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** As at 1 June 1993, there were 16 full-time circuit judges aged 70 or over. In addition there were 29 deputy circuit judges and 12 recorders aged 70 or over, who may sit part time. There were no assistant recorders aged 70 or over.

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** Since November 1992 the Lord Chancellor's Department has commenced market tests in eight areas: internal audit; pay services; Public Trust Office taxes division; Public Trust Office typing services; Statutory Publications Office; printing and forms supply; IT services; and court building and estates management. To date, seven separate market tests have been completed in the court building and estates management area, which all resulted in the services being contracted out. These services were formerly provided by the Property Services Agency. Save for internal audit, the market tests in the remaining areas are still proceeding and no decisions have been taken. In the case of internal audit an in-house provision has been maintained.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Redundant Farm Buildings

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what grant aid is available for the purpose of restoring redundant farm houses and associated buildings in order that they may once again form the basis of an active farming unit.

**Mr. Brooke:** If the hon. Member's focus is a Scottish one, I suggest that he writes to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. In England, since 1989, English Heritage has been contributing funds towards the barns and walls conservation scheme, in the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale conservation area of the Yorkshire Dales national park—a joint initiative also involving the national park, Richmondshire district council, the Countryside Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Grants of up to 80 per cent. are available to farmers and landowners to enable them to bring the buildings back into working condition, using traditional materials and repair techniques. Nationally, English Heritage is able to give grants for the repair of historic buildings of outstanding historical or architectural interest—usually those listed grade I or grade II—or those situated in designated conservation areas.

### National Lottery

**Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has for the national lottery to contain an instant lottery element.

**Mr. Sproat:** The types and mix of games for the national lottery will be for the operator to propose. The licensing of individual games under clause 6 of the National Lottery etc. Bill will be the responsibility of the director-general.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Northern Ireland Court of Appeal

**Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a further statement on the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland's progress in considering the cases referred to him by the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal in its judgment in the case of R *v.* Latimer and others delivered on 29 July 1992.

**The Attorney-General:** The Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland considered the judgment of the Court of Appeal and all other then available facts and information. On 5 August 1992, 10 February 1993 and 27 April 1993 the director issued interim directions to the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary requesting that further reports, information and witness statements be obtained. The majority of these further reports, information and witness statements have been obtained by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and submitted to the director. A small number of witness statements remain outstanding.

When all the matters requested in these interim directions have been received and considered, a decision as to whether criminal proceedings will be instituted will be taken. It is expected that this decision will be taken in the near future. I refer the hon. Member to the replies that I gave to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 11 November 1992 at columns *835-36* and to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) on 27 January 1993 at column *709*.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Wheel Clamping

**Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number and names of individuals and organisations who responded to the public consultation exercise on wheel clamping.

**Mr. Maclean:** Approximately 2,400 copies of the consultation paper were distributed and 184 responses have been received. Respondents were not asked to agree

to the publication of their names when their comments were invited and it would not be appropriate now to identify them. However, the table shows the categories to which these respondents belong.

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Landowners: | |
| hospitals | 7 |
| estates | 10 |
| national organisations | 9 |
| local organisations | 22 |
| individuals | 8 |
| Wheelclamping companies | 11 |
| Motorists | 13 |
| MPs and Members of the House of Lords | 8 |
| Local authorities | 46 |
| Police | 23 |
| Other bodies (including other Government departments and public and private organisations representing a wide variety of interests) | 27 |

In addition, since 1 April 1992, we have received 199 letters forwarded by MPs and Members of the House of Lords, and 107 letters sent direct to the Home Office or other Government Departments commenting on this issue.

### Police Batons

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will agree to a pilot project on the use of the expandable side-handled baton being monitored by *(a)* the Association of Chief Police Officers, *(b)* the Police Federation, *(c)* the Chief Inspector of Constabulary and *(d)* an independent research and assessment team.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 21 June at column *2*.

### Rabies

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce tougher sentences for offenders contravening anti-rabies laws; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** The maximum penalty for offences under the Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats and Other Mammals) Order 1974 is an unlimited fine and/or 12 months' imprisonment. We have no plans to increase it.

### Wickham Laboratories

**Sir John Wheeler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the outcome of the investigations into allegations by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection in respect of Wickham laboratories.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The Home Office Animals (Scientific Procedures) Inspectorate and the Medicines Control Agency have investigated allegations made by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) into procedures and practices at Wickham laboratories.

The investigation did not find substantiated some of the principal allegations against Wickham, but it did disclose poor local management, resulting in lax attitudes and practices among certain staff. These included a readiness to falsify test and environmental data on occasions. There was also one case of unnecessary animal use. Some aspects of the technical training were unsatisfactory: initial training was poorly structured and unrecorded and left some basic gaps in coverage. The system also lacked formal assessment of competence before unsupervised tasks were allocated to new employees.

My right hon. and learned Friend has concluded that direct responsibility for the failures detected by the investigation lies with the individual who was line manager for the named day-to-day care person at the time to which the BUAV allegations relate, and who was himself named day-to-day care person at the time of the Home Office investigation. My right hon. and learned Friend has directed that he be replaced as named day-to-day care person and deputy project licence holder, and that his personal licence be revoked. In addition, the individual who was named day-to-day care person at the time of the BUAV investigation has been warned that particular attention will be paid to her current skills and knowledge if in future she should apply for a personal licence. A number of other members of Wickham staff have received letters of admonition, reminding them of the importance of a proper understanding of their responsibilities and obligations under the legislation.

In addition to action in respect of individuals, my right hon. and learned Friend has directed:

- that Wickham agree with the inspectorate a *formal training scheme* for all animal unit staff, including full records of training given and an assessment of expertise for specific tasks being made from the beginning of each individual's employment;
- that Wickham's standard operating procedures relating to *the care, husbandry and euthanasia of animals* should be revised to the satisfaction of the inspectorate and to reflect best current practice.

It has been made clear to Wickham that a serious view has been taken of the lapses which this investigation has revealed, and that Wickham's operation will be subjected to particularly close scrutiny in the future. The Animal Procedures Committee has been informed of the outcome of the investigation, and has endorsed the action taken.

Other allegations made by the BUAV were not substantiated, and the inspectorate had reservations about some of the evidence presented in support of the allegations. In particular, the investigation did not find that there had been unauthorised reuse of animals, or that animal suffering had resulted from poor accommodation, or that problems had arisen from a potential conflict of interests among the senior management at Wickham. On the latter point, however, the Animal Procedures Committee has decided to look in general terms at the conflicts which may arise when the posts of certificate holder, project licence holder and named veterinary surgeon are not all held by separate individuals.

The BUAV alleged that unnecessary animal testing took place. I am satisfied, however, that all the work carried out at Wickham was properly licensed under the Act. The general issue of animal testing performed to satisfy the requirements of regulatory authorities is currently being examined by the Animal Procedures Committee, and I look forward to receiving its advice.

Finally, I understand that the Medicines Control Agency's conclusion is that although there were operational and procedural deficiencies at Wickham, they do not call in question the validity of the particular tests, nor do they raise doubts about Wickham's continued

operation as a contract research establishment. A range of improvements has been insisted upon by the agency and it will be keeping the situation under close review.

### Prosecution Statements

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to give the defence the right to see prosecution statements in summary trials; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** We have no plans at present to extend to defendants accused of summary offences the provisions of the Magistrates Courts (Advance Information) Rules 1985. The issue is, however, within the terms of reference of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice and we will consider carefully any recommendations it might make.

### Unit Fine System

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider establishing a restrospective scheme to compensate those individuals who have been disadvantaged by the unit fine system after it has been replaced.

**Mr. Maclean:** No.

### Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many claims have been made to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in each of the last three years; how many have been successful; how many have gone to appeal and then been accepted; and what have been the shortest, longest and average times each year to deal with cases that have gone to appeal.

**Mr. Maclean:** The latest available information, provided by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (CICB), is summarised in the following tables.

*Table 1*
*Claims received and decisions made by CICB*

| | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Claims received | 53,655 | 50,820 | 61,400 |
| Awards offered and accepted at first decision stage | 25,577 | 32,135 | 35,268 |
| Applications for appeal | 7,203 | 8,123 | 9,258 |
| Appeals heard | 3,897 | 6,265 | 8,731 |
| Successful appeals | 2,349 | 3,055 | 3,981 |

*Table 2*
*Time between application for appeal and hearing*

| | *1989-90 per cent.* | *1990-91 per cent.* | *1991-92 per cent.* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Up to 3 months | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| 3 to 6 months | 3 | 8 | 13 |
| 6 to 9 months | 6 | 10 | 15 |
| 9 to 12 months | 18 | 11 | 14 |
| Over 12 months | 72 | 67 | 55 |
| | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Note:* The numbers relating to awards, applications for appeals and appeals heard in any one year do not necessarily relate to claims received in that year, or to each other.

### Police Mergers

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those police authorities that have been considered for amalgamation *(a)* during his period of office as Home Secretary and *(b)* during the past 10 years; and which proposals did not proceed because of the current procedure for amalgamation (i) as the only or primary reason and (ii) as a contributory reason.

**Mr. Charles Wardle** *[holding answer 19 May 1993]:* No police authorities were considered for amalgamation during the term of office of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke). At the time of the abolition of the metropolitan county councils, consideration was given to possible changes in the relevant police force areas. No changes were made because it was felt unlikely that reorganisation would improve effectiveness. The amalgamation procedure was not a factor in this decision.

Complete records for the last 10 years are not available. However, the records that are available indicate that detailed consideration has not been given to the amalgamation of any other force areas during that time.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### World Service

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to enhance the output and reputation of the World Service.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** In discussions with the World Service in March and April this year we reached broad agreement on plans for the next funding triennium (April 1994 to March 1997), and on priority areas for development, funded from savings elsewhere in the World Service. These plans, which remain subject to the outcome of the current public expenditure survey, take account of the need to respond to changes in the former Soviet Union, and include the introduction of two central Asian languages.

### Trade Representatives

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many *(a)* diplomats and *(b)* trade representatives there are in each United Kingdom diplomatic post overseas.

**Mr. Goodlad:** The total number of United Kingdom diplomats (with the rank of second secretary and above) serving in United Kingdom diplomatic posts overseas is 1,263.

The total number of trade representatives at these posts, including locally engaged staff, is 451.

A breakdown of the figures by post is as follows:

*Foreign and Commonwealth Office diplomatic posts overseas*

| *Country* | *Post* | *Number of diplomats* | *Trade representatives*[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Albania | Tirana | 1·0 | 0 |
| Algeria | Algiers | 7·0 | 1 |
| Angola | Luanda | 6·0 | 2 |
| Antigua | Antigua | 1·0 | 0 |

| Country | Post | Number of diplomats | Trade representatives[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Argentina | Buenos Aires | 8·0 | 3 |
| Australia | Brisbane | 2·0 | 2 |
| Australia | Canberra | 11·0 | 0 |
| Australia | Melbourne | 3·0 | 5 |
| Australia | Perth | 2·0 | 3 |
| Australia | Sydney | 3·0 | 3 |
| Austria | Vienna | 10·0 | 3 |
| Austria | Vienna CFE | 5·0 | 0 |
| Austria | Vienna UKMIS | 4·0 | 0 |
| Azerbaijan | Baku | 2·0 | 0 |
| British Virgin Isles | Tortola | 1·0 | 0 |
| Bahamas | Nassau | 2·0 | 1 |
| Bahrain | Bahrain | 5·0 | 0 |
| Bangladesh | Dhaka | 11·0 | 1 |
| Barbados | Bridgetown | 5·0 | 1 |
| Barbados | DT Secretar | 2·0 | 0 |
| Belarus | Minsk | 1·0 | 0 |
| Belgium | Brussels | 11·0 | 5 |
| Belgium | Brussels JMO | 4·0 | 0 |
| Belgium | Brussels UKDL | 9·0 | 0 |
| Belgium | Brussels UKRP | 39·0 | 1 |
| Belize | Belmopan | 2·0 | 0 |
| Bolivia | La Paz | 2·0 | 1 |
| Botswana | Gaborone | 3·0 | 1 |
| Brazil | Brasilia | 8·0 | 0 |
| Brazil | Rio de Janeiro | 2·0 | 3 |
| Brazil | Sao Paulo | 3·0 | 5 |
| Brunei | Ban Seri Beg | 3·0 | 0 |
| Bulgaria | Sofia | 7·0 | 0 |
| Burma | Rangoon | 2·0 | 1 |
| Cambodia | Phnom Penh | 3·0 | 0 |
| Cameroon | Douala | 1·0 | 2 |
| Cameroon | Yaounde | 2·0 | 0 |
| Canada | Montreal | 3·0 | 4 |
| Canada | Ottawa | 8·0 | 3 |
| Canada | Toronto | 3·0 | 6 |
| Canada | Vancouver | 2·0 | 2 |
| Chile | Santiago | 8·0 | 4 |
| China | Peking | 17·0 | 7 |
| China | Shanghai | 2·0 | 1 |
| Colombia | Bogota | 5·0 | 1 |
| Costa Rica | San Jose | 2·0 | 2 |
| Croatia | Zagreb | 4·0 | 1 |
| Croatia | Zagreb ECMM | 1·0 | 0 |
| Cuba | Havana | 4·0 | 0 |
| Cyprus | Nicosia | 11·0 | 3 |
| Czechoslovakia | Prague | 11·0 | 5 |
| Denmark | Copenhagen | 10·0 | 5 |
| Ecuador | Quito | 3·0 | 2 |
| Egypt | Alexandria | 1·0 | 0 |
| Egypt | Cairo | 13·0 | 4 |
| El Salvador | San Salvador | 1·0 | 1 |
| Estonia | Tallinn | 1·0 | 0 |
| Ethiopia | Addis Ababa | 5·0 | 1 |
| Falklands | Stanley | 1·0 | 0 |
| Fiji | Suva | 2·0 | 1 |
| Finland | Helsinki | 8·0 | 4 |
| France | Bordeaux | 1·0 | 1 |
| France | Lille | 1·0 | 1 |
| France | Lyons | 1·0 | 2 |
| France | Marseilles | 1·0 | 1 |
| France | Paris | 33·0 | 10 |
| France | Paris OECD | 6·0 | 0 |
| France | Strasbourg | 2·0 | 0 |
| Gambia | Banjul | 2·0 | 0 |
| Germany | Berlin | 12·0 | 4 |
| Germany | Bonn | 25·0 | 0 |
| Germany | Dusseldorf | 7·0 | 7 |
| Germany | Frankfurt | 3·0 | 3 |
| Germany | Hamburg | 2·0 | 2 |
| Germany | Munich | 4·0 | 3 |
| Germany | Stuttgart | 1·0 | 2 |
| Ghana | Accra | 10·0 | 2 |
| Gibraltar | Gibraltar | 2·0 | 0 |
| Greece | Athens | 11·0 | 4 |
| Grenada | St. George's | 1·0 | 0 |
| Guatemala | Guatemala City | 3·0 | 1 |
| Guyana | Georgetown | 2·0 | 0 |
| Holy See | Vatican City | 2·0 | 0 |
| Honduras | Tegucigalpa | 1·0 | 0 |
| Hong Kong | Hong Kong BTC | 11·0 | 4 |
| Hong Kong | Hong Kong CTU | 2·1 | 3 |
| Hong Kong | Hong Kong JLG | 3·0 | 0 |
| Hungary | Budapest | 9·0 | 5 |
| Iceland | Reykjavik | 2·0 | 0 |
| India | Bombay | 7·0 | 5 |
| India | Calcutta | 2·0 | 2 |
| India | Madras | 2·0 | 3 |
| India | New Delhi | 21·0 | 5 |
| Indonesia | Jakarta | 14·0 | 5 |
| Iran | Tehran | 8·0 | 2 |
| Iraq | Baghdad | 4·0 | 0 |
| Ireland | Dublin | 9·0 | 3 |
| Israel | Tel Aviv | 7·0 | 3 |
| Italy | Florence | 1·0 | 1 |
| Italy | Milan | 5·0 | 8 |
| Italy | Naples | 2·0 | 1 |
| Italy | Rome | 17·0 | 3 |
| Ivory Coast | Abidjan | 3·0 | 2 |
| Jamaica | Kingston | 5·0 | 1 |
| Japan | Osaka | 3·0 | 5 |
| Japan | Tokyo | 23·0 | 14 |
| Jerusalem | Jerusalem | 2·0 | 0 |
| Jordan | Amman | 7·0 | 1 |
| Kazakhstan | Alma Ata | 2·0 | 0 |
| Kenya | Nairobi | 16·0 | 3 |
| Kiribati | Tarawa | 1·0 | 0 |
| Korea | Seoul | 9·0 | 9 |
| Kuwait | Kuwait | 10·0 | 4 |
| Latvia | Riga | 2·0 | 0 |
| Lebanon | Beirut | 2·0 | 1 |
| Lesotho | Maseru | 3·0 | 0 |
| Libya | Tripoli | 1·0 | 0 |
| Lithuania | Vilnius | 2·0 | 0 |
| Luxembourg | Luxembourg | 2·0 | 0 |
| Macedonia | Skopje | 1·0 | 0 |
| Madagascar | Antananarivo | 2·0 | 0 |
| Malawi | Lilongwe | 5·0 | 0 |
| Malaysia | Kuala Lumpur | 9·0 | 6 |
| Malta | Valletta | 4·0 | 1 |
| Mauritius | Port Louis | 2·0 | 0 |
| Mexico | Mexico City | 10·0 | 5 |
| Mongolia | Ulaanbaatar | 2·0 | 0 |
| Montserrat | Plymouth | 1·0 | 0 |
| Morocco | Casablanca | 2·0 | 2 |
| Morocco | Rabat | 4·0 | 0 |
| Mozambique | Maputo | 6·0 | 0 |
| Namibia | Windhoek | 3·0 | 0 |
| Nepal | Kathmandu | 5·0 | 0 |
| Netherlands | Amsterdam | 2·0 | 0 |
| Netherlands | The Hague | 13·0 | 5 |
| New Zealand | Auckland | 2·0 | 3 |
| New Zealand | Wellington | 8·0 | 2 |
| Nicaragua | Managua | 1·0 | 0 |
| Nigeria | Abuja | 4·0 | 2 |
| Nigeria | Kaduna | 2·0 | 2 |
| Nigeria | Lagos | 17·0 | 5 |
| Norway | Oslo | 10·0 | 3 |
| Oman | Muscat | 6·0 | 3 |
| Pakistan | Islamabad | 21·0 | 3 |
| Pakistan | Karachi | 4·0 | 3 |
| Panama | Panama City | 1·0 | 1 |
| Papua New Guinea | Port Moresby | 2·0 | 0 |
| Paraguay | Asuncion | 2·0 | 1 |
| Peru | Lima | 4·0 | 1 |
| Philippines | Manila | 7·0 | 3 |
| Poland | Warsaw | 12·0 | 3 |
| Portugal | Lisbon | 11·0 | 5 |
| Portugal | Oporto | 1·0 | 1 |
| Qatar | Doha | 3·0 | 3 |
| Romania | Bucharest | 8·0 | 2 |
| Russia | Moscow | 26·0 | 6 |

| Country | Post | Number of diplomats | Trade representatives[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Russia | St. Petersburg | 3·0 | 1 |
| Saudi Arabia | Al Khobar | 2·0 | 1 |
| Saudi Arabia | Jedda | 4·0 | 3 |
| Saudi Arabia | Riyadh | 13·0 | 8 |
| Senegal | Dakar | 2·0 | 0 |
| Seychelles | Victoria | 2·0 | 0 |
| Sierra Leone | Freetown | 2·0 | 0 |
| Singapore | Singapore | 8·0 | 5 |
| Slovakia | Bratislava | 2·0 | 0 |
| Slovenia | Ljubljana | 1·0 | 0 |
| Solomon Islands | Honiara | 2·0 | 0 |
| South Africa | Cape Town | 4·0 | 2 |
| South Africa | Durban | 1·0 | 1 |
| South Africa | Johannesburg | 8·0 | 6 |
| South Africa | Pretoria | 11·0 | 0 |
| Spain | Barcelona | 2·0 | 3 |
| Spain | Bilbao | 1·0 | 3 |
| Spain | Madrid | 19·0 | 8 |
| Spain | Malaga | 1·0 | 0 |
| Spain | Palma | 1·0 | 0 |
| Sri Lanka | Colombo | 7·0 | 2 |
| St. Lucia | Castries | 1·0 | 0 |
| St. Vincent | Kingstown | 1·0 | 0 |
| Sudan | Khartoum | 4·0 | 1 |
| Swaziland | Mbabane | 2·0 | 0 |
| Sweden | Stockholm | 10·0 | 5 |
| Switzerland | Berne | 6·0 | 1 |
| Switzerland | Geneva CG | 7·0 | 1 |
| Switzerland | Geneva UKDEL | 3·0 | 0 |
| Switzerland | Geneva UKMIS | 10·0 | 0 |
| Switzerland | Zurich | 2·0 | 6 |
| Syria | Damascus | 6·0 | 1 |
| Taiwan | Taipei Attc | 3·0 | 4 |
| Tanzania | Dar Es Salaam | 7·0 | 0 |
| Thailand | Bangkok | 13·0 | 8 |
| Tonga | Nuku'alofa | 1·0 | 0 |
| Trinidad | Port of Spain | 3·0 | 2 |
| Tunisia | Tunis | 5·0 | 0 |
| Turkey | Ankara | 10·0 | 3 |
| Turkey | Istanbul | 5·0 | 5 |
| Turks Caicos | Grand Turk | 1·0 | 0 |
| U. A. Emirates | Abu Dhabi | 7·0 | 3 |
| U. A. Emirates | Dubai | 5·0 | 3 |
| Uganda | Kampala | 7·0 | 0 |
| Ukraine | Kiev | 6·0 | 0 |
| Uruguay | Montevideo | 3·0 | 1 |
| USA | Atlanta | 2·0 | 3 |
| USA | Boston | 2·0 | 2 |
| USA | Chicago | 5·0 | 9 |
| USA | Cleveland | 1·0 | 1 |
| USA | Dallas | 1·0 | 2 |
| USA | Houston | 2·0 | 3 |
| USA | Los Angeles | 6·0 | 4 |
| USA | Miami | 1·0 | 2 |
| USA | New York BTIO | 9·0 | 11 |
| USA | New York UKMIS | 17·0 | 0 |
| USA | New York BIS | 3·0 | 0 |
| USA | New York CG | 4·0 | 0 |
| USA | New York JMO | 2·0 | 0 |
| USA | San Francisco | 2·0 | 2 |
| USA | Seattle | 1·0 | 1 |
| USA | Washington | 38·0 | 3 |
| Uzbekistan | Tashkent | 2·0 | 0 |
| Vanuatu | Vila | 2·0 | 0 |
| Venezuela | Caracas | 7·0 | 4 |
| Vietnam | Hanoi | 4·0 | 0 |
| Vietnam | Ho Chi Minh | 1·0 | 1 |
| Yemen | Sana'a | 5·0 | 1 |
| Yugoslavia | Belgrade | 7·0 | 3 |
| Yugoslavia | Kosovo | 1·0 | 0 |
| Zaire | Kinshasa | 2·0 | 0 |
| Zambia | Lusaka | 8·0 | 2 |
| Zimbabwe | Harare | 10·0 | 2 |
| | TOTALS | 1,263·1 | 451 |

[1] Including senior locally engaged staff.

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which 10 countries have had the greatest growth of GDP over the last five years; and what has been the percentage change of the number of United Kingdom trade representatives in the diplomatic posts in each of these countries over that period.

**Mr. Goodlad:** The information is contained in the table.

| Country | GDP growth 1988-92 | British exports 1992 £ million | Export league position 1992 | Percentage of British exports 1992 | Percentage change British trade representation 1988-92 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thailand | 10·17 | 476 | 34 | 0·40 | +79·0 |
| Maldives | 9·51 | 4 | 160 | 0·00 | [1] |
| Malaysia | 9·09 | 635 | 28 | 0·60 | −3·2 |
| Belize | 8·80 | 11 | 127 | 0·01 | [2] |
| Singapore | 8·06 | 1,145 | 19 | 1·10 | −9·9 |
| South Korea | 7·96 | 654 | 27 | 0·60 | +35·2 |
| China | 7·90 | 429 | 36 | 0·40 | +32·5 |
| United Arab Emirates | 7·20 | 926 | 23 | 0·90 | [2] |
| Chile | 7·14 | 125 | 57 | 0·10 | −1·6 |
| Botswana | 6·94 | 20 | 105 | 0·02 | −16·0 |

*Source:* IMF.
[1] No local representation.
[2] No change.

## Thailand

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current state of development of the proposed construction of the new transmitter in Thailand for the BBC World Service; and when the construction will be completed.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We have reached agreement in principle with the Thai authorities for the construction of a BBC World Service relay station in Thailand. Detailed site survey work, which is required before final project approval can be given, is about to begin. The target date for completion of the project is 1996.

## UN Security Council

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions the United Kingdom ambassador to the United Nations has had with his American, Russian, French and Chinese counterparts in New York following the proposal by the United States ambassador that Germany and Japan be allocated permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council; and what discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with the United States Administration over the proposal.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We have regular discussions with the Americans and other permanent members of the Security Council on a range of United Nations issues, including Security Council reform. The Americans have aired their views, which are not new, in the context of the Secretary-General's request for member states to submit views on Security Council reform by the end of June. Many states, including the United Kingdom, will be sending replies and we will play a full part in the debate.

## UN Peace-keeping Operations

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much the United Kingdom's contribution was to the United Nation's peace-keeping operations for each of the last 10 years; and what form each contribution took.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** United Kingdom assessed contributions to the United Nations for peacekeeping operations for calendar years 1983 to 1992 inclusive are shown in table A.

We also contribute contingents to a number of operations.

Table B shows average manpower totals for FY89/90 onwards and the costs. Figures are not available for personnel involved in peacekeeping operations before 1989.

*Table A*

| *PKO* | *Total United Nations costs* $ | *United Kingdom assessment* $ |
|---|---|---|
| *1983* | | |
| UNEF UNDOF | 51,424,618 | 2,903,400 |
| UNIFIL | 204,687,820 | 11,562,616 |
| TOTALS | 256,112,438 | 14,466,016 |
| *1984* | | |
| UNEF UNDOF | 35,008,804 | 1,980,362 |
| UNIFIL | 139,515,477 | 7,889,724 |
| TOTALS | 174,524,281 | 9,870,086 |
| *1985* | 17,668,157 | 999,159 |
| UNEF/UNDOF | 69,743,881 | 3,943,611 |
| UNIFIL | | |
| TOTALS | 87,412,038 | 4,942,770 |
| *1986* | | |
| UNEF/UNDOF | 36,075,718 | 2,128,643 |
| UNIFIL | 165,495,803 | 9,732,229 |
| TOTALS | 201,571,521 | 11,860,872 |
| *1987* | | |
| UNEF/UNDOF | 34,637,584 | 2,052,892 |
| UNIFIL | 160,242,048 | 9,499,379 |
| TOTALS | 194,879,632 | 11,552,271 |
| *1988* | | |
| UNEF/UNDOF | 17,448,712 | 1,034,131 |
| UNIFIL | 128,287,933 | 7,613,781 |
| UNIIMOG | 35,214,525 | 2,085,184 |
| TOTALS | 180,951,170 | 10,733,096 |
| *1989* | | |
| UNEF/UNDOF | 35,758,957 | 2,125,368 |
| UNIFIL | 152,928,144 | 9,100,088 |
| UNIIMOG | 113,464,671 | 6,765,227 |
| UNAVEM | 9,033,059 | 535,871 |
| UNTAG | 409,555,646 | 24,313,435 |
| TOTALS | 720,740,477 | 42,839,989 |
| *1990* | | |
| UNEF/UNDOF | 39,705,206 | 2,350,921 |
| UNIFIL | 142,383,974 | 8,450,380 |
| UNIIMOG | 24,245,517 | 1,431,539 |
| UNAVEM | 5,680,851 | 335,005 |
| ONUCA | 56,908,988 | 3,375,840 |
| TOTALS | 268,924,536 | 15,943,685 |
| *1991* | | |
| UNEF/UNDOF | 37,865,581 | 2,222,717 |
| UNIFIL | 151,520,291 | 8,895,787 |
| UNAVEM | 52,133,556 | 3,070,269 |
| ONUCA | 25,932,122 | 1,514,512 |
| UNIKOM | 60,296,777 | 3,542,240 |
| MINURSO | 140,911,223 | 8,265,226 |
| ONUSAL | 13,242,993 | 767,485 |
| TOTALS | 481,902,543 | 28,278,236 |
| *1992* | | |
| UNEF/UNDOF | 35,202,425 | 2,120,982 |
| UNIFIL | 144,962,169 | 8,792,954 |
| UNAVEM | 56,604,651 | 3,420,182 |
| ONUCA | 12,120,754 | 724,660 |
| UNIKOM | 60,869,647 | 3,651,915 |
| ONUSAL | 36,260,035 | 2,175,387 |
| UNAMIC | 33,294,358 | 2,010,720 |
| UNTAC | 801,823,206 | 48,813,331 |
| UNPROFOR | 250,455,801 | 15,254,166 |
| UNOSOM | 108,441,298 | 6,584,483 |
| TOTALS | 1,540,034,344 | 93,548,780 |

*Note:* Figures taken from United Nations status of Contribution Reports.

*Average manpower totals deployed on United Nations peacekeeping operations*

| *Operation* | *Financial Year 1989-90* | *Financial Year 1990-91* | *Financial Year 1991-92* | *Financial Year 1992-93* | *Financial Year 1993-94* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UNFICYP (Cyprus) | 763 | 778 | 773 | 786 | 592 |
| UNTAG (Namibia) | 170 | — | — | — | — |
| UNIKOM (Iraq-Kuwait) | — | — | 20 | 15 | 15 |
| MINURSO (Western Sahara) | — | — | 15 | 15 | 15 |

| Operation | Financial Year 1989-90 | Financial Year 1990-91 | Financial Year 1991-92 | Financial Year 1992-93 | Financial Year 1993-94 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UNTAC (Cambodia) | — | — | [1][2]123 | 123 | 123 |
| UNPROFOR (Yugoslavia) [Including Hanwoood, Cheshire and Grapple] | — | — | — | [1][3]2,489 | 2,642 |
| Total for year | 933 | 778 | 931 | 3,428 | 3,387 |

[1] Manpower level reduced following the recent 25 per cent. reduction in the UNFICYP force.
[2] Original deployment consisted of three military observers, a 13 man mine clearance team and two military liaison officers at the United Nations. Increased in mid-March to its current strength.
[3] Between 15 July—23 October average manpower in-theatre was 331 but rose to 2,489 following the implementation of Operation Grapple.

*Cost of United Kingdom participation*

*(£ million)*

| | 1988-89 | 1989-90 | 1990-91 | 1991-92 | 1992-93 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UNFICYP (Cyprus) | 23·77 | 24·84 | 26·34 | 29·93 | 33·78 |
| UNPROFOR (Croatia/Bosnia) | — | — | — | — | — |
| UNTAG (Namibia) | — | 1·25 | — | — | — |
| MINURSO (Western Sahara) | — | — | — | 0·06 | 0·61 |
| UNIKOM (Iraq/Kuwait) | — | — | — | 0·03 | 0·82 |
| UNTASC/UNAMIC (Cambodia) | — | — | — | 0·01 | 0·83 |
| Gross cost | 23·77 | 26·09 | 26·34 | 30·03 | 100·35 |

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution has been made by the United Kingdom towards the training of persons involved in peacekeeping by the United Nations in each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The preparation and training of United Kingdom personnel participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations is undertaken by the United Kingdom armed forces before each deployment. Over the last 10 years the United Kingdom has contributed personnel to the following peacekeeping operations:

MINURSO—United Nations Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara
UNFICYP—United Nations Peackeeping Force in Cyprus
UNIKOM—United Nations Iraq/Kuwait Observer Mission
UNTAC—United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNPROFOR—United Nations Protection Force (in the former Yugoslavia)
UNTAG—United Nations Transitional Assistance Group (Namibia)

### Narcotics

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total of the United Kingdom's funding for overseas programmes to combat the production and trade in narcotics in each of the last five years, with each programme shown separately.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The figures for Departments' overseas programmes to combat the production and trade in narcotics for the last five years are as follows:

| | Foreign and Commonwealth Office £ | Overseas Development Administration £ | Home Office £ |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 664,572 | n/a | 1,985,000 |
| 1989-90 | 4,267,927 | 7,941,400 | 2,267,000 |
| 1990-91 | 4,453,930 | 3,733,585 | 3,352,000 |
| 1991-92 | 3,203,266 | 3,496,275 | 2,093,000 |
| 1992-93 | 2,802,303 | 3,627,631 | 4,428,000 |

n/a = not available.

ODA figures relate to projects aimed both directly and indirectly at reducing drug production and trafficking in developing countries.

In addition, £94,000 from the seized asset fund was allocated to drugs-related assistance to overseas governments in 1992-93.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### EC Economic Statistics

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current *(a)* inflation rate, *(b)* budget surplus or deficit as a percentage of gross domestic product, *(c)* public debt as a percentage of gross domestic product and *(d)* long-term interest rate, of each of the EC member states.

**Mr. Nelson:** The information requested is set out in the table.

| | Latest inflation[1] | Budget balance[2] | General government debt[3] | Long-term bond yield[4] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belgium | 2·7 | −6·9 | 132·2 | 7·2 |
| Denmark | 1·1 | −2·4 | 74·0 | 7·2 |
| France | 2·0 | −3·9 | 50·1 | 6·9 |

| | Latest inflation[1] | Budget balance[2] | General government debt[3] | Long-term bond yield[4] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Germany[5] | 4·0 | −2·8 | 45·9 | 6·8 |
| Greece | 16·2 | −13·8 | 105·6 | n/a |
| Ireland | 1·9 | −2·4 | 99·0 | 7·6 |
| Italy | 4·0 | −9·5 | 106·8 | 10·5 |
| Luxembourg | 3·8 | −1·6 | 6·8 | 7·2 |
| Netherlands | 2·3 | −3·3 | 79·8 | 6·6 |
| Portugal | 5·7 | −5·4 | 66·2 | 12·2 |
| Spain | 4·6 | −4·5 | 47·4 | 10·7 |
| United Kingdom | 1·3 | −6·2 | 45·9 | 8·0 |

[1] Latest percentage change in consumer prices on year ago.
[2] 1992 general government financial balance (as a percentage of GDP), European Commission.
[3] 1992 gross debt of general government (as a percentage of GDP), estimates taken from European Economy (Annual Economic Report for 1993).
[4] Yield on fixed interest government securities on 15 June 1993.
[5] Inflation and government debt figures are for western Germany.

*Source:* OECD and Eurostat

### Industrial Research and Development

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to offer tax incentives to encourage companies in the United Kingdom to invest in industrial research and development.

**Mr. Dorrell:** My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's recent White Paper on science and technology reiterated our view that we do not consider there to be a case for further general tax incentives for spending on research and development.

### Profit Distribution

**Mr. Hain:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information his Departments has on the percentage of company profits distributed as dividends in each year since 1978 for each G7 country excluding Canada and for Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands.

**Mr. Nelson:** The available information is provided in the OECD's "National Accounts Volume II", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

### Income Tax

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total tax liability of each decile of taxpayers in each year since 1979-80 in *(a)* current prices and *(b)* 1979-80 prices; and how many taxpayers were in each decile in each year.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Estimates are given in the tables. For years up to and including 1989-90 married couples are counted as one taxpayer and their incomes are combined. Following the introduction of independent taxation, for 1990-91 onwards husbands and wives are counted separately. The figures in the table have been rounded to the nearest £100 million and may differ slightly from the totals shown.

*Income tax liability of decile groups of taxpayers at current prices*

*(£ million)*

| Year | Top 10 per cent. | 10-20 | 20-30 | 30-40 | 40-50 | 50-60 | 60-70 | 70-80 | 80-90 | Bottom 10 per cent. | Total tax liability | Number in each decile (thousands) | Total taxpayers[1] (thousands) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 7,900 | 3,600 | 2,800 | 2,300 | 1,900 | 1,600 | 1,200 | 900 | 500 | 200 | 22,900 | 2,160 | 21,600 |
| 1980-81 | 9,300 | 4,200 | 3,300 | 2,700 | 2,200 | 1,800 | 1,500 | 1,100 | 600 | 200 | 26,900 | 2,100 | 21,000 |
| 1981-82 | 10,800 | 4,700 | 3,700 | 3,000 | 2,500 | 2,100 | 1,600 | 1,200 | 700 | 200 | 30,500 | 2,080 | 20,800 |
| 1982-83 | 11,700 | 5,000 | 3,900 | 3,200 | 2,700 | 2,200 | 1,700 | 1,200 | 700 | 200 | 32,600 | 2,080 | 20,800 |
| 1983-84 | 12,100 | 5,300 | 4,000 | 3,300 | 2,700 | 2,200 | 1,700 | 1,200 | 700 | 200 | 33,400 | 2,040 | 20,400 |
| 1984-85 | 13,200 | 5,600 | 4,200 | 3,400 | 2,700 | 2,200 | 1,700 | 1,200 | 700 | 200 | 35,300 | 2,020 | 20,200 |
| 1985-86 | 14,800 | 5,900 | 4,500 | 3,700 | 3,000 | 2,400 | 1,900 | 1,400 | 900 | 300 | 38,800 | 2,020 | 20,200 |
| 1986-87 | 16,900 | 6,500 | 4,900 | 4,000 | 3,200 | 2,600 | 2,000 | 1,500 | 900 | 400 | 42,800 | 2,040 | 20,400 |
| 1987-88 | 18,400 | 6,800 | 5,100 | 4,100 | 3,400 | 2,700 | 2,000 | 1,500 | 900 | 300 | 45,300 | 2,080 | 20,800 |
| 1988-89 | 19,400 | 6,900 | 5,200 | 4,100 | 3,400 | 2,700 | 2,100 | 1,500 | 900 | 300 | 46,500 | 2,130 | 21,300 |
| 1989-90 | 22,600 | 8,300 | 5,900 | 4,600 | 3,700 | 2,900 | 2,300 | 1,700 | 1,100 | 400 | 53,400 | 2,150 | 21,500 |
| 1990-91 | 25,400 | 9,400 | 6,900 | 5,400 | 4,200 | 3,400 | 2,600 | 1,800 | 1,000 | 300 | 60,400 | 2,630 | 26,300 |
| 1991-92 | 26,200 | 9,800 | 7,100 | 5,600 | 4,400 | 3,500 | 2,600 | 1,800 | 1,000 | 300 | 62,400 | 2,550 | 25,500 |
| 1992-93 | 25,800 | 9,500 | 6,900 | 5,300 | 4,200 | 3,200 | 2,400 | 1,600 | 800 | 200 | 59,900 | 2,480 | 24,800 |

[1] Tax units prior to 1990-91.

*Income tax liability of decile groups of taxpayers at 1979-80 prices*

*(£ million)*

| Year | Top 10 per cent. | 10-20 | 20-30 | 30-40 | 40-50 | 50-60 | 60-70 | 70-80 | 80-90 | Bottom 10 per cent. | Total tax liability | Number in each decile (thousands) | Total taxpayers[1] (thousands) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 7,900 | 3,600 | 2,800 | 2,300 | 1,900 | 1,600 | 1,200 | 900 | 500 | 200 | 22,900 | 2,160 | 21,600 |
| 1980-81 | 8,000 | 3,600 | 2,800 | 2,300 | 1,900 | 1,500 | 1,300 | 900 | 500 | 200 | 26,900 | 2,100 | 21,000 |
| 1981-82 | 8,300 | 3,600 | 2,900 | 2,300 | 1,900 | 1,600 | 1,200 | 900 | 500 | 200 | 30,500 | 2,080 | 20,800 |

| Year | Top 10 per cent. | 10-20 | 20-30 | 30-40 | 40-50 | 50-60 | 60-70 | 70-80 | 80-90 | Bottom 10 per cent. | Total tax liability | Number in each decile (thousands) | Total taxpayers[1] (thousands) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1982-83 | 8,400 | 3,600 | 2,800 | 2,300 | 1,900 | 1,600 | 1,200 | 900 | 500 | 100 | 32,600 | 2,080 | 20,800 |
| 1983-84 | 8,300 | 3,700 | 2,800 | 2,300 | 1,900 | 1,500 | 1,200 | 800 | 500 | 100 | 33,400 | 2,040 | 20,400 |
| 1984-85 | 8,600 | 3,700 | 2,800 | 2,200 | 1,800 | 1,400 | 1,100 | 800 | 500 | 100 | 35,300 | 2,020 | 20,200 |
| 1985-86 | 9,100 | 3,600 | 2,800 | 2,300 | 1,900 | 1,500 | 1,200 | 900 | 600 | 200 | 38,800 | 2,020 | 20,200 |
| 1986-87 | 10,100 | 3,900 | 2,900 | 2,400 | 1,900 | 1,600 | 1,200 | 900 | 500 | 200 | 42,800 | 2,040 | 20,400 |
| 1987-88 | 10,600 | 3,900 | 2,900 | 2,400 | 2,000 | 1,600 | 1,200 | 900 | 500 | 200 | 45,300 | 2,080 | 20,800 |
| 1988-89 | 10,600 | 3,800 | 2,800 | 2,200 | 1,800 | 1,500 | 1,100 | 800 | 500 | 200 | 46,500 | 2,130 | 21,300 |
| 1989-90 | 11,400 | 4,200 | 2,900 | 2,300 | 1,900 | 1,500 | 1,200 | 800 | 600 | 200 | 53,400 | 2,150 | 21,500 |
| 1990-91 | 11,700 | 4,300 | 3,200 | 2,500 | 1,900 | 1,600 | 1,200 | 800 | 500 | 100 | 60,400 | 2,630 | 26,300 |
| 1991-92 | 11,500 | 4,300 | 3,100 | 2,500 | 1,900 | 1,500 | 1,100 | 800 | 400 | 100 | 62,400 | 2,550 | 25,500 |
| 1992-93 | 11,000 | 4,000 | 2,900 | 2,300 | 1,800 | 1,400 | 1,000 | 700 | 300 | 100 | 59,900 | 2,480 | 24,800 |

[1]Tax units prior to 1990-91.

**Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the revenue change in a full year at 1993-94 income levels and assuming existing levels of personal allowances of replacing the present rates and thresholds of income tax with a structure in which *(a)* the first £2,500 incurred tax at 20 per cent., *(b)* £2,500 to £30,000 at 25 per cent., *(c)* £30,000 to £50,000 at 30 per cent., *(d)* £50,000 to £75,000 at 40 per cent., *(e)* £75,000 to £100,000 at 50 per cent., *(f)* £100,000 to £250,000 at 60 per cent. and *(g)* over £250,000 at 70 per cent.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The estimated revenue cost in a full year at 1993-94 income levels from imposition of the specified regime is £510 million. This does not allow for any behavioural effect that might result from such changes to the tax system and does not include capital gains tax.

### New Change Building

**Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in resolving the dispute concerning outstanding payments to contractors on project 1215 at New Change, EC4 on behalf of the Bank of England; and when Mr. R. Simpson, the managing director of R. M. Simpson Ltd. (Heating Engineers) of London SE26, can expect a reply from the Chief Secretary to his letter to him of 19 March.

**Mr. Portillo** *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* I have no record of receiving such a letter, although I now have a copy. My private secretary wrote to Mr. Simpson on 21 June.

### Personal Investment Authority

**Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has about the costs to date of the proposed personal investment authority.

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* The PIA is a company limited by guarantee which will be applying to the Securities and Investments Board for recognition as a self-regulating organisation under the Financial Services Act. The costs to date are a matter for the company.

### Excise Duty

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value to the Exchequer of excise duty levied on *(a)* beer, *(b)* wine and *(c)* spirits, for the latest financial year; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir John Cope** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* The information requested, for the year ending March 1993, is as follows:

| | £ million |
|---|---|
| Beer | 2,377 |
| Wine and made wine | 979 |
| Spirits | 1,659 |

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

**Mr. Mates:** Eleven tests have been completed in Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office since November 1992. Five of these were won by the in-house providers, two by outside contractors and four by a combination of both, as follows:

Transit (computer systems)—Contracted out
Bridge inspection vehicles—Retained in-house
Roadman training centre—Retained in-house
Road testing machines—Retained in-house
Castlenavan Quarry—Combination
Grounds maintenance (two tests)—Retained in-house
Sewer maintenance—Combination
Sludge maintenance (two tests)—Combination
Catering—Contracted out

### EC Council of Ministers

**Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, together with the respective dates, those meetings of the EC Council of Ministers which were attended by Ministers in his Department in the latest 12 months.

**Mr. Mates:** None. Northern Ireland's interests like those of the rest of the United Kingdom at EC Council meetings are represented by the Minister with the lead United Kingdom policy responsibility.

### Clubs

**Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to publish in the near future the review of the Registration of Clubs (Northern Ireland) Order 1987; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ancram:** The review is still in progress. In due course, the Government will publish proposals for amending legislation.

### Education and Library Boards

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the annual cost of administering each education and library board in each of the last three years.

**Mr. Ancram:** The information is as follows:

| *Year* | *Belfast* | *North-Eastern* | *South-Eastern* | *Southern* | *Western* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *£ million* | *£ million* | *£ million* | *£ million* | *£ million* |
| 1990-91 | 6,229 | 6,840 | 6,727 | 7,227 | 6,365 |
| 1991-92 | 8,903 | 8,962 | 8,080 | 9,155 | 7,496 |
| [1]1992-93 | 7,888 | 7,429 | 6,266 | 7,360 | 6,532 |

[1] Estimated

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the education authorities in Northern Ireland and the total number of pupils for which each education and library board is responsible.

**Mr. Ancram:** The education authorities in Northern Ireland are the five education and library boards and the total numbers of pupils are as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Belfast | 66,183 |
| Western | 65,478 |
| Northern-Eastern | 74,328 |
| South-Eastern | 64,300 |
| Southern | 75,030 |

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time (i) teachers and (ii) other staff were employed in each education and library board area in Northern Ireland in the latest year for which figures are available.

**Mr. Ancram:** The latest information relates to 1992-93 and is as follows:

| *Board Area* | *Teachers* | | *Other Staff* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Full-time* | *Part-time*[1] | *Full-time* | *Part-time* |
| Belfast | 3,635 | 58 | 1,557 | 2,683 |
| North-Eastern | 3,994 | 118 | 1,741 | 4,365 |
| South-Eastern | 3,410 | 77 | 1,260 | 3,263 |
| Southern | 3,964 | 95 | 1,730 | 4,199 |
| Western | 3,507 | 34 | 1,823 | 4,735 |

[1] Information is not available on the number of part-time teachers. The figures in this column are based on the number of part-time teacher hours worked, expressed as full-time equivalents.

*Note:* Data for teachers covers all those employed in schools in the boards' areas, but not necessarily by the boards. Figures for other staff relate to boards' staff only.

### Education Department

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of people employed in the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) in each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Ancram:** The information is as follows:

| *Year* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1984 | 568 |
| 1985 | 588·5 |
| 1986 | 602 |
| 1987 | 606 |
| 1988 | 615·5 |
| 1989 | 621 |
| 1990 | 638·5 |
| 1991 | 631 |
| 1992 | 622 |
| 1993 | 655 |

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the annual cost of administering the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) in each of the last three years.

**Mr. Ancram:** The costs for each of the last three financial years were:

| *Year* | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 12·5 |
| 1991-92 | 13·0 |
| [1]1992-93 | 14·8 |

[1] Provisional outturn.

### Pensions

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the actual and estimated future annual totals for old age pension payments to people resident in Northern Ireland annually from 1990 to the year 2000.

**Mr. Ancram:** I refer the hon. Member to table 9.22 of the Government's Public Expenditure Plans for Northern Ireland (Cmnd 2216), a copy of which is in the Library. Expenditure plans for the years 1996 to 2000 are not yet available.

### European Community Funding

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the annual transfers of EC moneys to Northern Ireland are *(a)* payments to Northern Ireland under each specific EC fund and *(b)* payments channelled via the United Kingdom Government and not explicitly identified as common agricultural policy transfers or other such transfers.

**Mr. Mates:** The greatest part of the annual transfers of EC monies to Northern Ireland are made via the United Kingdom Government as payments from either the European regional development fund, the European social fund or the European guidance and guarantee fund (EGGF). Other small payments are made by the European Commission direct to recipients which are not passed through the United Kingdom Government.

The majorty of payments under the guarantee section of the EGGF are made centrally on a United Kingdom basis through the Intervention Board Executive Agency and are not recorded on a territorial basis. There are no other transfers of EC monies to Northern Ireland via the United Kingdom Government.

### Babies (Eye Defects)

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each year from 1976 to the latest available date, the numbers of babies born in Northern Ireland with *(a)* no eyes, *(b)* small eyes, *(c)* damaged optic nerves and *(d)* all recorded eye defects; and if he will estimate the comprehensiveness of the recorded information.

**Mr. Ancram** *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* The information is not collated centrally in the form requested. During the years 1980 to 1988, five babies were born in Northern Ireland with no eyes, 47 with small eyes and 28 with cataract. The number of babies born with eye defects between 1976 and 1981 were as follows:

| | *No eyes or small eyes* | *Other eye defects* |
|---|---|---|
| 1976 | 2 | 2 |
| 1977 | 2 | 1 |
| 1978 | 2 | 3 |
| 1979 | 12 | 22 |
| 1980 | 12 | 29 |
| 1981 | 12 | 19 |

The Northern Ireland genetics service, which has provided the information, believes it to be reasonably comprehensive.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Horse Racing

Q7. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on Government policy towards the horse racing industry.

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

the Government are keen to see the industry prosper and, as my hon. Friend knows, we have in recent months taken various measures to help it to do so. I also welcome the establishment of the new British Horseracing Board and wish it success in its aim of putting racing in this country on a sound financial footing.

### Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister what response he is making to the letter on THORP from the Japanese groups delivered to him on 15 June.

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

So far as I am aware, no trace of the letter can be found.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his public statements on THORP since November 1990.

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave to the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 17 June 1993 at columns 987-88.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list those hon. Members with whom he has had meetings to discuss THORP since November 1990.

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister meets hon. and right hon. Members regularly and discusses a range of topics.

### Engagements

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 June.

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been attending a European Council meeting in Copenhagen.

### Irish Republic (President)

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Prime Minister what has been the cost to the United Kingdom of each visit made by the present President of the Irish Republic to Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Workplace Creches

**Ms Abbott:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list, for the Civil Service in the Whitehall area, how many *(a)* men and women are directly employed, *(b)* buildings are used and *(c)* workplace creches are in place, or so much of the information requested as is available.

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

In the Whitehall area there were approximately 4,560 men and 3,080 women employed in the home civil service at 1 April 1993.

There are 27 common user estate buildings and two civil service workplace nurseries. A further nursery serving this area is scheduled to open in November. A number of Departments and agencies also have places in a private nursery in the vicinity.

## TRANSPORT

### British Transport Police

**Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the Government's conclusions on the response to the consultation document "The Future Status of British Transport Police".

**Mr. Freeman:** We have today issued our conclusions on the consultation exercise and I am arranging for a copy to

be placed in the Library of the House. I welcome this opportunity of confirming our decisions that overall control will remain in the public sector; that a provision in the operator's licence will make it compulsory to use BTP for the administration of law and order on the railway; and that there will be levels of policing laid down which operators will be required to provide.

The Government do not intend to change the policing of London Underground. The London Underground area of the BTP will continue largely as at present to provide these services.

### A5 (Dunstable Bypass)

**Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the target date of autumn 1993 for the publication of draft orders under the Highways Act for the A5 Dunstable bypass stated in the letter from the then Minister for Roads and Traffic to the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire of 23 March remains in place.

**Mr. Key:** We hope to publish draft orders next spring. The delay results from a need to examine more fully the environmental impact of the road on the sensitive areas through which it passes. I will write to the hon. Member.

### Air Accident Report

**Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on air accident report 3/93; and what action he plans to take, and when, on the recommendations in this report.

**Mr. Norris:** This accident report, by my Department's air accident investigation branch (AAIB), relates to an incident on 9 March 1992, when an aircraft suffered damage soon after take-off from Frankfurt and diverted to London Heathrow. The AAIB has made a thorough analysis of this incident and its causes and consequences and have produced a valuable and comprehensive report.

The AAIB has made two recommendations, directed at the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). These recommendations have been accepted and the appropriate alterations will be included in the next amendment to the Manual of Air Traffic Control Part I, due on 28 June 1993.

**Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he sent a copy of air accident report 3/93 to the Library.

**Mr. Norris:** No copies of air accident report 3/93 were sent to the Library. Copies of AAIB reports are sent to the Library in the event of accidents and incidents likely to attract considerable public interest or where Members have indicated a particular interest in the investigation.

**Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many hon. Members were sent copies of air accident report 3/93 when it was published on 9 June.

**Mr. Norris:** None. The air accidents investigation branch (AAIB) send copies of their reports to all Members of Parliament who express an interest in a particular investigation.

The AAIB published an interim bulletin on this accident in June 1992 but no Members indicated an interest in receiving a copy of the formal investigation report.

### Railway Track Support Grant

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will require a reassessment of rail freight rates in light of the proposed track support grant; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if the track support grant is to be made available to the Cambrian coast railway; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when he expects to make an announcement regarding the level and distribution of track support grant; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** We envisage that Railtrack will be able to accept on to the rail network any freight flow which can cover its avoidable costs. The track charge grant is aimed at assisting flows which cannot cover those costs. It follows that grant will be flow specific, not route specific. The public expenditure provision for the new grant will be determined in the course of the current public expenditure planning round.

### Taxis

**Dame Angela Rumbold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps will be taken under the new proposed regulations to ensure that ex-licensed black cabs are not used for other taxi purposes; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** At present, the law requires that when a vehicle licensed as a taxi in London is sold, or the licence has expired without plans for renewal, the vehicle licence plate must be returned to the licensing authority. Once this has been done the taxi becomes a private vehicle and although it can be used as a minicab, it is an offence to use it to ply for hire. In addition, the display of any sign or notice on it which includes the words "taxi", "cab" or "hire" is prohibited.

Outside London, a London-type taxi may be used as a hackney carriage if it is licensed by the local district council, but it may not be used as a private hire vehicle at all because it might be mistaken for a taxi. If unlicensed it may be used as a private car only.

**Dame Angela Rumbold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is proposing to take to enforce prosecution of unlicensed minicabs; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** Minicabs in London are not licensed, and their use for pre-booked journeys is perfectly legal. It is illegal for them to accept hirings in the street. The police already have powers to take action in such cases.

I am, however, reviewing the regulation of taxis, minicabs and private hire vehicles in England, including London, and I hope to publish a Green Paper on this subject shortly.

### A418

**Mr. Walden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department will publish its proposals for the A418 trunk route in Buckinghamshire.

**Mr. Key:** Preparations are in hand to consult the public about the A418 west of Aylesbury to Wing proposals later this year.

### Portwood Roundabout

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to give the approval and finance for the installation of traffic lights at the Portwood roundabout giving access to the M66.

**Mr. Key:** Approval has already been given to install lights on the Portwood roundabout so that traffic leaving the M63 does not queue on the motorway. Funds have been made available to carry out the work this financial year.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Milk

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what plans she has to help the milk industry following the reduction of EC financial support for the school milk scheme; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what is her policy towards the provision of subsidised school milk; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Jack:** Until the Commission presents its detailed proposals for expenditure under the school milk scheme in 1994, I am not able to make a clear statement of future policy in this area.

### Common Land

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to introduce legislation regarding common land and overgrazing; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Jack:** As regards legislation concerning common land, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 8 June at col. *291*.

Environmentally damaging overgrazing on common land and elsewhere is being tackled under legislation covering hill livestock compensatory allowances (HLCAs) and the environmentally sensitive areas scheme. We plan to adjust other livestock premiums to complement the action already being taken on HLCAs. In addition, we have carried out consultations on a new moorland scheme which will also contribute to reducing overgrazing.

### Ewe and Suckler Cow Premiums

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the criteria by which the national reserve of ewe and suckler cow premium is distributed to applicants.

**Mrs. Shephard:** The categories to be covered by the national reserve were the subject of a consultation exercise, and the details are currently being finalised. The necessary national legislation will be made later in the summer.

### New Farmers

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what capital incentives are available to make farming more accessible to new entrants.

**Mrs. Shephard:** No capital incentives available are aimed specifically at new entrants to the farming industry. However, young farmers (those under 40) taking out first improvement plans under the farm conservation grant scheme are eligible for additional grant of 25 per cent. of the normal rates of grant towards the cost of capital investments of benefit to conservation and the environment.

### CAP Fraud

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the total amount of expenditure by the EC's administration concerned with seeking out fraud in the operation of the comon agricultural policy over the most recent 12 months for which figures are available; what is the value of the fraudulent activities which they discovered during this period; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Jack:** A number of units within the Commission have an interest in dealing with CAP fraud. Information on their administrative costs is not available as the general budget of European Communities does not give this detail.

The Commission's annual report on the fight against fraud includes details of CAP fraud and irregularities and measures to combat these. The 1992 report and action programme for 1993, COM(93)141 final, was the subject of explanatory memorandum 6203/93 of 20 May 1993 submitted by the Paymaster General. A copy of the report was placed in the Library of the House.

### Redundant Farm Buildings

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what grant aid is available for the purpose of restoring redundant farm houses and associated buildings in order that they may once again form the basis of an active farming unit.

**Mrs. Shephard:** My Department does not offer grant aid for the restoration of redundant dwellings on farms. However, grants are available under the farm and conservation grant scheme for the repair or refurbishment of traditional farm buildings currently in agricultural use using traditional materials and construction methods.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Disabled People

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to improve the way his Department gives assistance towards meeting the employment needs of people with disabilities.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I have asked the Employment Service to introduce a new major programme for people with disabilities from 1 April 1994. It will be called "access to work" and will assist people who need help to overcome barriers to work resulting from disabilities.

Access to work replaces and adds to the help currently available under the special aids to employment, adaptations to premises and equipment, fares and work, and personal reader service schemes, which will be wound up. More people with a wider range of needs will be helped. Assistance will no longer be limited to prescribed, specific forms. Within resources available, it will be provided flexibly to meet need.

Access to work will be open to unemployed, employed or self-employed clients registerable as disabled with

priority for unemployed people. New forms of help available will include communication support for deaf people, adaptations of vehicles to get to work, and support workers for people with severe physical disabilities, mental illness or with learning difficulties.

In addition, from 5 July 1993, unemployed deaf people will be able to get help towards the cost of communicators at job interviews. Trials of other forms of communicator support for deaf people entering employment will be taking place in four locations during 1993. Lessons learned will be taken into account in access to work.

Under access to work there will be an upper limit, at a level to be specified as soon as possible, to the amount of financial help any one individual can receive over a five year period, but entitlement to support will begin again after five years. Employers will be asked to make a 50 per cent. contribution towards assistance for employees who have worked for them for six months or more. These contributions will be capped over the five year period at a level to be specified. Employers will also be expected to pay for the cost of one-off items of equipment or help costing less than £100 for their employees who have worked for them for six months or more. Employers will not be asked for any contribution for new recruits or employees who have worked with them for less than six months.

The job introduction scheme, which encourages employers to take on people with disabilities for short trial periods, will continue separately. The business on own account scheme, which currently provides assistance with general business setting up costs to only a very small number of severely disabled people, will be discontinued. However, those wanting to enter self-employment will be eligible for help under access to work.

I believe that the introduction of access to work will be an important step in helping to release, in the workplace, the individual potential and initiative of people with disabilities and to meet their employment needs.

## CBI

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet the chairman of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss training issues.

**Miss Widdecombe:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is looking forward to an early meeting. Such meetings are held regularly.

## Youth Unemployment

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the borough of Rochdale have been unemployed for more than a year.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Information on claimant unemployment by duration is available quarterly and on the unadjusted basis only.

In April 1993, in the Rochdale local authority district, there were 3,586 claimants who had been unemployed for more than one year.

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the measures taken to reduce unemployment in the 18 to 25 years age group.

**Miss Widdecombe:** All unemployed people in the 18 to 25 years age group are eligible, subject to qualifying criteria, for the full range of employment, enterprise and training measures available through the employment service, training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies. This is in addition to the advice and placement help which the employment service offers all unemployed people through its job centre network.

## Fishing Companies

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many fishing companies went into liquidation from 1975 and passed their obligation to pay redundancy to his Department; and how many fishermen were paid redundancy in each case.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The information is not available in the form requested.

## Unemployment, Barnsley

**Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each of the three Barnsley constituencies the latest figures for *(a)* unemployment, *(b)* those who have been unemployed for one year, *(c)* those who have been out of work for at least five years and *(d)* those on training courses.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Information on claimant unemployment by duration is available quarterly, for the months of January, April, July and October, and on the unadjusted basis. The information requested is given in the table.

Information on the numbers of people on training courses is collected at training and enterprise council (TEC) level and shows that in March 1993 there were 6,300 people on employment training and youth training courses in the Barnsley and Doncaster TEC area.

*Non-seasonally-adjusted claimant unemployment by duration—April 1993*

| | *Total* | *Unemployed over one year* | *Unemployed over five years* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Barnsley Central | 4,329 | 1,746 | 233 |
| Barnsley East | 3,892 | 1,478 | 242 |
| Barnsley West and Penistone | 4,016 | 1,437 | 205 |

## Redundancies

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now publish the Government's case to the European Court of Justice concerning employee representation under the EC Collective Redundancies Directive 1975.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 14 June at column *451*.

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundancies were notified in the latest year for which figures are available, expressed as a percentage of the total work force in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the north-west and *(c)* the travel-to-work areas of Accrington and Rossendale, Blackburn, Burnley and Pendle in east Lancashire.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Data on redundancies are obtained from the quarterly Labour Force Survey which provides figures for Great Britain only. Estimates of the numbers of

redundancies, in the three months prior to each survey, are shown in the table. Information for travel-to-work areas is not available.

| | Great Britain | Percentage of employees | North West | Percentage of employees |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spring 1992 | 322,000 | 1·5 | 32,000 | 1·4 |
| Summer 1992 | 278,000 | 1·3 | 35,000 | 1·5 |
| Autumn 1992 | 310,000 | 1·4 | 29,000 | 1·2 |
| Winter 1992 | 344,000 | 1·6 | 45,000 | 1·9 |

### Disabled People

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action has been undertaken to date by his Department to implement the recommendations of the EC Council of Ministers in 1986 on the subject of disabled people and employment within the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Many of the issues covered by the EC Council of Ministers' recommendations had already been addressed by the United Kingdom prior to 1986. Since then we have:

- carried out a thorough review of all our employment and training provision for people with disabilities;
- undertaken wide-ranging consultations on proposals to improve the effectiveness of that provision;
- improved the local specialist disability services for employers and individuals by introducing placing assessment and counselling teams;
- ensured that equal opportunities principles apply to the delivery of training provision through training and enterprise councils and local enterprise councils;
- made delivery of employment rehabilitation more accessible locally through contracts with the voluntary sector;
- introduced a disability symbol so that employers who are committed to employing people with disabilities can communicate this publicly. The symbol was strengthened from 1 June 1993 so that employers who use the symbol now have to agree to five specific commitments to action relating to good employment practices;
- taken positive action to ensure that people with disabilities have priority for a place on each of the Department's main employment and training programmes for which they are suitable and eligible;
- announced improvements to our special schemes, which through the introduction of access to work next year, will increase both the range of help available to disabled people to overcome barriers to work and the number of disabled people who can be helped;
- reviewed the funding arrangements for our sheltered employment and will shortly be issuing a consultative document with proposals to improve their effectiveness.

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to issue guidelines to employers outlining what constitutes reasonable cause for the dismissal of a registered disabled person.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** It is a question of fact for the court to decide whether there is reasonable cause under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 for a particular dismissal. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is not given any statutory power to lay down guidelines of the kind suggested.

Guidance to employers on their obligations under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 is given in a leaflet "Employers Obligations—Notes for Guidance" which is issued by the employment service.

Advice to employers on employing disabled people, whether or not they are registered, is contained in the code of practice on the employment of disabled people available from the employment service. This is a voluntary code and there is no legal obligation on employers to observe it. We would expect that if an employer acted in accordance with the guidance and spirit of the code it would be most unlikely that a court would hold him or her to have acted unreasonably.

### Hazardous Substances

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the implementation of paragraphs 77 and 78 of the approved code of practice in regard to the survey conducted under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The impact of paragraphs 77 and 78 (regarding the monitoring of exposure to hazardous substances at the workplace) was covered in a two-part survey on the regulations, carried out by inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities.

The full report of the evaluation will be published in July and I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

### Manufacturing Jobs

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has about the number of manufacturing jobs in each European Community region in each year since 1980; and what proportion of the regional total number of jobs they represented.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Statistics on employment by European Community region are published by the EC Statistical office in a series of reports entitled "Regional Statistics". Published reports covering years up to 1985 are available in the Library. Reports covering later years are in preparation but no publication date has yet been announced.

### Maternity Provisions

**Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to implement the new maternity provisions set out in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill before October 1994.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** All the provisions of the EC Pregnant Workers Directive will be implemented in United Kingdom law by October 1994, as the directive requires.

### Job Losses, Stoke on Trent

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what meetings he, or officers in his Department or agencies or consultancies under his Department, have organised to discuss the effect of job losses in Stoke on Trent.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Meetings are held when appropriate by officials of the Employment Department, the employment service and the Staffordshire training and enterprise council to discuss the effect of job losses in Stoke on Trent. The most recent meeting was held on 6 May 1993 and another is planned for 28 July.

## DEFENCE

### Gulf War (Depleted Uranium)

13. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the use of depleted uranium during Operation Desert Storm.

**Mr. Hanley:** Depleted uranium was used by coalition forces in tank armour and ammunition. British use in the conflict was confined to a small number of rounds of tank ammunition.

### Royal Naval Engineering College, Manadon

14. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the consultation on the proposals to close the Royal Naval Engineering college at Manadon to be completed.

**Mr. Hanley:** Comments on the consultative document which outlines our proposals for the future of the Royal Navy first degree engineer officer training and the Royal Naval Engineering college, Manadon, a copy of which is in the Library of the House have been requested by 1 July 1993. In response to a request from the trades unions however I am happy to announce an extension of 10 working days.

### Service Accommodation (Cyprus)

15. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the capital expenditure used in the provision of new and renovated accommodation for *(a)* families and *(b)* single service personnel in Cyprus for the past five years.

**Mr. Hanley:** In the five financial years ending on 31 March 1993, capital expenditure on service families' accommodation in Cyprus has been £13,191,000, all of which was for new accommodation. Capital expenditure on accommodation for single service personnel has been £8,897,000 of which £7,384,000 was for new accommodation and £1,513,000 for renovation.

### International Commitments

16. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the ability of existing regiments and battalions to meet all current international commitments; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** I have received a number of representations from hon. Members and their constituents. The Government's position is set out in its response to the Defence Committee's Second Report, Session 1992-93, on "Britain's Army for the 90s", which the Committee published on 16 June.

### Exports

17. **Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will assess the share of the world market achieved by British defence exports in 1992 and so far in 1993.

**Mr. Aitken:** In 1992, Britain's share of the world defence export market (in terms of new contracts let) was 20 per cent.—putting us in second place only to the United States of America. Based on our achievements so far this year we believe that we are on course to retain this market share.

### Overseas Service

18. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many armed forces personnel are currently serving on duty outside the United Kingdom; and in which principal locations.

**Mr. Hanley:** On 1 April 1993, the number of United Kingdom regular forces serving overseas was 70,436. The main locations were:

Continental Europe (including former Yugoslavia)
Cyprus
Elsewhere in the Mediterranean, near east and Gulf
Hong Kong
Elsewhere in the far east
and Gibraltar.

### Bosnia

19. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to meet other EC Defence Ministers to discuss the deployment of troops in Bosnia.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I met a number of my European colleagues at a meeting of NATO's Defence Planning Committee in Brussels on 25 May. Our discussions covered a wide range of issues, including the deployment of forces in the former Yugoslavia. I keep in regular contact with other European Defence Ministers on such matters, which remain under continuous review.

### Job Opportunities (North Yorkshire)

20. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about Ministry of Defence job opportunities in North Yorkshire.

**Mr. Aitken:** Plans that will result in the reduction, rationalisation and transfer-out of posts in North Yorkshire have already been announced, and work is continuing to ensure that a cost-effective balance is achieved between our front-line forces and supporting infrastructure, but I can assure the hon. Member that there will continue to be a large MOD presence in the county.

### Royal Naval Reserve

21. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make an announcement on the future of the Royal Naval Reserve.

**Mr. Hanley:** I refer the hon. Member to the announcement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 17 June at columns 1009-12.

### United Nations Peacekeeping

22. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many United Nations peacekeeping and other operations involve British service men and women; and what are the numbers posted to these operations.

**Mr. Hanley:** As at early June the numbers of British service personnel serving with United Nations operations was as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Former Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) | 2,446 |
| Cyprus (UNFICYP) | 592 |
| Cambodia (UNTAC) | 122 |
| Western Sahara (MINURSO) | 15 |
| Iraq-Kuwait (UNIKOM) | 15 |

### Hydrographic Department

23. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the planned work of the Hydrographic Department.

**Mr. Hanley:** The Ministry of Defence Hydrographic Department will continue to provide specialist input to defence programmes and plans and specialist advice to other Government Departments.

### Departmental Residential Property

24. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on empty residential property owned by his Department.

**Mr. Hanley:** Empty residential properties which are surplus to long term requirements are sold wherever possible. Empty properties which are required in the long term but for which there is no immediate need are wherever possible leased to local authorities and over 900 properties are currently on lease in this way. Not all empty properties are surplus to requirements however as some are undergoing major maintenance or refurbishment and others are earmarked for incoming families and future deployments.

### Exports

25. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department is taking to assist United Kingdom defence industries to increase the proportion of their output supplied to overseas markets.

**Mr. Aitken:** Within my Department, the Defence Export Services Organisation assists United Kingdom defence industry market and sells its products and services overseas. We provide a wide range of advice and services including the promotion of exhibitions, the compilation of market surveys, help with foreign contacts and the offer of training and advice to customer countries.

### Yugoslavia

26. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British troops are in former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** On 15 June there were 2,608 British forces personnel on the ground in the former Yugoslavia.

### Eurofighter

27. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the meetings he has held with his European colleagues about the progress of the Eurofighter 2000 so far in 1993.

**Mr. Aitken:** My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has not discussed Eurofighter 2000 with his German, Italian and Spanish counterparts this year. I met the State Secretaries of the partner nations on 5 April in Bonn to review progress on the project and I have discussed this matter with my German counterpart, Herr Schönbohm, on two further occasions.

29. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet his European colleagues to discuss the Eurofighter 2000.

**Mr. Aitken:** My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to meet his German, Italian and Spanish counterparts to discuss Eurofighter 2000.

### Belize

28. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the timetable for withdrawal of the British garrison from Belize.

**Mr. Hanley:** I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 14 June at col. *475* and the answer that my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford gave my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) on 13 May at cols *561-62*.

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

**Mr. Aitken:** The information requested is as follows:

| *Activity* | *Result In house/ Contractorised* |
|---|---|
| Flight checking services 115 Squadron—RAF Benson | Contractorised |
| Domestic services Gateway house—RAF Brize Norton | Retained in house |
| Engineering and Supply/Multi-activity contract RAF Scampton | Contractorised |
| Elementary flying training RAF Topcliffe | Contractorised |
| Catering—A and AEE Boscombe Down | Contractorised |

| Activity | Result In house/ Contractorised |
|---|---|
| Grounds maintenance Royal Marine Establishments | Retained in house |
| Domestic and administration services Wethersfield | Contractorised |

## HEALTH

### Mental Hospitals

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many mental hospitals there were in each region and nationally in each of the last 15 years.

**Mr. Bowis:** The available information is shown in the table.

*Number of psychiatric hospitals[1] 1978 to 1990-91*

| All psychiatric hospitals | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987-88 | 1988-89 | 1989-90 | 1990-91 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northern | 19 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 21 | 23 | 19 | 17 | 16 | 16 |
| Yorkshire | 36 | 36 | 36 | 37 | 36 | 34 | 35 | 37 | 38 | 33 | 35 | 36 | 40 |
| Trent | 64 | 63 | 64 | 64 | 65 | 65 | 67 | 62 | 61 | 53 | 58 | 53 | 49 |
| East Anglian | 22 | 22 | 23 | 25 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 24 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 21 | 23 |
| North West Thames | 18 | 19 | 19 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 21 | 24 | 21 | 22 | 22 | 20 |
| North East Thames | 20 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 25 | 28 | 28 | 31 |
| South East Thames | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 29 | 35 | 36 |
| South West Thames[2] | 34 | 35 | 35 | 34 | 35 | 37 | 35 | 35 | 34 | 40 | 46 | 40 | 35 |
| Wessex | 38 | 42 | 42 | 43 | 47 | 54 | 64 | 79 | 88 | 29 | 41 | 39 | 37 |
| Oxford | 19 | 21 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 24 | 24 | 30 | 21 | 24 | 25 | 17 |
| South Western | 56 | 57 | 55 | 59 | 60 | 61 | 63 | 68 | 73 | 54 | 58 | 53 | 60 |
| West Midlands | 36 | 37 | 37 | 38 | 41 | 41 | 43 | 55 | 57 | 37 | 39 | 40 | 36 |
| Mersey | 15 | 15 | 14 | 13 | 13 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 15 | 16 |
| North Western | 14 | 13 | 13 | 17 | 17 | 19 | 21 | 22 | 22 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 20 |
| Special Health Authorities | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| England | 421 | 427 | 425 | 437 | 447 | 458 | 478 | [3]513 | [3]544 | 422 | 455 | 440 | 437 |

[1] A hospital where 90 per cent. or more of the available beds are allocated to the psychiatric (mental illness and mental handicap) specialities. For years 1987-88 to 1990-91 mental handicap community units have been excluded. These units can generally be defined as facilities staffed by the NHS and managed separately from any hospital, which is located in the community, and provides not more than 24 residential places for people with learning disabilities.
[2] Number for 1987-88 estimated.
[3] These totals may be inflated by the inclusion of Mental Handicap Community Units.

*Sources:* SH3 (Hospital Classification) 1978 to 1986.
KH03 (4th Quarter) 1987-88 to 1990-91.

### Neonatal Units

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many neonatal units there were in each of the last five years; and how many of these units had a named consultant in charge.

**Mr. Sackville:** The information available on the number of neonatal units in the last five years is shown in the table. Every baby in a neonatal intensive care cot will have a consultant paediatrician who is responsible for that baby's care.

*Number of hospital units recording beds available for neonatal intensive care*

| | Number |
|---|---|
| 1987-88 | [1]221 |
| 1988-89 | 211 |
| 1989-90 | 210 |
| 1990-91 | 208 |
| 1991-92 | [2]— |

*Source:* KHO3.
[1] Includes an estimated figure for South West Thames.
[2] Data are being collected in a different form with effect from 1991-92 due to redesignation after the National Health Service reforms were introduced.

### Dioxins

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken to calculate the effect of dioxins on humans.

**Mr. Sackville:** The expert Advisory Committee on the Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment has reviewed the toxicology of dioxins on a number of occasions. It has set a tolerable daily intake (TDI) for dioxins of 10 picograms per kilogram body weight per day. Provided that individual intakes of dioxins do not exceed this level no risk to health is anticipated.

### Hospital Services, London

**Mr. Gale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she plans to publish the reports of the six reviews of specialties in London; and what role their advice will play in decisions about the future of hospital services in London.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** The specialty reviews will be published in full tomorrow and copies will be placed in the Library and Vote Office at 10.30 am. The chairmen of the review teams will hold a press conference to coincide with the publication.

The Government set out their proposals for improving the National Health Service in London in "Making London Better", published on 16 February, copies of which are available in the Library. The specialty reviews were announced then, in response to a recommendation in Sir Bernard Tomlinson's report. The independent review teams were established to address the extensive duplication and fragmentation of services in six specialties (cancer; cardiac; neurosciences; renal; plastic surgery and children's specialist services) and make recommendations

on their future disposition. Their reports are independent advice to Ministers and the NHS, not statements of Government policy.

Work on developing the proposals set out in "Making London Better" has progressed well since February. The recommendations of the specialty reviews represent a further necessary stage in that process, but not its conclusion. The review recommendations will form part of a complex jigsaw of factors informing decisions about the future pattern of services in London. The recommendations will be fed into the local process—already well under way—of developing sensible and sustainable proposals which meet the Government's objectives of improved patient care, support for excellence in teaching and research and value for money. Academic interests must be taken into account. Above all, proposals must be supported by NHS purchasers, reflecting patient preferences through the internal health market. No decisions are being taken to close any hospital, or make major service changes, on the basis of the specialty reviews alone.

"Making London Better" set out a timetable for long-term change. Clearly, some issues will be resolved more quickly than others. We anticipate that the main proposals for the future configuration of services will be put forward in the autumn. Proposals for major changes to services would, of course, be subject to full statutory public consultation, according to established procedures.

### Persistent Vegetative State

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the implications of the case of Anthony Bland for the funding by the national health service of the care of patients who have been in PVS for more than one year in cases where the patient's family wish treatment to continue.

**Mr. Sackville:** None. Decisions on the care of patients in persistent vegetative state (PVS) are made by doctors in consultation with the care team and the patient's relatives/friends. Treatment of PVS patients, in common with all chronically ill long-stay patients, is funded from national health service resources.

## WALES

### Pensions

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* members and *(b)* dependants are currently in receipt of *(a)* civil service pensions, *(b)* NHS pensions, *(c)* teachers' pensions, *(d)* armed forces pensions and *(e)* local government pensions in Wales; and what is the average amount of pension for (i) members and (ii) dependants in each category.

**Mr. Redwood:** Separate information for Wales on civil service, national health service, teachers and armed forces pension recipients is not readily available. Figures for the eight Welsh county councils, which include 77 other bodies whose superannuation funds are run by these councils, are given in the table.

*Pensions and Annuities, 1991-92*

| | *Number at 31 March 1992* | *Average Pension/annuity[1] (£ per person)* |
|---|---|---|
| Retired employees | 36,952 | 2,396 |
| Dependants | 8,128 | 894 |

*Source:* Local Government Superannuation Funds returns.
[1] Excluding lump sums, transfers and refunds of contributions.

### Cardiff Bay Development Corporation

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 11 June, *Official Report*, column *346-48*, if he will list the urban investment grants given by the Cardiff Bay development corporation, over the past eight quarters broken down by the same statistical headings.

**Mr. Redwood:** The information is as follows:
Project—NCM relocation
Developer—ABP (Grosvenor Waterside)
Grant paid—£550,000 (January-March 1993)
Total grant approved—£2·5 million
Private investment—£14·5 million
Forecast permanent jobs—400

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many urban investment grants have been made in excess of £250,000 by the Cardiff Bay development corporation; to which property developers or owners they have been made; and how many other offers the corporation has made of over £250,000 which were not taken up.

**Mr. Redwood:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the details of urban investment grants made by Cardiff Bay development corporation in the reply given today. The corporation has made no other offers over £250,000 which were not taken up.

### Quarrying

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by mineral planning authority the number of quarrying prohibition orders that have been issued, the number of appeals that have been made against them, and the inspector's decision in each case, over the last 10 years.

**Mr. Redwood:** There has been one. The order was made by Mid Glamorgan county council in respect of Ewenny quarry at Bridgend. Two objections were made to the order and following a public inquiry the inspector recommended that the order be not confirmed. The former Secretary of State accepted that recommendation and his decision was issued accordingly. There is at present an application by the county council before the High Court challenging the decision.

### European Parliamentary Constituencies

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the review of boundaries for European parliamentary constituencies in Wales to be completed; and what consultations he proposes to hold on the membership of the committee to conduct such a review.

**Mr. Redwood:** These are matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

### Local Education Authorities

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the expenditure on administration by each local authority in each of the last three years.

**Mr. Redwood:** Information for 1989-90 and earlier years is not available on a consistent basis and is not yet available for 1992-93. The information available is given in the table:

*Local education authority net current expenditure on administration*

*£000*

| | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 5,992 | 7,903 |
| Dyfed | 5,847 | 5,370 |
| Gwent | 6,628 | 6,821 |
| Gwynedd | n/a | n/a |
| Mid Glamorgan | 9,347 | 9,459 |
| Powys | 2,290 | 2,254 |
| South Glamorgan | 4,519 | 5,406 |
| West Glamorgan | 5,245 | 5,131 |

n/a = Not available.

### Flooding, Llandudno

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people registered at the emergency centres during the recent flood at Llandudno; how many were offered alternative accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr.Redwood:** Aberconwy borough council reports that some 3,800 people have so far registered at the emergency centres at Llandudno and Conwy. Of these, about 2,500 have been offered alternative accommodation, but the number requiring medium to long-term alternative accommodation is thought to be nearer 1,000. The borough council is, of course, continually updating these figures.

### Linseed

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to ensure that Welsh linseed farmers will be paid the same as their English counterparts; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** Payment rates for linseed have been calculated under the rules of the arable aid payment scheme. The yield regions for future years are under discussion.

### Craft Industry

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to help the craft industry in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The craft industry makes an important contribution to the economic and cultural life of Wales and a wide range of assistance is available from the Welsh Development Agency, Development Board for Rural Wales and the Welsh Arts Council

### Public Bodies

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 17 June, *Official Report*, column *728*, in which non-departmental public body each vacancy exists; and for how long the vacancy has existed.

**Mr. Redwood:** The information requested is shown in the following table. Since 11 June, two vacancies have been filled: one on the Sports Council for Wales and one on the Board of the Cardiff Bay development corporation.

*Appointments made by the Secretary of State for Wales*
*Vacancies at 11 June 1993*

| *NDPB* | *Number of vacancies* | *Date vacancy commenced* |
|---|---|---|
| Agricultural wages committee and agricultural dwelling house advisory committee: | | |
| —Clwyd | 1 | February 1993 |
| —Dyfed | 1 | February 1993 |
| —Glamorgan | 1 | April 1993 |
| —Gwent | 1 | May 1993 |
| Plant variety and seeds tribunal: | | |
| —Strawberries | 1 | June 1993 |
| Snowdonia national park committee | 1 | March 1993 |
| Cardiff Bay development corporation | [1]2 | March 1993<br>May 1993 |
| Sports council for Wales | [2]1 | April 1993 |
| Gwent community health NHS trust | 1 | March 1993 |
| Gwent FHSA | 1 | November 1992 |
| Clwyd North CHC | 1 | April 1993 |
| Cardiff CHC | 1 | October 1992 |
| Land authority for Wales | 1 | April 1991 |
| Housing for Wales | 1 | April 1989 |
| Welsh Development Agency | 2 | December 1992 |

[1] One of these vacancies has now been filled.
[2] This vacancy has now been filled.

### Strategic Planning Guidance

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answers of 27 May, *Official Report*, column *716*, and 17 June, *Official Report*, column *726*, what plans he has for arrangements for remuneration of the Assembly of Welsh Counties for its costs in *(a)* carrying out the strategic planning guidance exercise and *(b)* publicising it.

**Mr. Redwood:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply my right hon. Friend gave to him on 27 May.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Environmental Management

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to participate in the Institute of Waste Management conference in Torbay from 15 to 18 June; and what recent meeting he has had with officials of the institute regarding the completion of waste management legislation.

**Mr. Yeo:** I addressed the opening session of the Institute of Waste Management conference on Tuesday 15 June. I shall be meeting representatives of the institute and of the National Association of Waste Disposal Contractors and local authority associations soon to discuss waste management licensing.

### New Age Travellers

**Mr. Aspinwall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what legal action he intends to take to remove *(a)* the new age travellers and *(b)* their vehicles trespassing on land at Gipsy lane, Burnett, Avon, owned by his Department; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what measures he intends to take to protect the Wynne family from disturbance arising from trespass of vehicles occupied by new age travellers on his department's land adjacent to their home at Gipsy lane, Burnett, Avon;

(3) what discussions he has held with the chief constable of Avon and Somerset about removal of illegal trespassers from his Department's land at Gipsy lane, Burnett, Avon;

(4) when he intends to introduce measures *(a)* to end the open-ended financial commitment to meet new age travellers' accommodation needs and *(b)* to give local authorities stronger powers to deal quickly with illegal camping.

**Mr. Baldry:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State directed Avon county council in 1990 under the Caravan Sites Act 1968 to make additional accommodation available for gypsies as only one site had been provided in Avon at that time. It is for the council to comply with that statutory directon and determine where sites should be located.

I announced legislative proposals on 31 March 1993 to give local authorities stronger powers to tackle illegal camping and to repeal the duty to provide sites and the power to provide grant. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my right hon. Friend, the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) on 31 March at column *291*. But the duty remains in force until it is repealed and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State remains responsible for ensuring that Avon county council complies with the duty and the direction.

PSA services offered this surplus former Crown Suppliers depot at Burnett for sale on the open market in October last year and the council made an offer to purchase the property in order to develop it as a gipsy caravan site. Travellers have camped illegally on the site since the council's intentions became public.

PSA services, as current owner of the site is preparing to take action for possession under order 113 of the rules of the supreme court.

PSA services and its agents, Building Management South and West have liaised with the police on handling throughout, and have had discussions with Mr. and Mrs. Wynne about their position. I understand that a gated fence has been erected to prevent encroachment by the travellers on to Mr. and Mrs. Wynne's property.

It is open to the council to apply for Exchequer grant to cover the capital costs of developing this site if it obtains planning permission to develop it as a gipsy caravan site. Gipsies are defined in the 1968 Act as

"persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin"

and it is for the council to decide who is or is not a gipsy, and to ensure that sites are only provided for—and used by gipsies.

The cost of providing an authorised site on this land for gipsies, as defined in section 16 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968, has been estimated by Avon county council as £795,500.

### Methane Emissions

**Ms Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what prospects there are for reducing methane emissions from closed landfill sites; and what licensing requirements he will make for *(a)* existing and *(b)* new landfill sites in respect of methane emissions.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Government have published guidance on dealing with gas from closed landfill sites, and is undertaking further work on methods of controlling methane emissions. Resources are made available to authorities for investigation and remedial measures by means of supplementary credit approvals.

Conditions in individual waste disposal licences are a matter for waste regulation authorities. The Government issue guidance to authorities on the discharge of their licensing functions. In particular, revised guidance on landfill gas was issued as Waste Management Paper No. 27 in 1991; further guidance on licensing, which will deal with the need to control methane emissions, is in preparation.

**Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been undertaken by his Department into methane gas emissions from landfill sites.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Department recently commissioned the Energy Technology Support Unit (ETSU) of the Department of Trade and Industry to conduct a preliminary study on the subject. Their report was made available in draft form to the Watt committee and to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution for their study of waste incineration. The final report will shortly be available as a departmental research report.

The ETSU study showed that there is considerable uncertainty about the contribution of landfills to United Kingdom methane emissions. Preliminary estimates lie in the range of 0·6 to 5·3 Mt/year, with a best estimate of about 2 Mt/year. Given the level of uncertainty in the input level, it is not possible to predict the level of emissions to within a factor of two of the best estimate. There are two main sources of uncertainty: waste arisings data and information on the amount of methane oxidation that occurs close to the surface of a landfill.

### Carbon Dioxide Emissions

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the cost to the United Kingdom economy of implementing the carbon dioxide targets agreed at Toronto in 1988.

**Mr. Yeo:** No targets were agreed by the United Kingdom Government at Toronto in 1988.

### Community Charge

**Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in rank order all local authorities in England showing receipts of community charge in 1992-93 as a percentage of the expected yield.

**Mr. Baldry:** I am arranging for the information requested to be placed in the Library of the House.

### Landfill Directive

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the revised version of the EC landfill directive from the European Commission.

**Mr. Yeo:** The European Commission has indicated that they expect to present their revised proposals for a landfill directive towards the end of June.

### Local Government Holidays

**Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many extra-statutory holidays, in addition to bank holidays, are enjoyed by employees in local government.

**Mr. Curry:** This is entirely a matter for local government. We understand from the Local Government Management Board (the employers organisation) that in addition to statutory and other general national holidays, national agreements entitle local government employees to a further two extra-statutory holidays the timing of which are determined by local authorities after consultation with their employees.

### Biodiversity

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *113*, if he will make a statement on the issues discussed and decisions taken at the Trondheim biodiversity conference in May.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Trondheim conference on biodiversity, convened by the United Nations Environment Programme, discussed a large range of issues associated with the provisions of the convention on biological diversity. This was one of a number of meetings being held to provide expert opinion which will inform the decisions to be made by the intergovernmental negotiating committee and in time by the conference of the parties to the convention.

### Building Management South-East

**Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he is taking to remedy the management and control weaknesses which have been identified by the investigation of his Department's internal audit and central inquiry unit into allegations of irregularities at BMSE contracting division;

(2) if he will name the contractor whose activities have given rise to concern to his Department's internal audit and central inquiry unit during its investigation into allegations of irregularities at BMSE contracting division;

(3) if he will place in the Library a copy of the findings of his Department's internal audit and central inquiry unit's investigation into allegations of financial irregularities in the BMSE contracting division.

**Mr. Curry:** The following steps have been taken to remedy the management and control weaknesses identified by the internal audit and central inquiry unit investigations:

- an experienced civil service senior manager was brought in to take overall charge of Building Management South East contracting division while a detailed recovery plan was prepared
- the contracts of two members of staff have not been renewed
- a new financial controller has been appointed
- a management action plan has been agreed and implementation of it is being monitored by the BMSE board

I do not propose to name the contractor whose activities have given rise to concern, as investigations into the case continue.

It is not customary to place copies of internal audit and central inquiry unit reports in the Library. They are available to the staff of the Comptroller and Auditor General in the usual way.

### Waste Incineration

**Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to respond to the Royal Commission on environmental pollution report on waste incineration; and if he will indicate the nature of his proposed response.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Government have welcomed the report from the Royal Commission on environment pollution on the incineration of waste as a comprehensive and clear analysis of the role of incineration as a waste management option. It describes incineration in a positive and reassuring light and is likely to go a long way to offsetting public concerns about incineration. The Government will be making a full response to the commission's report in due course.

### Community Care Housing

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that the Housing Corporation capital funding to meet community care housing needs is maintained at or above the 1989-90 levels; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to increase the Housing Corporation capital funding to meet community care housing needs for new schemes to allow new building levels to equal the 1989-90 level.

**Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will increase the proportion of Housing Corporation capital funding to meet new schemes for community care housing needs to levels at or above those given in 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Baldry:** The Housing Corporation continues to provide support for 3,000 special needs bed spaces a year, which attract revenue funding from the special needs management allowance. The corporation also provides capital support for further units of accommodation—up to 1,500 in the current year—suitable for people with special needs, but not requiring revenue support. No decisions have yet been taken about future levels of expenditure.

There are many ways of meeting the housing needs arising from community care, including general needs social housing funded by the corporation, in which tenants can receive non-residential care support. Overall, resources for the corporation's approved development programme have been doubled from £935 million in 1989-90 to over £1·8 billion this year.

The corporation's allocations to housing associations are made in response to the housing strategies prepared by local housing authorities. They in turn are consulted by the social services agencies about their community care strategies.

### Housing (Elderly People)

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the housing needs of people over 80 years in Stoke on Trent, North constituency and in the United Kingdom as a whole.

**Mr. Baldry:** The Department commissioned Ernst and Young management consultants to carry out an independent study of the housing needs of elderly and disabled people, including those aged 80 years and over. The study has been completed and a series of reports covering different elements of the programme of research is being prepared.

The Ernst and Young study is restricted to England and will produce representative findings at national and regional levels. Separate studies of the housing needs of elderly and disabled people have been undertaken in recent years by the Scottish Office and the Northern Ireland Office.

Guidance to local housing authorities will be produced, using the Ernst and Young research, on methods for assessing the needs of elderly people and the comparative costs of different housing and care options to meet their needs. This guidance is referred to in paragraph 18 of the joint circular (10/92) issued by my Department and the Department of Health on housing and community care.

### Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Bill (Advisory Body)

**Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to establish an advisory body in respect of the provisions of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Bill; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir George Young:** I have announced that the Government are prepared to contribute, for up to three years, towards the cost of a body giving advice on the leasehold reform provisions of the Bill. The Leasehold Reform Co-ordinating Committee has prepared a scheme for an advisory agency and is presently seeking to attract funding from various professional bodies and other organisations.

### Interim Development Orders

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to revoke all interim development orders which conflict with good environmental standards and sound environmental protection; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment gave on 22 January 1993 at columns *457-58*.

### Nuclear Industry

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what procedures exist to ensure that the information supplied by BNFL in respect of applications for authorisation for proposed radioactive discharge limits fulfils the requirements of environmental assessment; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo** *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* Details of the procedures used by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to assess the radiological implications of the radioactive discharges proposed by BNFL in its applications for new discharge authorisations for Sellafield, including the thermal oxide reprocessing plant, are given in the explanatory memoranda which accompanied the public consultation documents. Copies of these memoranda are in the Library of the House.

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the application from BNFL for authorisation for proposed new radioactive discharge limits from the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield fulfils the requirements of environmental assessment; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo** *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* The information provided by BNFL in support of their applications for new radioactive discharge authorisations for Sellafield, including the thermal oxide reprocessing plant, was sufficient to enable Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to conduct detailed assessments of the radiological implications of the company's proposed discharges. These assessments confirmed that doses resulting from the proposed discharges would be well within national and international limits.

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made in accordance with EC directive 84/467 Euratom of the projected costs and benefits which will arise from the operation of the BNFL thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo** *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, together with my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, is currently considering a report by Her Majesty's chief inspector of pollution and the MAFF inspectorates on the recent consultation on applications for revised authorisations under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 for radioactive discharges from the Sellafield site. The revised authorisations would take into account (amongst other things) the operation of the THORP plant.

Any decision on the applications will be made in accordance with national and EC law, including the relevant requirements of Directive 84/467/Euratom.

## EDUCATION

### Pupil Testing

**Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his present estimate of the costs of the testing of 14-year-old pupils under the arrangements required by his Department *(a)* by local education authorities and *(b)* by his Department; and if he will express the figure for the confirmed expenditure as a sum per pupil involved.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The Department provides support under the grants for education support and training programme for local authority expenditure on training for teachers about national curriculum assessment. In the financial year 1993-94, grant at the rate of 60 per cent. supports £17 million of expenditure for the in-service training of teachers. Over the last three years £50·6 million

has been supported for this purpose. Information on the precise proportion of this expenditure which relates to the testing of 14-year-olds is not available.

### Tuition Fees

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to ensure that universities are not permitted to charge top-up fees for undergraduate courses; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Boswell:** The Government have given maximum independence to universities and colleges to manage their own affairs. To intervene in the setting of tuition fees would cut across that principle and would exceed my right hon. Friend's legal powers. Public funding for higher education is sufficient. It totals over £4 billion in England and over £270 million in Wales in 1993-94.

### EC Students

**Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps have been taken to obtain funding from the European Community or other member states in respect of the costs resulting from the enrolment of European Community students for third-level courses in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Boswell:** Students from other EC member states attending designated courses of higher education in the United Kingdom qualify for an award covering their course fees up to a specified maximum, where they satisfy basic eligibility conditions similar to those for students who live in the United Kingdom. Reciprocal rights apply to United Kingdom students studying elsewhere in the EC. The Department regularly discusses the distribution of funds for the various EC student mobility programmes with the Commission and representatives of other member states.

### EC Students

**Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many European Community students enrolled for third-level courses in the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* 1992; what amount of tuition fee was forgone in respect of European Community students enrolling for third-level coures in the United Kingdom in (i) 1990, (ii) 1991 and (iii) 1992; and what was the total cost of the education of European Community students enrolling for third-level courses in the United Kingdom in (1) 1990, (2) 1991 and (3) 1992.

**Mr. Boswell:** In the academic years 1990-91 and 1991-92 there were respectively 26,837 and 33,133 students from other EC member states studying third-level courses at institutions in the United Kingdom. Data for 1992-93 are not yet available. Except in exchange programmes, higher education institutions have not forgone tuition fees in respect of these students, who, depending on circumstances, either receive an award covering the cost of fees or pay the fees themselves. The cost of provision for EC students is not recorded separately.

### Grant-maintained Schools

**Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list, by local education authority area, those grant-maintained schools already operating on 1 April which *(a)* have received their final budgets for the 1993-94 financial year and *(b)* have yet to receive their final budgets for the 1993-94 financial year;

(2) if he will list, by local education authority area, those grant-maintained schools that started operating on 1 April which *(a)* have received their final budgets for the 1993-94 financial year and *(b)* have yet to receive their final budgets for the 1993-94 financial year;

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The information is contained in the tables. Schools which became self-governing on 1 April this year are asterisked. All schools were notified in March this year of a "proposed final" AMG based on an updating of last year's budget figure on which they are basing current year planning prior to final figures becoming available.

SELF-GOVERNING STATE SCHOOLS IN RECEIPT OF FINAL AMG BUDGETS

*Barnet*
Mill Hill County School

*Bromley*
Beaverwood School for Girls
Buller Wood School for Girls
Charles Darwin School
Coopers School
Crofton Junior School
Hayes School
Holy Innocents Roman Catholic Primary School
Kelsey Park School
Langley Park School for Boys
Newstead Wood School for Girls (GM)
Ravens Wood School for Boys
St. John Rigby School
St. Olave's and St. Saviours Grammar School

*Hounslow*
Gumley House Convent School for Girls*
Gunnersbury Catholic School*

*Humberside*
Wold Newton Primary School

*Kingston*
Tiffin School
Richard Challoner School*
Holy Cross Convent School*

*Kirklees*
Castle Hall School
Heckmondwike School

*Lancashire*
Bacup and Rawtenstall School
Lancaster Girls Grammar School
Newton Bluecoat School

*Liverpool*
St. Francis Xavier's College

*Newham*
Stratford School

*Oxfordshire*
Shenington C.E. Primary School*

*Sandwell*
Manor High Community School

*Somerset*
Bruton Primary School
Sexey's School

*Surrey*
The Beacon School

Collingwood School
De Stafford School
Epsom and Ewell High School
Glyn School
Gordon's School
Guildford County School
Hawkedale First School
Heathside Secondary School
Manor County First School
Rosebery School
St. John the Baptist School
St. Paul's Catholic School
Send CE First School
Stoneleigh First School
Thamesmead School

*Tameside*
Audenshaw High School
West Hill High School*

*Warwickshire*
The Avon Valley Grant-Maintained School
Ash Green Grant-Maintained School
Hartshill School
Myton School
Queen Elizabeth School Atherstone
Rugby High School for Girls*
Alcester Grammar School*

*Wolverhampton*
Moseley Park GM School
Wolverhampton Girls High School

SELF-GOVERNING SCHOOLS WITH PROPOSED FINAL AMG BUDGETS

*Avon*
Beechen Cliff School
Oldfield School

*Barnet*
Queen Elizabeth School for Boys

*Bedfordshire*
Ashcroft High School*
Crawley Green Infant School*
Icknield High School*
Lea Manor High School*
Lincroft Middle School*
Manshead School
Queensbury School
Sharnbrook Upper School
Thomas Whitehead CE School
Wootton Upper School*

*Berkshire*
Cippenham Middle School GM
Denefield School
Desborough Comprehensive School
Downs School (The)
Herschel Grammar School
Holy Family RC Combined School
Langley Grammar School
Priory School
Reading School
Southlands School
St. Bartholomew's School
Upton Grammar School
Whitelocke Infant and Nursery School*

*Bexley*
Barnehurst Infant Grant-Maintained School
Barnehurst Junior Grant-Maintained School
St. Mary and St. Joseph's School*
St. Columba's RC Boys School*

*Birmingham*
King Edward VI Aston School*
King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys*
King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Girls*
King Edward VI Five Ways School*
King Edward VI Handsworth School*
Baverstock GM School
Great Barr GM School
Hall Green School*
Handsworth Grammar School for Boys
Small Health School

*Bolton*
Canon Slade School*
Crompton Fold Primary School
George Tomlinson School*
St. James' CE School

*Bradford*
Bingley Grammar School
Hanson School*
Laisterdyke Middle School*
Oakbank School*
Thornton School*

*Brent*
Claremont High School GM
Copland Community School and Technology Centre
Convent of Jesus and Mary High School*
Kingsbury High School*
Queens Park Community School*

*Buckinghamshire*
Brookmead School
Overstone Grant-Maintained Combined School
Hamilton Combined School*
Beechview Middle School*
Bridgewater Hall School
Brindley Hall School
Beaconsfield High School
The Chalfonts Community College
Wycombe Royal Grammar School*
Lord Grey School*
The Radcliffe School*

*Calderdale*
Crossley Heath School (The)
Holy Trinity CE Senior School
North Halifax High School (The)
Rastrick High School*
Salterlee Primary School

*Cambridgeshire*
Ailwyn Community School*
Bassingbourn Village
Comberton Village College*
Crosshall Infants School
Crosshall Junior School
Deacons School*
Gamlingay Village College
Jack Hunt School
Longsands Community College*
Orton Wistow Primary School*
Park Lane Primary School
Sawston Village College*
Sawtry Village College
Stanground College*
St. Helens Primary School
The Kings School
The Queens School
Wheatfield Junior

*Cheshire*
Bankfield High School (GM)
Fallibroome High School*
Henbury School*
Kettleshulme St. James GM CE Primary School

*Croydon*
Edenham School*
Riddlesdown School

*Cumbria*
Appleby Grammar School*
Dallam School*

Harraby School*
Hayton CE Primary School
Kirkbie Kendal School
Kirkby Stephen Grammar School*
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School
Queen Katherine School
St. Aidan's High School
Scotby CE VA Primary School
Trinity School

*Derbyshire*
Belmont Primary School
Borrow Wood Junior School
Repton Primary School*
Netherthorpe School
The Ecclesbourne School
Chellaston School
The Merrill Community School
Belper School*
John Port School*
Murray Park Community School*
Noel Baker School*
Heanor Gate School*

*Devon*
Colyton Grammar School
St. Boniface's College*
Teign School*
Torquay Boy's Grammar School

*Dorset*
Avonbourne School
Bournemouth School
Bournemouth School for Girls
Budmouth School
Highcliffe Comprehensive School
Parkstone Grammar School
Poole Technical High School*
St. Walburga's RC Primary School*
Woodroffe School (The)

*Dudley*
Ellowes Hall School (The)*
Kingswinford School (The)
Old Swinford Hospital School

*Ealing*
Brentside High School
Drayton Manor High School
Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls (The)
Greenford High School
Northolt High School
Wood End First School
Wood End Middle School

*Essex*
Appleton School
Beauchamps School
Belfairs School*
The Boswells School
Bromfords School
Castle View School
Chalvedon School
Chelmer Valley High School*
Chelmsford High School for Girls
The Cornelius Vermuyden School
Davenant Foundation School*
The Deanes School
The Eastwood School
Elmwood Primary School
The Fitzwimarc School
Furtherwick Park School
Gable Hall School*
Grays School*
The Greensward School*
Great Totham Primary School
The Hedley Walter School
Jotmans Hall Primary School*
Katherines Primary School
The King Edmund School
King Edward VI Grammar
King Harold School
King John School
Newlands Spring Primary School
Newport Free Grammar*
North Crescent Primary School
Northlands Junior School
Northwick Park Infant School*
Northwick Park Junior School*
The Philip Morant School
The Plume School
Rainsford School*
Rickstones School
Rolph CE VA Primary School*
Saffron Walden High School
Southend Girls High School*
St. Andrews CE Primary*
St. Clere's School*
St. Martin's School*
Tendring High School*
Thorpe Bay High School*
Thurstable School
Torells School
Westborough Primary School
Westcliff High School for Boys
Westcliff High School for Girls
West Hatch High School
William De Ferrers School*
William Edwards School*

*Gloucestershire*
Balcarras School
Chipping Campden School
Cotswold School
Chosen Hill School
Churchdown School
The Crypt School
Katharine Lady Berkeleys School
Marling School
Newent Community School
Pates GM Grammar School
Rednock School
Ribston Hall High School
Robinswood Primary
Saintbridge GM Technology College
St. Gregory The Great RC Primary School
Stroud High School
Tewkesbury Grant-Maintained School
Blue Coat CE Primary School*
Picklenash School*
Wyedean School*

*Hammersmith*
London Oratory School

*Hampshire*
Abbotswood Middle School
All Hallows RC School*
Arnewood School (The)
Bay House School*
Blackfield Middle School*
Bohunt Community School*
Burgate School
Calmore Middle School*
City of Portsmouth Boys School (The)
Crofton School, Fareham
Front Lawn Middle School
Hardley School GM
Priory County Primary School (The)
Ringwood School GM Comprehensive
St. Joseph's RC Primary School*
Testwood School

*Havering*
Abbs Cross School*
Coopers Company and Coburn School (The)*
Frances Bardsley School (The)

*Hereford and Worcester*
St. Augustine's RC School (*)
St. Bede's RC School (*)

*Hertfordshire*
St. Mary's Catholic Primary School
Christ Church CE Primary School
Parkside First School
Hertingfordbury Cowper JMI School
Rickmansworth School
Watford Grammar School for Boys
Francis Bacon School
Watford Grammar School for Girls
Parmiters School
The Bishop's Stortford High School
Ashlyns School*
Dame Alice Owens School*
Bushey Meads School*
Bushey Hall School*
Queen's School*
Mount Grace School*

*Hillingdon*
Oak Farm Infant School
Oak Farm Junior School
Grange Park Infant School*
Grange Park Junior School*
Bishopshalt School
Haydon School
Vyners School
Queensmead School
Uxbridge School
Northwood School
The Hayes Manor School
Mellow Lane School
The Douay Martyrs School
Abbotsfield School*
Swakeleys School*

*Kensington and Chelsea*
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School

*Kent*
The Grammar School for Girls Wilmington
The Cornwallis School
The Maplesden Noakes School
Wilmington Grammar School for Boys
Dartford Grammar School
Homewood School
Southlands Comprehensive School
St. George's CE School
Thamesview School
Aylesford School
Dartford Grammar School for Girls
Oldborough Manor Community College
Senacre Technology School
Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys
Snodland CE Primary School
Wrotham School
Cranbrook School
Angley School
Fulston Manor School
Minster College
Oakwood Park Grammar School
Rainham Mark Grammar School
The Robert Napier GM School
The Skinners' School
Borough Green Primary School
Chatham Grammar School for Girls
Holy Trinity CE Primary School
Sandown Court Community College
Sir Roger Manwood's School
The Archbishop's CE School
The Bradbourne School
The Canterbury High School
The Malling School
Meopham School
St. Simon Stock School
The Hugh Christie School
The Wildernesse School*
Westlands High School*
St. Gregory's RC Comprehensive School*
St. John Fisher School*
Sutton-at-Hone CE Primary School*
Roseacre Junior School*
Mascalls School*
The Charles Dickens School*
The Folkestone School for Girls*

*Lambeth*
Archbishop Tenisons*
Bishop Thomas Grant School*
Dunraven School*
La Retraite RC Girls School
St. Bernadette's Junior School

*Lancashire*
Archbishop Temple School*
Baines School
Clitheroe Royal Grammar
Lancaster Royal Grammar

*Leicestershire*
Abington High School*
Bushloe High School*
Long Field GM High School
South Wigston High School*
Uppingham Community College*

*Lewisham*
Turnham Primary School

*Lincolnshire*
Ancaster High School (The)
Bourne Abbey Primary School
Caistor Grammar School
Carre's Grammar School
Castle Hills GM School (The), Gainsborough
Ermine Junior GM School
Gartree GM School (The)
Gleed Girls GM School
King Edward VI School, Lincs
Kings School Grantham (The)
Lacey Gardens Junior School*
Lincoln Christ's Hospital School
Magdalen School (The)
Malcolm Sargent County Primary (The)*
Monks' dyke High School
North Kesteven GM School
Queen Elizabeth's GM Grammar School (ALF)
Queen Elizabeth's Grammar (HORN)
Rauceby School CE GM
Robert Pattison GM School
Skegness Grammar School
St. George's GM School
William Alvey CE Junior School
William Farr CE Comprehensive School
Yarborough High School

*Norfolk*
Acle High School
Cliff Park High School*
Costessey High School
Cromer High School
Dereham Church First School
Downham Market High School
Flegg High School*
Great Yarmouth High School*
Gresham Primary School
Heacham Middle School
Robert Kett Middle School
Loddon Middle School
Lynn Grove High School*
Marshland High School
Norwich Road School
Redgate Middle School
St. Clements High School*
Sheringham High School
South Wootton GM Junior School
West Flegg Middle School
Wymondham College

*Northamptonshire*
Danesholme Junior School*
King John Middle School

Kingsley Park Middle School
Kingswood School
Lodge Park School
Manor School
Montagu School
Moulton Primary School
Northampton School for Boys
Sir Christopher Hatton School
Southfield School for Girls
Weavers School
Windmill Primary School
Woodnewton Way Junior*
Wrenn School

*Nottinghamshire*
George Spencer School*
Greenwood Dale School*
Ravensdale Middle School

*Rochdale*
Crossgates Primary School
Smithy Bridge Primary School*
St. James Primary School*
Wardle High School*

*Sheffield*
Clifford CE GM School

*Shropshire*
Adam's Grammar School
The Corbet School*

*Solihull*
Hatchford GM Primary School

*Southwark*
The London Nautical School
St. Francesca Cabrini RC Primary School*

*Staffordshire*
Cannock Chase High*
St. Thomas More RC School

*Sutton*
Cheam High School
The John Fisher School
Nonsuch High School for Girls
Sutton Grammar School for Boys
St. Philomena's School*
Wallington High School for Girls*
Wallington County Grammar*
Wilson's School

*Tower Hamlets*
Raines Foundation School

*Trafford*
New Wellington High School*
Ashton-on-Mersey County High School*
Sale Moor County High School*

*Walsall*
St. Thomas More RC Comprehensive GM School
Shire Oak Community School*
Streetly School

*Waltham Forest*
Highams Park School

*Wandsworth*
Ethelburga Primary School (Grant-Maintained)
Hillbrook Primary School*
Graveney School
Burntwood School
Elliott School (GM)
Salesian College
John Paul II RC School*
Southfields School (GM)*

*Wiltshire*
Aloeric GM Primary School
Highbury School
Lavington Comprehensive School
St. Augustine's RC GM Comprehensive School

*Wirral*
Calday Grange Grammar School*

**Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the respondents to the consultative document "A Common Funding Formula for Grant-maintained Schools" issued on 18 December 1992; and if he will place a copy of each response in the Library.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Following is a list of respondents to the consultative document "A Common Funding Formula for Grant-maintained Schools" issued on 18 December 1992. Respondents commented on this consultation paper, as others, on the understanding that their replies would be treated as private correspondence. They may, of course, give their views wider circulation should they wish.

A further consultation document on a common funding formula was issued on 10 June. Section B of that paper contains a summary of responses to the first paper. Copies are available in the Library.

*GM Schools*
Adams' Grammar School, Shropshire
Audenshaw High School, Tameside
Beaconsfield High School, Buckinghamshire
Bullers Wood School, Bromley
Calday Grange Grammar School, Wirral
The Canterbury High School, Kent
The Chalfonts Community College, Buckinghamshire
Chalvedon School, Essex
Charles Darwin School (Bromley GM Head Teachers), Kent
Chelmsford County High Girls, Essex
Chosen Hill School, Gloucestershire
The Cornwallis School, Kent
Cranbrook School, Kent
Crompton Fold Primary School, Bolton
Crosshall Junior School, Cambridgeshire
The Crossley Heath School, Calderdale
Dartford Grammar School, Kent
Desborough School (Berkshire Association of GM Heads), Berkshire
Epson and Ewell School, Surrey
Ermine Junior GM School, Lincolnshire
Gordon's School, Surrey
Hardley School, Hampshire
Haydon School, Hillingdon
Heathside School, Surrey
The Hedley Walter High School, Essex
Hendon School, Barnet
Herschel Grammar School, Berkshire
Highcliffe School, Dorset
Holy Family Primary RC School, Berkshire
The King's School, Grantham, Lincolnshire
The King's School, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire
The Schools of King Edward VI, Birmingham
King Edward VI Grammar School, Essex
Kirkbie Kendal School, Cumbria
The London Nautical School, Southwark
Meopham School, Kent
Newent Community School (Gloucs Association of GM Heads), Gloucestershire
Northolt High School, Ealing
Oak Farm JMI School, Hillingdon
The Park Lane Primary School, Cambridgeshire
Riddlesdown High School, Croydon
Robinswood Primary School, Gloucestershire
St. Bartholomew's School, Berkshire
St. Helen's Primary School, Cambridgeshire
St. John's School, Wiltshire
St. John The Baptist School, Surrey
Thamesmead School, Surrey
Tiffin School, Kingston
The Westborough Primary School, Essex

Wilmington Grammar School for Boys, Kent
Wilson's School, Surrey
Wolverhampton Girls' High School, Wolverhampton
The Woodroffe School, Dorset

*LEAs: Inner London*
Camden
Hammersmith and Fulham
Kensington and Chelsea
Lewisham
Southwark
Tower Hamlets
Wandsworth
Westminster

*LEAs: Outer London*
Barnet
Bexley
Bromley
Havering
Hillingdon
Kingston
Redbridge
Sutton

*LEAs: Metropolitan*
Barnsley
Birmingham
Bolton
Calderdale
Cleveland
Dudley
Durham
Knowsley
Merton
Newcastle
Solihull
Trafford
Wolverhampton

*LEAs: Shires*
Avon
Bedfordshire
Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Cambridgeshire
Cornwall
Cumbria
Derbyshire
Devon
Dorset
Essex
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Hertfordshire
Humberside
Kent
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
Norfolk
Northamptonshire
Oxfordshire
Somerset
Staffordshire
Surrey
Warwickshire
West Sussex
Wiltshire

*Specified Bodies*
Association for All Speech Impaired Children (AFASIC)
Association of Educational Psychologists
Association of Heads of GM Schools (AHGMS)
Association of London Authorities (ALA)
Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA)
Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)
Campaign for State Education (CASE)
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
London Boroughs Association (LBA)
National Association of Governors and Managers (NAGM)
National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)
National Association of Maintained Charitable Secondary Schools
National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN)
National Deaf Children Society (NDCS)
National Union of Teachers (NUT)
Oxford Diocesan Board of Education
Professional Association of Teachers (PAT)
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR)
Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
Special Educational Consortium
University of Sussex at Brighton

*Others*
Colin Baker of Grey Coat Hospital School, Westminster
R. D. Hurdman, Headteacher East Barnet School, Barnet
R. J. Howling, The Purbeck School, Dorset

### Student Sabbaticals

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will seek information as to how many full-time students are on paid sabbaticals and at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Boswell:** The Government's consultations on student union matters have covered the uses to which public funds may legitimately be put, including supporting the activities of sabbatical officers. My right hon. Friend is now finalising proposals for action.

### School Ballots

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total sum of money paid to date to the Electoral Reform Society for its conduct of opt-out ballots in schools.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The total sum paid to the Electoral Reform Society for its conduct of ballots at schools considering grant-maintained status is almost £980,000 to date, covering 1,070 ballots over the past five years.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Plutonium

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the destination and end-use of shipments of plutonium nitrate from Dounreay; what plans there are to increase these shipments; and for how long he expects these to continue.

**Mr. Eggar:** Plutonium nitrate recovered from prototype fast reactor (PFR) fuel is shipped from Dounreay to Sellafield where facilities exist for its conversion to plutonium oxide and long-term storage under international safeguards.

The use to which the plutonium oxide is put is a matter for the owners, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA).

Plutonium nitrate shipments are an operational matter for the UKAEA, which will be determined in the light of arisings from the reprocessing plant at Dounreay.

It was announced in the statement by the then Secretary of State for Energy on 21 July 1988 at columns 1302-11 that the Government had decided to fund the reprocessing plant at Dounreay until 1996-97, to process spent fuel from PFR.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *159*, what were the names of the Japanese reactors which provided the irradiated fuel from which the plutonium to which he refers was extracted and returned to Japan.

**Mr. Eggar:** Such matters are for British Nuclear Fuels plc and its customers.

### Sellafield

**Mr. Hood:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the opening date of the Mox demonstration facility at Sellafield.

**Mr. Eggar:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 15 April 1993, *Official Report*, column *720*.

### Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what countries are expected to ship waste to, and receive plutonium from, the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

**Mr. Eggar:** The thermal oxide reprocessing plant is a recycling facility which will reprocess spent nuclear fuel to recover the plutonium and uranium in a form which can be used for electricity generation. Nuclear waste will not be shipped to THORP. The plant has contracts from customers in Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. Plutonium would be returned only under international safeguards and upon receipt of appropriate assurances covering peaceful use, physical protection and controls on re-transfer.

### Spent Batteries

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the organisations and individuals to whom his Department sent a copy of their consultation document of 5 May on options for spent battery collection under EC directive 91/157/EEC.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** More than 800 copies of the Department's consultation paper have been issued so far, to all local authorities, to relevant trade and industry representative organisations, consumer, retail and environmental groups, and to companies and individuals who have expressed an interest in the subject to the Department. Responses are now being assessed.

### Renewable Energy

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what electricity generating capacity from renewable resources his Department is committed to underwrite financially for the United Kingdom as a whole by the year 2000;

(2) when he expects to publish his renewable energy strategy review document.

**Mr. Eggar:** The Government are committed to working towards new renewables generated capacity of 1500 MW (DNC) by 2000 and will publish a renewable energy strategy review document later this year, in the light of the report of the Renewable Energy Advisory Group and the coal review. I expect to make an announcement on future NFFO arrangements in due course.

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the progress of discussions between his Department and the EC Commission concerning the extension of non-fossil fuel obligation funding for renewables beyond 1998.

**Mr. Eggar:** Discussions with the European Commission are continuing.

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade for the last five years, what percentage of *(a)* total electricity supply, *(b)* total electricity generating capacity and *(c)* primary energy supply was supplied by renewable energy sources; what proportion of renewable capacity received non-fossil fuel obligation funding; and what percentage of his Department's energy research budget was allocated to (i) nuclear research projects and (ii) renewables research.

**Mr. Eggar:** The information requested is as follows:

The percentage of total electricity supply generated by renewables over the last five years is as follows:

| | *per cent.* |
|---|---|
| 1988 | 1·9 |
| 1989 | 1·8 |
| 1990 | 1·9 |
| 1991 | 1·7 |
| 1992 | 2·1 |

The percentage of total electricity generating capacity which has been accounted for by renewables over the last five years is as follows:

| | *per cent.* |
|---|---|
| 1988 | 2·2 |
| 1989 | 2·1 |
| 1990 | 2·1 |
| 1991 | 2·2 |
| 1992 | 2·6 |

The percentage of primary energy supply generated by renewables over the last five years is as follows:

| | *per cent.* |
|---|---|
| 1988 | 0·8 |
| 1989 | 0·8 |
| 1990 | 0·9 |
| 1991 | 0·8 |
| 1992 | 0·9 |

*Source:* United Kingdom digest of energy statistics, 1991 and 1992.

Since the Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation was introduced in 1990, the proportion of renewables capacity receiving NFFO funding has risen to around 12 per cent. (as at 31 March 1993).

The percentage of my Department's energy research budget spent on nuclear and renewables is as follows:

| | *Nuclear* | *Renewables* |
|---|---|---|
| 1987-88 | 79·9 | 9·1 |
| 1988-89 | 83·8 | 8·6 |
| 1989-90 | 79·8 | 10·8 |
| 1990-91 | 69·6 | 13·1 |
| 1991-92 | 72·0 | 19·0 |

*Source:* Annual review of Government funded research and development, 1990 and 1992.

### Collieries (Market Testing)

**Mr. Tipping:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Coal about those collieries which are market testing; how long this period of market testing will last; and what discussions there have been about the closure of any of those collieries.

**Mr. Eggar:** Decisions about the future of individual collieries are a matter for British Coal. No deadline for the period of market testing has been set. Completion of the process will depend on the progress of commercial negotiations between British Coal and electricity generators over additional sales of coal.

### Arms Exports

**Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those countries which receive United Kingdom aid to which arms have been exported in each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Needham:** For the period requested, statistics of arms exports could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information on aid is available from "British Aid Statistics", and for arms transfers in 1992 the hon. Lady may wish to consult the United Kingdom's return for the United Nations register of arms transfers. Both documents have been placed in the Library.

### Registered Letters

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the current procedures in relation to the delivery of registered letters by the Royal Mail; and what alterations to this procedure were carried out in the delivery of registered letters to addresses used in connection with the Hoover free-flight promotion.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Royal Mail's procedures for delivering registered letters are as follows:

As registered items arrive in the receiving sorting office they are recorded in a registered mail book. This book, together with the registered items, is sent to the local delivery office where the items are again checked against the book. As items are delivered to, or collected by, the customer, he or she signs for the number of registered items received. There was no variation of these procedures in respect of the Hoover offer. The agency handling the promotion collected and signed for its registered letters in the usual way.

### Recycling

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to encourage investment in capital equipment for the purpose of recycling of waste materials in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Waste disposal costs are increasing, as a result of the higher standards required under certain provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This is helping to make recycling a more attractive waste management option, and investment in capital equipment for this purpose will flow naturally as a result. The Government are also encouraging investment by undertaking a number of initiatives aimed at developing markets for recycled materials. These include offering a £20 million grant towards the cost of papermaking plant, with the capacity to recycle an extra 350,000 tonnes of waste paper a year, and providing grants for various research and development projects which seek to identify new uses for recovered materials, and which develop and demonstrate new recycling technologies.

### Exporters

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what new plans he has to assist exporters.

**Mr. Needham:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave on 16 June, *Official Report*, column *603*.

### Rural Sub-post Offices

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps are being taken to ensure that rural sub-post offices in Northern Ireland will be kept open; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Post Office Counters Ltd. is making strenuous efforts to keep rural offices open, for example through its community office programme. In our review of the Post Office we are exploring a number of ways to underpin the rural network to ensure that post office services continue to be readily accessible to all in towns and in the country, throughout Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

### Shipbuilding Intervention Fund

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has yet received a reply to the letter from his department on 26 May to the European Commission on the eligibility of British warship yards for the shipbuilding intervention fund; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I have not yet received a reply to my letter of 26 May to Commissioner van Miert.

### Structural Steel

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *601*, what representations he has received about the dumping of structural steel by countries within the European Community.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I have received no representations about the dumping of structural steel in the United Kingdom by countries within the European Community. I have, however, received a number of representations about imports into the United Kingdom of allegedly subsidised structural steel from other EC member states.

### Political Contributions

**Mr. Bell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the number of investigations that have been taken place by the companies investigation branch into allegations of irregularities or non-compliance of the Companies Acts in relation to non-disclosure of political contributions in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** None.

**Mr. Bell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many complaints have been made to Companies

House in regard to the non-disclosure of political contributions to political parties which have led to investigation by the Serious Fraud Office in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** None.

### Company Directors Disqualification Act

**Mr. Bell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many directors have been disqualified under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 for the years 1990, 1991 and 1992.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The total number of directors notified to Companies House as disqualified under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 was 419 in financial year 1990-91 and 459 in 1991-92. The provisional figure for 1992-93 is 649. Information is not compiled on a calendar year basis.

### High Definition Television

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if the United Kingdom has the power to veto on funding for high definition television via the EC; and what is the upper limit of the contribution that Her Majesty's Government are prepared to make to this project;

(2) which plants in which countries will benefit from EC funding of research and development of high definition television; and how many jobs will be created or sustained in the United Kingdom;

(3) what level of funding is being proposed by the European Commission for high definition television; how much the United Kingdom is being asked to contribute; and what system is proposed for development by which firms;

(4) what was the most recent Council of Ministers meeting at which high definition television and its development was discussed; and how the United Kingdom voted.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** At the Telecommunications Council on 16 June, unanimous agreement was reached on the framework of an action plan to help launch widescreen television services. The four-year plan will be for Community funds, together with funds from other sources, to be used to partially offset the additional costs to broadcasters and programme producers of broadcasting TV services (including high definition television services) in the widescreen format. The United Kingdom's contribution to the action plan subsidy will be calculated on a gross contribution of about 15 per cent. less abatement, which would depend on the level of United Kingdom receipts.

The settlement represents a considerable negotiating success for the United Kingdom:

The 850 MECU Community subsidy originally proposed by the European Commission has been reduced to 228 MECU (£160m). Additional funding from other sources, including industry, will introduce market discipline.

The original proposal was to support only the analogue MAC technology. Broadcasters and programme makers using other technologies, including PALPlus or fully-digital technologies will now qualify for assistance.

The UK also secured a valuable commitment that UK-based companies contributing to the action plan will be given due recognition of this in future European collaborative research and development and standardisation activities into digital TV. The European Commission are expected to come forward with proposals for such activities before the end of the year.

Consumer reaction to widescreen TV will determine how much United Kingdom broadcasters, programme makers and television set manufacturers benefit from the action plan. United-Kingdom-based television set manufacturers already enjoy 20 to 25 per cent. of Europe's manufacturing capacity and thus should be well placed to capitalise on the spread of widescreen. They should also benefit from the ability to participate in future EC research and development in new television technologies.

### Auditing

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what powers he has to ensure that partners from auditing firms criticised by the DTI inspectors are prevented from having a seat on the Financial Reporting review panel.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** Appointments to the financial reporting review panel are a matter for the financial reporting council.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many auditing partners have been barred from practising as a result of critical reports published by his Department since June 1979.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** None, so far as I am aware.

### Pennine Commercial Holdings

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when will he publish the Department of Trade and Industry inspectors' report relating to *(a)* Pennine Commercial Holdings plc and *(b)* British Anzam plc.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** Following the conclusion of criminal proceedings, the inspectors are reviewing their interim report on Pennine Commercial Holdings plc with a view to submitting a final report. When the Pennine report is submitted, I will consider publication of the report on that company and of the report on British Anzani plc. Both relate to events concerning the Savings and Investment Bank Ltd of the Isle of Man.

### Departmental Inspectors

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide a list of the names and business connections of the individuals who are currently acting as inspectors for his Department.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

D. Donaldson, QC
Ian Watt, FCA of The Bank of England
Miss E. Appleby, QC
Mr. P. Foss, FCA
Mr. L. Ziman, Solicitor, of Nabarro Nathanson
Mr. W. Hoffman, FCA of Baker Tilly, Chartered Accountants
Mr. P. Heslop, QC
Mr. R. Lewis, FCA of Kidsons Impey, Chartered Accountants
Mr. E. Hamilton, QC
Mr. J. Scott, FCA of BDO Binder Hamlyn, Chartered Accountants
Mr. W. M. Gage, QC
Mr. A. Gilroy, FCA of BDO Binder Hamlyn, Chartered

Accountants
Mr. A. Robertshaw of DTI
Mr. C. Mayhew of DTI
Mr. A. Fausset of DTI
Mr. R. Thomas, QC
Mr. R. Turner, FCA of Nevill Russell, Chartered Accountants

### Assisted Areas

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on progress in discussions with the European Commission and the Council of Ministers in respect of member states being able to designate areas within their borders as eligible for objective 2 and 5(b) assistance; and when he expects a decision to be reached.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* No agreement has yet been reached on the method of selection of objective 2 and 5(b) areas for the period 1994 onwards. This issue forms one element of the current negotiations on the review of the structural funds regulations. I do not expect the Council to be in a position to adopt the revised regulations before the end of July.

### Nuclear Non-proliferation

**Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will take steps to make available all information held by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. regarding its activities abroad, shipments of plutonium and spent nuclear fuel, in aid of the United States Governments's non-proliferation review;

(2) what assistance Her Majesty's Government will give to the United States Government's plutonium proliferation review with particular reference to the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* The review is a matter for the United States Government. It has not asked the United Kingdom Government for any assistance. The provision of any information held by BNFL regarding its commercial activities would be a matter for the company.

### Research

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for the future representation of the United Kingdom in ENERO, the EC's environmental research organisation.

**Mr. McLoughlin** *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* That is a matter for future consideration but I hope it will be the new national environmental technology centre.

### Offshore Oil

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those offshore blocks for which licences with obligation well requirements have been issued in the second stage of the 14th round.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* Details of work programmes attached to individual oil and gas production licences are commercially confidential to the licensee. In total, work programmes on the 73 awarded blocks which were offered under the second stage of the 14th round include 72 (40 firm and 32 contingent) well obligations. Work programmes on all 110 blocks awarded in the round include 93 well obligations.

### Warren Spring Laboratory

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much was raised by the Government by the sale of the Warren Spring Laboratory site; and what was the cost of the purchase of the new site in Welwyn Garden City and the construction of the new laboratory.

**Mr. McLoughlin** *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* A total of £25 million is being raised by the sale of the Stevenage site to Glaxo. The cost of purchasing the site at Welwyn Garden City, constructing a replacement laboratory and moving the staff and facilities was estimated at nearly £33 million.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of its full economic costs in trading terms the Warren Spring Laboratory recovered through the charges levied on customers in 1992-93; and what proportion of the net rate excess of income over expenditure set out in the DTI's supply estimate was met.

**Mr. McLoughlin** *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* On the basis of unaudited accounts the Laboratory recovered the whole of its full economic costs. The 1992-93 audited accounts are expected to be laid before the House before the summer recess.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the subsidiary targets for the Warren Spring Laboratory for the year 1992-93; and to what extent they were met.

**Mr. McLoughlin** *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorkshire (Mr. Hague) on 13 January 1993, *Official Report*, column *739*. On the basis of unaudited results, the laboratory looks to have met its 1992-93 targets.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what limitations there are on the freehold disposal of the site identified for the Warren Spring Laboratory in Welwyn Garden City.

**Mr. McLoughlin** *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* There are no limitations on the resale of the land at Welwyn Garden City, although I understand that any purchaser would have to enter into a deed of covenant with the management company.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what account he took of the possibility of conflict of interest in the report by PA consultants on the Warren Spring Laboratory; and what action was required of PA consultants to guard against conflicts of interest in preparing the report.

**Mr. McLoughlin** *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on 21 June, *Official Report*, column 20.

## SCOTLAND

### Salmon Advisory Committee

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of those individuals not re-appointed to the Salmon advisory committee in 1993 were *(a)* ineligible through age or *(b)* unwilling to serve a further term.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* I refer to the reply by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, on 14 June at column *396*.

### Local Government Finance

**Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the population, *(b)* the total capital budget for 1993-94 and *(c)* the total revenue budget for 1993-94, for (i) Annandale and Eskdale, (ii) North East Fife, (iii) Bearsden and Milngavie, (iv) Edinburgh City, (v) Banff and Buchan, (vi) Nithsdale district councils and (vii) Grampian region.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* The information requested is as follows:

| *Local authority* | *Population as at 30 June 1991* | *1993-94 (See note 1) Capital allocation £000* | *Total revenue budget £000* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Annandale and Eskdale | 37,140 | 2·516 | 5,269 |
| North East Fife | 69,930 | 2·384 | 12,584 |
| Bearsden and Milngavie | 41,040 | 1·275 | 6,484 |
| Edinburgh City | 438,780 | 35·532 | 117,528 |
| Banff and Buchan | 85,640 | 1·792 | 14,033 |
| Nithsdale | 57,140 | 4·244 | 8,915 |
| Grampian | 514,400 | 49·713 | 470,672 |

*Note:*

1. Information on local authorities' capital budgets is not held centrally. The Secretary of State does, however, give his consent annually to local authorities to incur liabilities to meet capital expenditure. This is given in the form of individual capital consent allocations as well as consent to meet capital expenses from capital receipts and revenue and private sector contributions. In addition local authorities eligible for assistance from the European regional development fund will receive in 1993-94 supplementary consent equal to the amount of grant they receive. The figures provided are therefore the total capital allocations including housing for 1993-94 and not the capital budgets.

### Loch Lomand

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are being taken to ensure co-ordination between inquiries by the Department of Transport marine safety directorate and by the Scottish Office into the fatal speed boat accident on Loch Lomond on the weekend of 5 to 6 June.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* The fatal accident which occurred on Loch Lomond is the subject of an investigation by Strathclyde police, who will make a report to the procurator fiscal in due course. The Marine Safety Directorate, which is also inquiring into the accident, is I understand, co-operating with the police.

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take in the wake of the fatal speed boat accident on Loch Lomond last weekend.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* The Secretary of State's working party, which has been examining management issues affecting Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, is expected to report next month. I understand that safety is one of the issues with which it will deal. We shall give careful consideration to all the recommendations which the working party will be making, including any relating to safety.

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to what extent implementation of byelaws on Loch Lomond will require amendment of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, in connection with the requirement of unanimity of riparian owners; and what legislative steps he intends to take in this respect.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* For the making of byelaws to regulate the use of inland waters, section 121 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 requires a district or islands council to obtain, subject to certain conditions, the consent of every person having a proprietorial interest in or in relation to the waters. If district or islands councils represent to us that, in general terms, they are placed in real difficulty in meeting the statutory requirements for the byelaws they wish to make, then we shall be prepared to review the existing legislation.

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date the working party on Loch Lomond and the Trossachs will report.

**Sir Hector Monro:** *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* I understand that the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs working party has completed its deliberations and intends to present its report to the Secretary of State during July.

### Forestry

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on progress made to date regarding his review of incentives for forestry investment.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 18 June 1993]:* As part of the review which my right hon. Friend announced on 30 March 1993 in a reply to the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) at column *150*, the Forestry Commission has issued a consultation paper seeking views on the effectiveness of the current incentives for forestry investment.

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to suspend the forestry

market-testing programme and any internal reorganisation of the Forestry Commission pending the outcome of his review on current incentives for forestry investment.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 18 June 1993]:* The Forestry Commission will continue to undertake its normal business, including market testing, while the Forestry Review Group is carrying out its work. The Commission carried out a major internal reorganisation in 1992 and any proposals for further significant changes will not be considered until the outcome of the review is known.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what projects have been undertaken by Central Scotland Woodland: A Countryside Trust Ltd since its inception; if he will give details of the funding of each project; what outside bodies have been involved in each project; what contribution they have made; and how many people were employed in each project per agency involved.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* Central Scotland Woodlands: A Countryside Trust Ltd. as a private sector company limited by guarantee, with charitable status, is responsible to its board of directors. The principal shareholders are Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Enterprise, Central, Lothian and Strathclyde regional councils and Cumbernauld and Kilsyth, Falkirk, Monklands, Motherwell, Strathkelvin and West Lothian district councils. I have asked Sir David Montgomery, its chairman, to write to the hon. Member with the information requested.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the acreage of Forestry Commission-owned forestry and the total number of Forestry Commission employees in each Scottish constituency; if he will list the projects which the Forestry Commission is carrying out with other agencies; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* The Forestry Commission does not keep records of the area of its landholdings or number of employees by constituency and this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The Forestry Commission carries out a large number of projects with other agencies and organisations throughout Great Britain, particularly in the areas of recreation, conservation and research. This information is not held centrally and could be prepared only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish details of any offers to purchase the assets of the Forestry Commission which have been received by the review body; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Hector Monro:** The Forestry Review Group, established on 30 March 1993 by my right hon. Friend and his forestry Minister colleagues, has not received any offers to purchase assets owned by the Forestry Commission.

## Appointments

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the procedure undertaken by his Department for the nomination and appointment of members of health boards and NHS trusts; and if he will list the individuals who are responsible for the appointments.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* My right hon. Friend is solely responsible for the appointment of non-executive members of health boards and NHS trusts. Nominations may be made by anyone but, in the case of health boards, are invited, in accordance with statute, from local authorities, bodies representative of the medical professions and certain other bodies. For the last round of appointments nominations were also invited through public advertisements.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of individuals appointed to health boards and national health service trusts; and if he will list by health board their current occupation and whether they reside within the health board area.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* The information on non-executive appointments is as follows. Those not resident within the health board area have business or other connections there.

| | *Occupation/profession* | *Resident in health board area* |
|---|---|---|
| *Argyll and Clyde health board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. R. Reid | Farmer | Yes |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Mr. M. Jones | Company director | Yes |
| Mrs. E. Lander | Company director | Yes |
| Mrs. J. Le Roux | Housewife | Yes |
| Dr. J. Moffat | Retired consultant psychiatrist | Yes |
| Mrs. S. Nelson | Primary school teacher | Yes |
| Mr. C. Parker | Company director | Yes |
| *Royal Alexandra Hospital National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. T. Gibson | Former hospice director | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Mrs. A. Burns | Housewife | Yes |
| Mr. A. Durward | Retired chief executive | Yes |
| Mrs. M. Ford | Housewife | Yes |
| Mr. A. Gaunt | Retired commandant, Erskine hospital | Yes |
| Mr. G. Murray | Retired locomotive driver | Yes |

| | Occupation/profession | Resident in health board area |
|---|---|---|
| *Ayrshire and Arran health board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. J. Donaldson | Electrical engineer | Yes |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Dr. K. Fegan | General medical practitioner | Yes |
| Mr. J. Greene | Solicitor | Yes |
| Miss M. Grosset | Company secretary | Yes |
| Miss K. Paterson | Retired nurse | Yes |
| Mrs. E. Reid | Health carer | Yes |
| Mr. W. Young | Company director | Yes |
| *Ayrshire and Arran Community Health Care National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mrs. A. Bates | Former nurse teacher | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Mr. I Allison | Chartered accountant | Yes |
| Mr. D. Gall | Retired policeman | Yes |
| Mr. R. Johnston | Solicitor | Yes |
| Dr. S. Kinnaird | Auditor | Yes |
| Mr. W. McConnell | Retail pharmacist | No |
| *North Ayrshire and Arran National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. W. Ritchie | Retired civil engineer | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Mrs. A. Dunbar | School attendance officer | Yes |
| Mrs. K. Donald | Company secretary | Yes |
| Mr. J. Grier | Retired banker | Yes |
| Mr. A. Stewart | Solicitor | Yes |
| Mr. K. Tulloch | Chartered accountant | Yes |
| *South Ayrshire Hospitals National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. J. Brown | Retired surgeon | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Mr. W. Mowatt | Chartered accountant | Yes |
| Mr. H. Currie | Business consultant | Yes |
| Mr. G. McKinstry | Solicitor | Yes |
| Mrs. A. Wilson | Housewife | Yes |
| Mrs. D. McLellan | Housewife | Yes |

| | Occupation/profession | Resident in health board area |
|---|---|---|
| *Borders health board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. D. Kilshaw | Solicitor | Yes |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Rev. A. Bennett | Minister | Yes |
| Miss M. Marshall | Chartered secretary | Yes |
| Mr. J. Metcalfe | Retired company chairman | Yes |
| Dr. A. Paton | Retired general practitioner | Yes |
| Lady Sanderson | Business consultant | Yes |
| Mr. H. Steven | NFU Secretary | Yes |
| *Dumfries and Galloway health board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. J. McIntyre | Farmer | Yes |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Mrs. V. Jardine-Paterson | Housewife | Yes |
| Mr. H. McFadzean | Farmer | Yes |
| Dr. J. Stubbs | Retired anaesthetist | Yes |
| Mrs. M. Thomson | Former member, South of Scotland Electricity Board | Yes |
| Mrs. J. Tulloch | Company director | Yes |
| Dr. A. Wilkinson | General practitioner | Yes |

| | Occupation/profession | Resident in health board area |
|---|---|---|
| *Fife health board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. R. Baker | Company director | Yes |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Mrs. S. Aitken | Housewife | Yes |
| Dr. A. Alexander | General practitioner | Yes |
| Mr. F. Craig | Company director | Yes |
| Mrs. M. Steedman | Retired headmistress | Yes |
| Mrs. C. Stenhouse | Housewife | Yes |
| Mr. G. Thomson | Chartered accountant | No |
| *Forth Valley health board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mrs. J. Isbister | Mental welfare commissioner | Yes |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Mr. E. Bell-Scott | Solicitor | Yes |
| Mr. K. Harding | Newsagent | Yes |
| Dr. G. Hastings | Unit director, Strathclyde university | Yes |
| Mr. P. Joynson | Chartered surveyor | Yes |
| Mrs. K. Smith | Emergency services organiser, WRVS | Yes |
| Mr. C. Stroyan | Solicitor | Yes |
| *Stirling Royal Infirmary National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. G. McKelvie | Retired surgeon | No |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Mrs. A. Bowie | Company director | Yes |
| Mr. G. Houston | Head of Industrial Society | Yes |
| Mrs. D. Littlejohn | President, Industrial tribunals | Yes |
| Mr. G. Simmers | Retired company chairman | Yes |
| Mrs. A. Walker | University research fellow | Yes |
| *Royal Scottish National Hospital and Community National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. A. Ward | Solicitor | No |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Mr. W. Hughes | Company chairman | Yes |
| Ms V. Smart | Chartered accountant | Yes |
| Professor A. Stewart | College professor | Yes |
| Mr. D. Tarr | Chief scientific engineer | Yes |
| Dr. P. Williams | Engineer | Yes |
| *Grampian Health Board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Dr. C. MacLeod | Company chairman | Yes |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Mr. J. Arbuthnott | Estate owner/manager | Yes |
| Mrs. C. Ferguson | Housewife/farmer | Yes |
| Mr. G. McLellan | Company director | Yes |
| Professor D. Ogston | University professor | Yes |
| Mrs. M. Park | Solicitor | Yes |
| Mrs. J. Wisely | Housewife | Yes |
| *Aberdeen Royal Hospitals National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. A. Broomfield | Managing director | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Professor G. Catto | University professor | Yes |
| Professor M. Meston | University professor | Yes |
| Mr. H. Tocher | Retired banker | Yes |
| Dr. F. Lyle | Retired general practitioner | Yes |
| Mrs. A. Scott | Tax partner | Yes |

| | Occupation/profession | Resident in health board area |
|---|---|---|
| *Grampian Health Care National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Dr. A. J. Taylor | Retired general practitioner | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Mr. M. Humphrey | Farmer | Yes |
| Mr. T. Murison | Managing director | Yes |
| Mr. G. Robb | Company director | Yes |
| Mrs. J. Catto | Solicitor | Yes |
| Mr. H. Fullerton | Chief executive, Grampian Enterprise | Yes |
| *Moray Health Services National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. J. Snedden | Retired banker | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Mrs. M. Adams | Teacher | Yes |
| Mr. R. Anderson | Farmer | Yes |
| Mrs. L. King | Retired teacher | Yes |
| Mr. W. Phillips | Chartered accountant | Yes |
| Mr. J. Royan | Master butcher | Yes |
| *Greater Glasgow Health Board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. W. Fyfe | Company chairman | No |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Rev. R. Campbell | Minister | Yes |
| Mr. P. Holst | Company director | Yes |
| Professor R. Mackie | University professor | Yes |
| Mr. W. McCreath | Solicitor | No |
| Mrs. J. Mackenzie | Housewife | Yes |
| Mr. P. Runciman | Retired company chairman | No |
| Mr. A. Scobbie | Managing director | Yes |
| *Southern General Hospital National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. Al | | |
| Mr. A. Garland | Partner, Construction company | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Mr. R. McEwan | Retired director, Scottish Development Agency | Yes |
| Mrs. A. Moore | Solicitor | Yes |
| Mrs. A. Stewart | Tax adviser | Yes |
| Mr. H. Tankel | Retired surgeon | Yes |
| Mrs. S. Bell | Company director | No |
| *Victoria Infirmary National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Dr. J. Dall | Retired physician | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Dr. R. Colville | Retired general practitioner | Yes |
| Mrs. D. Glasser | Solicitor | Yes |
| Mrs. L. Howieson | Pharmacist | Yes |
| Mrs. A. Gilchrist | Company director | Yes |
| Mr. D. O'Brien | Chartered accountant | Yes |
| *Yorkhill National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mrs. J. Cameron | Housewife | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Dr. J. Davidson | Retired consultant radiologist | Yes |
| Mrs. M. Hall | Solicitor | Yes |
| Mr. R. Cleland | Partner, Recruitment consultancy | Yes |
| Mrs. G. Garner | Field worker, Action for Sick Children | Yes |
| Mrs. S. Kuenssberg | Children's panel training organiser | Yes |
| *Highland Health Board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. J. Robertson | Company chairman | Yes |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Mr. J. Ligertwood | Retired bank manager | Yes |
| Dr. D. MacDonald | Retired general practitioner | Yes |
| Mr. D. Mackay | Retired company executive | Yes |

| | Occupation/profession | Resident in health board area |
|---|---|---|
| Mrs. A. MacPherson | Farm business partner | Yes |
| Mr. C. Neilson | Retail businessman | Yes |
| Mrs. C. Thomson | Company director | Yes |
| *Caithness and Sutherland National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. G. Bruce | Former company manager | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Mr. J. Gunn | Chartered accountant | Yes |
| Rev. A. Murray | Minister | Yes |
| Dr. E. MacKenzie | Retired general practitioner | Yes |
| Mr. J. Rosie | Technical assistant | Yes |
| Ms W. Taylor | Retired nurse | Yes |

| | Occupation/profession | Resident in health board area |
|---|---|---|
| *Raigmore Hospital National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. J. Kyle | Retired surgeon | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Mr. J. Gray | Retired health board treasurer | Yes |
| Mrs. F. Hunt | Solicitor | Yes |
| Mr. A. Morrison | Master baker | Yes |
| Professor G. McNicol | Retired university vice-chancellor | Yes |
| Mrs. J. Robertson | Housewife | Yes |
| *Lanarkshire Health Board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. I. Livingstone | Solicitor | Yes |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Dr. W. Criggie | General practitioner | Yes |
| Mrs. A. Hinshalwood | Housewife | Yes |
| Mrs. M. Melvin | Teacher | Yes |
| Mr. D. Millar | Business consultant | Yes |
| Mr. J. Robison | Retired colliery official | Yes |
| Mr. J. Thomson | Director, voluntary organisation | Yes |
| *Monklands and Bellshill National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Dr. G. Bell | Retired general practitioner | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Mrs. A. Irvine | Sales consultant | Yes |
| Mr. D. MacDonald | Executive director | Yes |
| Dr. M. Moore | University reader | Yes |
| Mrs. A. Morrison | Veterinary surgeon | |
| Mr. W. Huggins | Retired finance director | |
| *Lothian health board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Dr. J. Baynham | Company director | Yes |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Professor R. Aitken | University professor | Yes |
| Mrs. G. Barton | Housewife | Yes |
| Mr. J. Campbell | Chartered surveyor | Yes |
| Mr. R. Findlay | Chief executive, Radio Forth | Yes |
| Mrs. M. Knox | Housewife | Yes |
| Mr. G. Millar | Community pharmacist | Yes |
| *West Lothian National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. R. Watt | Company chairman | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Mr. T. Bennie | Retired banker | Yes |
| Mr. J. Cunningham | Retired trade union secretary | Yes |
| Mrs. I. Douglas | Company accountant | Yes |
| Mr. P. Johnston | School teacher | Yes |
| Mrs. C. Stevenson | Housewife | Yes |

| | Occupation/profession | Resident in health board area |
|---|---|---|
| *Orkney health board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. J. Leslie | Pharmacist | Yes |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Mr. J. Flett | Solicitor | Yes |
| Mr. E. Gibson | Retired assistant headteacher | Yes |
| Captain M. Gunn | Ships master | Yes |
| Mrs. E. Kerr | Housewife | Yes |
| Mr. J. Rendall | Sub-postmaster/postman | Yes |
| Dr. J. Walker | General practitioner | Yes |
| *Shetland health board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mrs. F. Grains | Housewife | Yes |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Mrs. M. Colligan | Retired teacher | Yes |
| Sq. Leader B. Gregson | Local government officer | Yes |
| Dr. M. Hunter | General practitioner | Yes |
| Mr. R. Johnson | Retired businessman | Yes |
| Mrs. T. Leslie | Teaching auxiliary | Yes |
| Mr. J. Telford | Chartered accountant | Yes |
| *Tayside health board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. J. MacFarlane | Retired company director | Yes |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Rev. K. Campbell | Minister | Yes |
| Mr. D. Davidson | Pharmacist | Yes |
| Mrs. V. Joiner | Company director | |
| Mr. H. Nicoll | Retired local government officer | Yes |
| Professor R. Olver | University professor | No |
| Mr. I. Sandison | Retired company director | Yes |
| *Dundee Teaching Hospitals National Health Service Trust* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. J. S. Fair | Solicitor | Yes |
| *Non-executive directors* | | |
| Mrs. M. Cane | Retired university lecturer | Yes |
| Mr. G. Lowden | Chartered accountant | Yes |
| Mr. R. Lyon | University senior lecturer | Yes |
| Mrs. J. Wood | Housewife | Yes |
| Professor H. Dick | University professor | Yes |
| *Western Isles health board* | | |
| *Chairman* | | |
| Mr. A. Matheson | Pharmacist | Yes |
| *Non-executive members* | | |
| Dr. S. Brydon | General practitioner | Yes |
| Mr. J. Harrison | Depute head teacher | Yes |
| Mr. A. Hay | Retired sales director | Yes |
| Mrs. C. MacAskill | Housewife | Yes |
| Mrs. F. MacDonald | Solicitor | Yes |
| Mr. M. MacLennan | Building society manager | Yes |

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the members of each NHS trust and health board who are councillors; and which party they represent in each case.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* The information is as follows:

| | Party |
|---|---|
| *Argyll and Clyde Health Board* | |
| Mr. R. R. Reid | Conservative |
| *Forth Valley Health Board* | |
| Mr. K. Harding | Conservative |
| *Grampian Health Board* | |
| Mrs. J. G. A. Wisely | Conservative |
| *Lanarkshire Health Board* | |
| Mr. J. P. Robison | Labour |
| *Lothian Health Board* | |
| Mrs. M. B. M. Knox | Conservative |
| *Shetland Health Board* | |
| Mrs. F. B. Grains | Independent |
| Mrs. M. U. Colligan | Independent |
| Mr. R. L. Johnson | Independent |
| *Western Isles Health Board* | |
| Mr. A. Matheson | Independent |
| *Grampian Health Care NHS Trust* | |
| Mr. J. M. Humphrey | Conservative |

| | Party |
|---|---|
| *Caithness and Sutherland NHS Trust* | |
| Rev. A. Murray | Independent |
| Mr. J. Rosie | Independent |
| *West Lothian NHS Trust* | |
| Mr. P. Johnston | SNP |
| *Yorkhill NHS Trust* | |
| Mrs. J. E. Cameron | Conservative |

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by health board and NHS trust the number of nominations for NHS trusts and health boards which have been made by regional councils; and if he will list by health board/NHS trust the number of nominations from regional councils which have been accepted.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* The information in respect of non-executive appointments made with effect from 1 April 1993 is detailed in the table. The nominations were made for both health boards and NHS trusts.

*Number of regional council nominations for health board/NHS trust appointments*

| | Number |
|---|---|
| Argyll and Clyde Health Board<br>Royal Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust | 3 |
| Ayrshire and Arran Health Board<br>Ayrshire & Arran Community Health Care NHS Trust<br>North Ayrshire & Arran NHS Trust | 3 |
| Borders Health Board | 3 |
| Dumfries & Galloway Health Board | 6 |
| Fife Health Board | 2 |
| Forth Valley Health Board<br>Royal Scottish National Hospital NHS Trust<br>Stirling Royal Infirmary NHS Trust | 1 |
| Grampian Health Board<br>Grampian Health Care NHS Trust<br>Moray Health Services NHS Trust | 7 |
| Greater Glasgow Health Board<br>Southern General Hospital NHS Trust<br>Victoria Infirmary NHS Trust<br>Yorkhill NHS Trust | 5 |
| Highland Health Board<br>Caithness and Sutherland NHS Trust<br>Raigmore NHS Trust | 6 |
| Lothian Health Board<br>West Lothian NHS Trust | 9 |
| Lanarkshire Health Board<br>Monklands and Bellshill NHS Trust | 3 |
| Orkney Health Board | 2 |
| Shetland Health Board | 0 |
| Tayside Health Board<br>Dundee Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust | 1 |
| Western Isles Health Board | 0 |

One of the nominees was appointed to the Caithness and Sutherland NHS Trust.

### Sheep Quotas

**Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has within the EC to seek a reform in the current system of quota allocations for sheep farmers, with particular reference to allowing the transfer of a quota allocation when the farm ownership changes.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* The introduction of quotas to the sheep annual premium scheme was part of the overall agreement on CAP reform reached in 1992. It is too early to consider major changes to that agreement.

The EC regulations already contain provisions for producers who took over a farm after the reference year to apply to the national reserve for an allocation.

### Babies (Eye Defects)

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year from 1976 to the latest available date, the number of babies born in Scotland with *(a)* no eyes, *(b)* small eyes, *(c)* damaged optic nerves and *(d)* all recorded eye defects; and if he will estimate the comprehensiveness of the recorded information.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* The table shows the number of babies born annually in Scotland with recorded eye defects from 1980 to 1992 with an indication of the comprehensiveness of the data recorded. Information is not available for the period before 1980 and no separate record is kept of figures for damaged optic nerves.

| Year | [1] Anophthalmia | [2] Microphthalmia | [3] Other eye defect | All recorded eye defects | [5] Neonatal hospital discharge record percentage of coverage of live births |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1980 | 0 | 3 | 13 | 16 | 75·5 |
| 1981 | 0 | 7 | 12 | 19 | 78·5 |
| 1982 | 0 | 2 | 13 | 15 | 83·7 |
| 1983 | 0 | 2 | 19 | 21 | 85·7 |
| 1984 | 0 | 6 | 17 | 23 | 85·3 |
| 1985 | 3 | 7 | 20 | 27 | 85·0 |
| 1986 | 0 | 2 | 13 | 15 | 87·2 |
| 1987 | 0 | 3 | 18 | 21 | 87·8 |
| 1988 | 0 | 1 | 17 | 18 | 91·5 |
| 1989 | 2 | 1 | 22 | 25 | 95·7 |
| 1990 | 3 | 3 | 26 | 32 | 95·0 |
| 1991 | 0 | 8 | 40 | 48 | 98·4 |
| [4]1992 | 1 | 4 | 30 | 35 | 96·7 |

[1]One or both eyes absent.
[2]One or both small eyes.

[3]All other mention of eye defects.
[4]Provisional.
[5]Increased coverage reflects improved record keeping.

### Research and Development

**Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to improve the take up of grants and other incentives for research and development by small and medium enterprises.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* All industrial research and development support schemes administered by my Department are dealt with by one unit, making it easy for companies of all sizes to deal with appropriate officials who are aware of the full range of support and will signpost companies to the most appropriate form of assistance.

My Department carries out a wide range of promotional activities, often working closely with local enterprise companies and other business intermediaries such as management consultants, accountants, and small business advisers in banks to encourage small and medium sized companies in Scotland to take up the support available for research and development both from the United Kingdom Government and the European Commission.

Through the media of seminars, workshops and advice days, information and services are provided which identify opportunities to participate in United Kingdom and EC research and development programmes. Details on calls for proposals and deadlines are disseminated throughout Scotland by the publication of Industry Department's Technology Bulletin. Advice, guidance and assistance is also given to companies regarding the completion and submission of applications.

In addition my officials work closely with the Scotland and Northern England relay centre which specialises in promoting EC research and development initiatives. The relay centre plays a central role in ensuring that the results emanating from the EC's framework research and development programme are used effectively, particularly by small and medium enterprises.

### Innovation Support

**Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to improve the ease of access to innovation support programmes by small and medium sized enterprises.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* The publicity activities of my Department supplement the efforts of the Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise networks to encourage small and medium sized enterprises to apply new technology and to take advantage of support for innovation.

To improve further the supply of information for industry, Scottish Enterprise, in partnership with other bodies, is currently establishing a network of local business shops throughout Scotland.

In addition, the Government are reviewing the scope for transferring from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Scottish Office responsibility for a range of schemes in Scotland for encouraging industrial innovation and technology transfer. The object of the review will be to bring about transfer of responsibility wherever practicable, again with the aim of improving responsiveness to local needs.

### Housing (Elderly People)

**Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to increase housing facilities for the elderly to enable the implementation of community care programmes; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* Housing for the elderly is provided by public sector landlords, housing associations and the private sector. Guidelines on housing for the elderly were published in 1991 and Scottish Homes published its discussion paper on housing for the elderly in May.

Very substantial resources totalling some £900 million have been made available to local authorities, Scottish Homes and new town development corporations for capital investment in housing in 1993-94, including projects relating to the elderly.

### NHS Trusts

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the cost of preparing and publishing the applications for trust status in Lothian health board hospitals.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* As in previous years separate funds had been set aside to assist hospitals who wish to consider and prepare applications for NHS trust status. The costs of preparing and publishing applications by Lothian hospitals are not yet available but as part of the public consultation process the Government attach great importance to copies of all applications being widely available to assist members of the public in their consideration of the proposals.

### Education Authorities

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the education authorities in Scotland with the total number of pupils for which each education authority is responsible.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The total number of pupils at September 1992 in education authority nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, or for whom special arrangements are made under section 14 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, is shown for each education authority in Scotland.

| *Education Authority* | *Number of pupils* |
|---|---|
| Scotland | 797,978 |
| Borders | 15,204 |
| Central | 43,682 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 23,425 |
| Fife | 58,022 |
| Grampian | 80,943 |
| Highland | 35,173 |
| Lothian | 103,688 |
| Strathclyde | 366,076 |
| Tayside | 59,168 |
| Orkney | 3,463 |

| Education Authority | Number of pupils |
|---|---|
| Shetland | 4,228 |
| Western Isles | 4,906 |
| *Strathclyde Divisions:* | |
| Argyll and Bute | 9,546 |
| Ayr | 61,108 |
| Dunbarton | 54,541 |
| Glasgow | 99,535 |
| Lanark | 83,256 |
| Renfrew | 58,090 |

## Ferries

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what restrictions exist on the transfer of ferries constructed with the aid of European funds to private ownership.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** None.

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the contributions made from EC funds to the construction of Caledonian MacBrayne ferries, in each of the past 10 years.

**Mr. Stewart:** The information is not readily available in the format requested. The total contribution made from EC funds to the construction of Caledonian MacBrayne ferries during the past 10 years is given in the following table:

| Vessels | Year of award | £ EC allocation | £ Total EC grant paid |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hebridean Isles | 1984 | 2,750,000 | 2,200,000 |
| Loch Striven | 1985 | 425,000 | 424,610 |
| Loch Linnhe | 1985 | 425,000 | 424,703 |
| Loch Riddon | 1987 | 425,000 | 425,000 |
| Loch Ranza | 1986 | 425,000 | 425,000 |
| Isle of Mull | 1987 | 3,216,000 | 3,216,000 |
| Lord of the Isles | 1989 | 2,545,600 | 2,545,600 |

## EC Council of Ministers

**Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, together with the respective dates, those meetings of the EC Council of Ministers which were attended by Ministers in his Department in the latest 12 months.

**Mr. Stewart:** My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Scotland attended a special joint meeting of Environment and Transport Ministers on 25 January 1993.

My hon. Friend, the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, led for the United Kingdom at the Fisheries Councils on 19 October 1992 and 23 November 1992 and shared the lead for the United Kingdom at the Fisheries Council on 19 December 1992. He also attended the Agriculture Council on 26 October 1992 and the Fisheries Council on 18 March 1993.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Education for Scotland attended the Education Council on 27 November 1992.

On the occasions where Scottish Office Ministers do not personally attend they are represented at all EC Council meetings by senior officials or by their colleagues in the United Kingdom Government.

## Forestry Commission

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the locations of Forestry Commission land *(a)* currently being developed for leisure activities and *(b)* those areas developed for leisure activities in each of the last five years.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* The Forestry Commission is preparing a list of its recreation facilities and I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a copy as soon as possible and for further copies to be placed in the Library.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of Forestry Commission interpretation centres and their location.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* The Forestry Commission has 29 interpretation centres, which are at the listed locations.

*England*
Alice Holt Forest, Hampshire
Bedgebury Pinetum, Sussex
Border Forest Park, Northumberland
Cannock Forest, Staffordshire
Delamere Forest, Cheshire
Grizedale Forest Park, Cumbria
Hamsterley Forest, Durham
Neroche Forest (Offwell Centre), Devon
North Riding Forest Park, North Yorkshire
Thetford Forest Park, Suffolk
Westonbirt Arboretum, Gloucestershire
Whinlatter Forest Park, Cumbria
Wyre Forest, Hereford and Worcester

*Scotland*
Bennachie Forest, Grampian
Farigaig Forest, Highland
Galloway Forest Park (Clatteringshaws), Dumfries and Galloway
Galloway Forest Park (Kirroughtree), Dumfries and Galloway
Galloway Forest Park (Murray Centre), Dumfries and Galloway
Galloway Forest Park (Stroan Bridge), Dumfries and Galloway
Glenmore Forest Park, Highland
Inverliever Forest, Strathclyde
Portree Wood, Highland
Queen Elizabeth Forest Park (David Marshall Lodge), Central
Tay Forest Park, Tayside

*Wales*
Betws y Coed, Gwynedd
Clocaenog Forest, Ruthin, Clwyd
Coed Taf, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan
Coed y Brenin Forest Park, Dolgellau, Gwynedd
Nant Yr Arian, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements have been made for the involvement of the Ministry of Defence in discussions on the future of the Forestry Commission.

**Sir Hector Monro:** Ministerial colleagues in the Ministry of Defence are being kept informed of issues affecting their interests which arise from the work of the Forestry review group, announced by my right hon. Friend on 30 March 1993.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Disability Benefits

**Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of *(a)* the extra expenditure and *(b)* savings for each year up to 2000 as a result of each of the main measures on disability benefits which he announced on 10 January 1990; and if he will make further projections for (i) extra costs and (ii) savings for each of these measures between the years 2000 and 2025 where these can be estimated in broad orders of magnitude.

**Mr. Scott:** Information on the projected costs/savings of each of the main measures was announced by the former Secretary of State on 10 January 1990 at column *482*. The table estimates in broad orders of magnitude these costs/savings for 1993-94 to 1995-96 and the likely effect for 2000-01 at the latest price base. It is not possible to provide estimates in the longer term since the costs and savings depend on a large number of factors which cannot be accurately forecast.

| *Measure* | *1993-94 Cost/saving £ million* | *1994-95 Cost/saving £ million* | *1995-96 Cost/saving £ million* | *2000-01 Cost/saving £ million* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Introduction of disability living allowance | +230 | +290 | +340 | +490 |
| Introduction of disability working allowance | +20 | +50 | +50 | +100 |
| Abolition of the accrual of new rights to the earnings-related additions to invalidity pension | −30 | −70 | −120 | −550 |
| Age related addition on severe disablement allowance | +50 | +60 | +60 | +70 |
| Abolition of reduced earnings allowance in the industrial injuries scheme | −80 | n/a | n/a | −160 |

+ = cost; − = saving.

*Sources:*

1. Government Actuary and Department of Social Security (for disability working allowance).
2. Estimates for abolition of reduced earnings allowance in the industrial injuries scheme taken from *Official Report* of 19 January 1990 and converted to 1992-93 prices.

*Notes:*

1. Figures are at 1992-93 prices.
2. Estimates take account of changes to income related benefit entitlement, except for disability working allowance which are gross costs.
3. Figures are rounded to the nearest £10 million, but are not accurate to that degree. Estimates for 2000-01 are subject to a considerable degree of uncertainty.

### Housing Benefit

**Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to ensure that local authorities are meeting the requirement to process housing benefit claims within 14 days.

**Mr. Burt:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 19 January, at column *211*. Full statutory responsibility for the administration of the housing benefit scheme rests with local authorities. They are required to ensure that the system is working effectively and in accordance with the rules of the benefit scheme. Regulations prescribe that claims should be processed within 14 days of receipt of all the necessary information, or as soon as possible thereafter. Where through no fault of the applicant, a claim to rent allowance cannot be settled within 14 days, interim payments should be made.

We recognise the continuing concerns about some authorities' performance in this area, and the Department plans shortly to issue strengthened guidance reminding all authorities of their legal duties to make interim payments.

My reply to my hon. Friend on 2 March 1993 at column *112* referred to the housing benefit performance measures, prepared by the Audit Commission, under the citizens charter initiative within local government. Publication of the results, both locally and nationally, will ensure that authorities monitor more closely how they meet the 14-day requirements.

**Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what evidence he has on the extent to which local authorities are meeting the 14-day target for housing benefit claims; if he will list those authorities which did not meet the target for the two most recent years where figures are available; and how many days it took those authorities to process such claims.

**Mr. Burt** *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* The available information has been placed in the Library. Information on the actual number of days that authorities take to process benefit claims is not available.

Figures reported by many authorities indicate how well they administer housing benefit. Regulations provide that authorities should process claims within 14 days of all the necessary information becoming available. In 1991-92, overall figures, based on the 345 authorities supplying data, indicated that around 70 per cent. of authorities achieve, or exceed, the national average of 75 per cent. for the processing of housing benefit claims within 14 days of

all relevant information becoming available. Some 40 per cent. of responding authorities process 90 per cent. or more of claims within 14 days.

*Source:* Housing Benefit Management Information System Statistical Return (1991-92).

### Disability Allowances

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have applied for disabled living allowance or the equivalent benefit, in each of the last three years; and what percentage of men and women have been granted it (i) for life and (ii) for specified periods of time.

**Mr. Scott:** I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Invalidity Benefit

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the relevant extracts from leaflets available to the general public in which advance notice has been given of the Government's intention to make invalidity benefit subject to income tax.

**Mr. Scott:** Reference to the intention to extend taxation to invalidity benefit has been included in the Department's leaflet about the benefit (NI 16A) since April 1983. The current wording is as follows:

"Invalidity Benefit is not taxable, even when you continue to get it after 65 (men) or 60 (women). It is planned to tax it some time in the future, but a date hasn't yet been set".

### Social Fund

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action has been undertaken by his Department as a result of the recommendations on the reform of the social fund by the Social Security Advisory Committee.

**Mr. Scott:** We have taken account of these recommendations in making recent operational improvements to the social fund. In particular; this year's increase in the budget to £346 million (52 per cent. higher than in April 1991); the introduction of the social fund computer system which will improve the consistency, speed and quality of decision making; revised training; and improved forms and letters.

We will continue to take account of the findings of this and other reports, as well as our own close monitoring, as we consider any further improvements to the operation of the fund.

### Quarry House

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the budget for decoration and art work for Quarry house in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

**Mr. Hague:** It is not possible to put a precise figure on the budget for decoration and artwork for Quarry house in 1991-92 and 1992-93 because the majority of work was covered by the main building contract.

### Terminal Illness

**Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what benefits are currently available to terminally ill people in hospices or nursing homes;

(2) what was the value of each benefit available to terminally ill people in hospices or nursing homes in each of the last 10 years; and how many people claimed each of those benefits in each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Burt:** A wide range of benefits is available to terminally ill people in hospices or nursing homes, provided they meet the conditions of entitlement. Special higher levels of income support are available to people who were in residential care and nursing homes, including hospices which make a charge, at 31 March 1993. The maximum level which applies for such people who are terminally ill in nursing homes is currently £280 a week (£315 in London) plus personal expenses of £12·65. For details of this I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 18 January at columns *106-107*. The income support entitlement of people entering homes since 1 April 1993 includes a residential allowance of £45 (£50 in London).

Information about the value and the numbers of recipients of each benefit is not available in the form requested.

Full information about eligibility to benefits is made widely available by the Benefits Agency in a variety of forms including leaflets and various confidential free telephone advice lines.

### Maternity Pay

**Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when his Department will announce the proposed changes to statutory maternity pay required by the EC directive on the protection of pregnant women at work.

**Mr. Scott:** We are considering the directive's implications for statutory maternity pay and maternity allowance and will make an announcement when this work has been completed.

### Resettlement Unit Advisory Steering Group

**Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the resettlement unit advisory steering group last met; and when the group is next expected to meet.

**Mr. Hague:** The management of the Resettlement Agency is a matter for Mr. Tony Ward, the chief executive. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Mr. T. Ward to Mr. Nick Raynsford, dated 21 June 1993:*

As the Resettlement Agency is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him, about the Resettlement Unit Advisory Steering Group, when it last met, and when the group is next expected to meet. This is something which falls within the responsibilities he has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The Resettlement Unit Advisory Steering Group last met on 4 April 1990. Since then, much headway has been made by the Agency, in taking forward Government policy to

disengage from the direct revision of facilities for single homeless people with an unsettled way of life. Ten units which provided 667 beds have been either replaced or sold by way of grant aid to voluntary organisations, and 852 new beds have been created to replace them. In this way, the Agency has made rapid advances and has not had cause to seek the advice of the Advisory Steering Group since 1990. In view of the progress that has been made, it is, in my opinion, most unlikely that I will need to seek its help in future.

I enclose a copy of my latest annual report from which you will see details of the Agency's performance.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Wednesday 23 June 1993*

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### New Age Travellers

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the preparations he has taken to ensure full and effective co-ordination by police forces in the west of England to deal with possible breaches of the law, trespass and blocking of the highway by new age travellers in the summer months.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** These are operational matters for the police. The Association of Chief Police Officers has set up a national intelligence-gathering network on the activities of travellers with co-ordinating centres in the Wiltshire constabulary and Cumbria constabulary. Forces have also reviewed their contingency plans for dealing with the problems caused by new age travellers. These have proved effective so far this year.

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he is taking to ensure, in conjunction with the police, that convoys of new age travellers do not block the public highway.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Enforcement of road traffic and highways legislation is an operational matter for the police.

### Racist Crimes

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the incidence of crimes in each of the last five years in which there has been a racist element.

**Mr. Maclean:** The only information currently available relates to the number of reported racial incidences and I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) on 26 April, at column *266*.

### Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Scheme

**Dame Angela Rumbold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent the resources of the Metropolitan police cab enforcement section have been increased; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The section has been maintained at the same staffing level for the past five years. The Commissioner has no plans to make any increases.

### Police (Stress-related Illness)

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* custody officers, *(b)* custody sergeants and *(c)* rota sergeants have taken five or more days off work through stress-related illnesses in each police force area in England and Wales in each year since 1990.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The information requested is not held centrally and could be collected from individual forces only at disproportionate cost.

### Prisoners (Police Cells)

**Ms Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* remand and *(b)* convicted prisoners were held in police cells in each prison service region for each month in 1993.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated June 1993:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners held in police cells in each Prison Service region for each month in 1993.

The following table shows the total number of prisoners held in police cells on each Friday this year up to 12 February, which is the last day prisoners were held in police cells. It is not possible to separate remand and convicted prisoners although most would have been on remand. All the prisoners concerned should have been in establishments in the Prison Service's Directorate of Inmate Programmes which covers establishments in the north of England.

| *Date* | *Number of prisoners in police cells* |
|---|---|
| 8 January | 279 |
| 15 January | 252 |
| 22 January | 236 |
| 29 January | 166 |
| 5 February | 119 |
| 12 February | 20 |

### Voting, Christchurch

**Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the numbers of people at the last election who used *(a)* proxy, *(b)* absent and *(c)* postal votes in the parliamentary constituency of Christchurch.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** There were 1,356 electors on the postal voters list in the Christchurch constituency at the last general election, and 1,220 postal ballot paper covering envelopes were returned. Information about the number of electors voting by proxy is not collected centrally.

### Side-handled Baton

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will agree to a pilot project on the use of the expandable side-handled baton taking place in specific areas within three police forces in England and Wales.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 21 June, at column *2*.

## TRANSPORT

### Auto Care Europe

**Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much British Rail is investing in the new joint venture company Auto Care Europe.

**Mr. Freeman:** I have authorised BR to invest up to a maximum of £1·33 million.

### Minibuses

**Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what plans he has to introduce legislation which would require all passengers in minibuses to wear safety belts; (2) what measures are being taken to improve the design of minibuses in the interest of greater passenger safety.

**Mr. Key:** We are making a continuing effort to improve the safety of all road vehicles including minibuses. Seat belts are already required to be fitted to the front seats of all new minibuses. We have sought agreement within the European Community for the mandatory extension of this requirement to all seats in minibuses.

Where seat belts are fitted, they must be worn by passengers travelling in the front seat of any minibus and by a passenger travelling in a rear seat of a smaller minibus with an unladen weight not exceeding 2,540 kg.

### Motor Insurance

**Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has consulted the motor insurance industry on the feasibility of requiring evidence of insurance to be displayed on a vehicle's windscreen.

**Mr. Key:** Following wide-ranging discussions with representatives of the insurance industry, the police and the Home Office, we have decided not to require evidence of insurance to be displayed on a vehicle windscreen. Under our present driver-related insurance system, the enforcement benefit would be little more than is already provided by the check on insurance which is made when renewing vehicle excise duty. The display of an insurance disc would provide no assurance that the driver was covered by an insurance policy or complying with policy conditions, nor would it protect against the insurance being cancelled once the disc has been issued.

The enforcement potential of a windscreen display would be greater under a vehicle-related insurance regime, where cover is taken out for a particular vehicle regardless of who drives it. However, this would require all vehicles to be insured for any driver and so remove an insurer's ability to take account of the risks associated with different drivers. Because every insured vehicle could be driven by a high-risk driver, the contribution that the present insurance system makes to road safety would be undermined. It could lead to a substantial increase in motor premiums, especially for safer drivers who would, for example, find themselves contributing to the cost of insuring all cars to be driven by novice drivers or by drivers with a poor accident record. Premium increases could in turn encourage further evasion and render the measure self-defeating.

I deplore the irresponsible behaviour of the minority of drivers who fail to take out insurance. But I am sceptical about imposing further regulations on all drivers, particularly when we cannot be confident that insurance evasion would be significantly reduced. The police already have wide powers to inspect insurance certificates, and there are over 200,000 convictions for uninsured driving every year. The maximum for this offence was increased to £5,000 in October 1992. We have decided as a result of our discusions that the format of insurance certificates should be reviewed and simplified where possible to assist the police in checking them. This will speed up this important aspect of enforcement. A further check on insurance certificates is made with applications for vehicle excise duty.

The decision not require the display of windscreen insurance discs has no effect on the compensation received by those involved in road accidents. Victims of uninsured drivers will continue to be compensated by the Motor Insurers Bureau under a long-standing agreement between the bureau and the Secretary of State for Transport.

### Transport and Works Act Orders

**Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further consideration he has given to the means of notifying to hon. Members his receipt of application for orders under part I of the Transport and Works Act 1992.

**Mr. Freeman:** Yes. My Department has arranged with the House of Commons Library that applicants will supply a full set of their application documents for the information of hon. Members. The House of Commons Public Information Office will note in the "Weekly Information Bulletin" the receipt of such documents, together with a contact point from which further information may be obtained.

### East London River Crossing

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the actual or estimated cost of the Ironbridge to Canning Town improvement schemes on or adjacent to the A13 trunk road in the boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham in respect of *(a)* East India Dock road, interim junction scheme as now completed, *(b)* the East India Dock tunnel link, *(c)* the completed Abbott road, Leamouth road and A13 Ironbridge widening scheme, *(d)* the widening of the Canning Town flyover from four to six lanes and associated road works and *(e)* works associated with the re-aligned east-bound slip road to the A13; and what plans he has for improvements for pedestrian crossing of the A13, Newham way, between these works and the proposed Freemasons road underpass.

**Mr. Norris:** The actual or estimated construction costs for the roads schemes listed by the hon. Member are as follows:

| *Schemes* | *£ million (including VAT)* |
|---|---|
| *(a)* and *(c)* East India Dock Road/Leamouth Road | 2·60 |
| *(b)* East India Dock Road Link | 36·00 |
| *(d)* and *(e)* A13 Ironbridge/A13 Canning Town Flyover (including NE Slip Road, Canning Town) | 50·06 |

Schemes *(a)* and *(c)* relate to the completed works for improvement to the East India Dock road junction and widening of the A13 at Leamouth, including the Abbott road junction. The proposed widening of the Ironbridge is now an integral part of scheme *(d)*, as is scheme *(e)*.

Scheme *(b)* is the responsibility of the London Docklands development corporation.

Subways at Beckton road and Douglas road have been refurbished in recent years. The Department is discussing with LB Newham the possibility of improving the condition of the Rathbone subway.

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the expected outturn cost, or estimated cost of *(a)* of the Lower Lea crossing, *(b)* repairs and renewal to the Silvertown flyover, *(c)* the north Woolwich road widening and improvements, *(d)* the new Connaught crossing, *(e)* the Albert Dock spine road and associated intersections and *(f)* the Eastern G gateway link road in the London borough of Newham at 1993 or other specified year prices; and what is the estimated cost of the east London river crossing and its approaches on both sides of the Thames.

**Mr. Norris:** The costs for the road schemes listed by the hon. Member are as follows:

| | *£ million (including VAT)* |
|---|---|
| *(a)* Lower Lea Crossing | 37·5 |
| *(b)* Silvertown Flyover repairs | [1]0·5 |
| *(c)* North Woolwich Road Improvements | [1]3·0 |
| *(d)* Connaught Crossing | 26·0 |
| *(e)* Albert Dock Spine Road | 38·5 |
| *(f)* Eastern Gateway Access Road | 10·8 |
| *(g)* East London River Crossing | [2]300·0 |

[1] Estimates at current prices.
[2] At 1989 prices; also includes land costs.

Only scheme *(g)* is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. Schemes *(a)*, *(d)*, *(e)* and *(f)* are the responsibility of the London Docklands development corporation. Schemes *(b)* and *(c)* are the responsibility of the London borough of Newham.

### Road Schemes (Protestors)

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the occasions when his Department has sought orders for the seizure of property from those protesting against proposed new road schemes; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Key:** My Department has been unable to identify any such cases.

### Railway Track Maintenance

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost per mile of maintaining mainline railway track and branch line railway track *(a)* throughout the British Rail network and *(b)* in the south Wales and western regions.

**Mr. Freeman:** My Department does not hold this information. Maintenance programmes and costs are a matter for the British Railways Board.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Home Helps

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are currently in receipt of home help service in the Down and Lisburn unit of management; and what was the comparable figure for the same period last year.

**Mr. Ancram:** In May 1992, the latest date for which information is available, 2,436 people were in receipt of the home help service in the Down and Lisburn unit of management. In May 1991, the number of recipients was 2,444.

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people who are currently in receipt of home help service in the Down and Lisburn unit of management have been subject to a reduction in hours.

**Mr. Ancram:** A total of 453 people who are currently in receipt of home help service in the Down and Lisburn unit of management have had a reduction in home help hours.

### Renewables Order

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department in establishing a Renewables Order for Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Atkins:** The Department of Economic Development intends to ask NIE plc to organise a competitive tender to secure generation capacity from plant using renewable sources of energy, with a view to making a non-fossil fuel order. The necessary arrangements for the tender competition are being finalised at present and I hope to make a further statement in the near future.

### Clubs

**Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to meet representatives of the Northern Ireland Federation of Clubs and the Club and Institute Union to discuss the registration of clubs under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1969; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Atkins:** Clubs may be registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1969 if they satisfy certain conditions. These will be notified shortly to representatives of the Northern Ireland Federation of Clubs and the Club and Institute Union Ltd. Applications to register from clubs may then follow.

### Ballyconnell Canal

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 24 May, *Official Report*, columns *461-62*, what estimate he has made of the overall administrative costs of the Ballyconnell canal project met in *(a)* Northern Ireland and *(b)* in the Republic of Ireland; and how many persons in his Department have been engaged in such work.

**Mr. Ancram:** The construction work on the Ballyconnell canal is being managed by the Electricity

Supply Board in the Republic of Ireland, which reports to a joint steering group comprising six representatives from Northern Ireland Government Departments and six representatives from Republic of Ireland Government Departments. The joint steering group oversees the project, deals with policy issues, approves expenditure and monitors progress. It meets two or three times a year. In addition to these formal meetings, there is also ad hoc liaison between the two Governments and with the project managers, including contacts at local level to facilitate works progress. It is not possible to estimate the overall administrative costs of the project.

### Director General for Electricity Regulation

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the address of the office of the new Director General for Electricity Regulation in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Atkins:** The address is:

Office of Electricity Regulation Northern Ireland (OFFER NI)
Brookmount Buildings
42 Fountain Street
BELFAST
BT1 5EE

### Forensic Science Laboratory, Newtownbreda

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many claims for compensation, arising from the IRA bomb at the forensic science laboratory at Newtownbreda in September 1992 are still to be concluded.

**Mr. Mates:** Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Compensation Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. Robinson. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from John Robinson to Mr. John D. Taylor, dated 22 June 1993:*

I refer to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning the number of compensation claims arising from the IRA bomb at Newtownbreda in September 1992 which have still to be concluded.

The following is a summary of progress to date:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Number of applications received | 902 |
| Number disallowed | 37 |
| Number of cases in which final compensation has been paid | 512 |
| Number in which formal offers of settlement have been made | 157 |
| Number still to be resolved and which are at various stages of completion | 196 |
| Number of interim payments made in cases still to be resolved | 173 |

I hope this is helpful.

### Ballynahone Bog

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he now intends to take any action to prevent damage to Ballynahone bog.

**Mr. Atkins** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* The Bulrush Peat Company Ltd. has permission for the extraction of peat from part of Ballynahone bog. This followed a detailed public inquiry. While the Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland has no plans to revoke the permission, I shall shortly be announcing a policy statement on how the Government intend to address the issues of peat bogs in Northern Ireland.

## HEALTH

### Neonatal Care

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of nurses per neo-natal cot nationally and per region at the latest available date.

**Mr. Sackville:** The information is not available in the form requested. Latest data on the number of beds on neo-natal wards and nursing staff employed in special care baby units are shown in the tables.

*Table 1: Average number of daily available beds 1990-91 England, regional health authority (RHA) and special health authorities*

| *Neonates* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| England | 3,374 |
| Northern RHA | 260 |
| Yorkshire RHA | 282 |
| Trent RHA | 295 |
| East Anglian RHA | 121 |
| North West Thames RHA | 248 |
| North East Thames RHA | 275 |
| South East Thames RHA | 271 |
| South West Thames RHA | 189 |
| Wessex RHA | 182 |
| Oxford RHA | 180 |
| South Western RHA | 148 |
| West Midlands RHA | 371 |
| Mersey RHA | 172 |
| North Western RHA | 340 |
| Special Health Authorities | 41 |

*Note:* These beds are in wards for neonates in regional designated intensive centres or non-maternity wards.

Regional figures do not add up to England total due to rounding.

*Source:* KHO3 return, lines 10, 11.

*Table 2*
*Number of nurses and midwives employed in special care baby units 1991*
*England, Regional Health Authority (RHA) and Special Health Authorities*

| | *Qualified Nurses* | *Unqualified Nurses* | *Midwives* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| England | 1,950 | 290 | 1,260 | 3,500 |
| Northern RHA | 90 | 20 | 70 | 180 |
| Yorkshire RHA | 150 | 30 | 80 | 260 |
| Trent RHA | 260 | 30 | 80 | 360 |
| East Anglian RHA | 90 | 10 | 30 | 130 |
| North West Thames RHA | 90 | 20 | 90 | 210 |

| | Qualified Nurses | Unqualified Nurses | Midwives | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| North East Thames RHA | 130 | 10 | 80 | 220 |
| South East Thames RHA | 160 | 20 | 50 | 230 |
| South West Thames RHA | 40 | 10 | 70 | 110 |
| Wessex RHA | 110 | 0 | 50 | 170 |
| Oxford RHA | 130 | 20 | 50 | 200 |
| South Western RHA | 150 | 10 | 100 | 260 |
| West Midlands RHA | 240 | 40 | 130 | 400 |
| Mersey RHA | 70 | 30 | 100 | 190 |
| North Western RHA | 200 | 30 | 270 | 510 |
| Special Health Authorities | 50 | 10 | 0 | 60 |

*Source:* Non-medical Workforce Census September 1991.
Figures are rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalent—regional figures may not therefore add up to England total.

### GPs (Advocates)

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she plans to extend the role of general practitioners as independent advocates for patients to hospital doctors.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** General practitioners already act as advocates of their patients in providing general medical services and referring patients to specialist services if required. GP fund holding builds on this principle by enabling volunteer practices to purchase directly a range of hospital and community services on behalf of their patients. This is proving a great success and our aim is to extend the benefits to as many patients as possible.

### Social Work

**Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps have been taken by her Department to encourage the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work to change its equal opportunities policies; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Bowis:** The Department shares the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work's—CCETSW—commitment to ensure that individuals are not unfairly disadvantaged on the grounds of age, gender, disability, language, including sign language, race or religion.

Various aspects of the implementation of CCETSW's equal opportunities policy were discussed at the last annual ministerial review in December 1992. It was emphasised that CCETSW should not give a misleading impression in its documentation about the emphasis it places on anti-racist and other anti-discriminatory issues in training, and this must not be at the expense of receiving a solid, practical grounding in other important professional and management skills.

### Laser Photorefractive Keratectomy

**Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have been treated in the NHS for *(a)* myopia and *(b)* other eyesight disorders by laser photorefractive keratectomy; and what information she has on the extent of the use of this treatment in the private sector.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** This information is not available centrally.

**Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her assessment of laser photorefractive keratectomy as a treatment to correct myopia; and what plans she has to make it available free of charge to patients at NHS hospitals.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Different types of laser are now being used in the national health service for the treatment of various eye conditions, including glaucoma. The use of photorefractive keratectomy, or excimer, lasers for treating myopia—short-sightedness—is still subject to research. An evaluation study is currently under way and is not expected to report before 1994. The evaluation is important, particularly as most people who are short-sighted and seek laser treatment do not have an eye disease and wish only to avoid wearing spectacles or contact lenses.

The form of treatment of myopia is, therefore, currently only available to NHS patients as part of ongoing research.

### Optical Appliances

**Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what has been the total number of optical appliances vouchers redeemed in each year since 1986;

(2) what was the total cost of the optical appliances voucher scheme in each year since 1986.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information for England is shown in the table.

| | Numbers of vouchers paid for (millions) | Cost of vouchers (£ million) |
|---|---|---|
| 1986-87[1] | 1·46 | 27·0 |
| 1987-88 | 2·52 | 47·9 |
| 1988-89 | 2·26 | 52·1 |
| 1989-90 | 2·27 | 53·6 |
| 1990-91 | 2·43 | 63·9 |
| 1991-92 | 2·84 | 79·8 |
| 1992-93 | 3·18 | [2]99·9 |

[1] Figures are for nine months only following introduction of the scheme on 1 July 1986.
[2] Provisional figures.

### Dietary Health

**Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish in tabula form details of all grants currently approved by her Department to support projects connected with diet health and cookery including the amount of the grant, the period for which it has been approved, the name and location of the person or organisation to which it is made and the name of the person responsible for accounting to her for the expenditure of public funds in each case.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department is currently funding one such project—"Get Cooking" managed by the National

Food Alliance which aims to improve the basic cooking skills of young people as a contribution to healthy eating. Funding amounts to £60,000 over two years—£31,000 in 1992-93 and £29,000 in 1993-94—and is subject to the normal vigorous financial management of all projects awarded funding under section 64 of the Health Service and Public Health Act 1968.

### Opticians

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to establish an official complaints body to cover all dispensing opticians;

(2) what representations she has received concerning the need for an official complaints body for customers of dispensing opticians.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** We have no plans to set up a body to investigate complaints against dispensing opticians, who are independent practitioners, nor have we received any representations to do so. The bodies representing optometrists and dispensing opticians set up an independent consumer complaints' system—the optical consumer complaints service—in January this year, and all dispensing opticians' practices have been encouraged to become members.

### NHS Drugs

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the total NHS budget in each of the last 10 years was spent on drugs; how many items were prescribed per head of population; and what corresponding information she has from other EC countries.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The available information is shown in the tables. The total national health service drugs bill comprises expenditure by family health services—FHS—and the hospital and community health services—HCHS. Items prescribed per head of population relate to prescriptions written by general practitioners and dispensed within the FHS. Comparable data for the other countries in the European Community are not available.

| *Year* | *Total NHS drugs bill as a percentage of total NHS expenditure* |
|---|---|
| 1982-83 | 10·2 |
| 1983-84 | 10·7 |
| 1984-85 | 10·4 |
| 1985-86 | 10·5 |
| 1986-87 | 10·6 |
| 1987-88 | 10·7 |
| 1988-89 | 10·8 |
| 1989-90 | 11·2 |
| 1990-91 | 10·7 |
| 1991-92 | 10·9 |

*Note:* 1992-93 expenditure figures are not yet available.

| *Year* | *Items prescribed per head of population* |
|---|---|
| 1983 | 7·2 |
| 1984 | 7·3 |
| 1985 | 7·3 |
| 1986 | 7·3 |
| 1987 | 7·6 |
| 1988 | 7·9 |
| 1989 | 8·0 |
| 1990 | 8·3 |
| 1991 | 8·5 |
| 1992 | 8·8 |

*Note:* Prior to 1991, prescription items were based on dispensing fees paid to contractors. From 1991, the actual numbers of items are shown.

### Hospital Patients

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients in the Mid-Staffordshire health authority who have been referred by their general practitioner to a hospital consultant are currently not being put on an active waiting list and not being given any indication of when an appointment will be available.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** This information is not available centrally. Patients who are referred to a hospital consultant by a general medical practitioner should either be seen immediately or put on an out-patient waiting list depending on their clinical priority. No one should have to wait to be put on an out-patient waiting list after he or she has been referred by his or her GP.

### Lung Cancer, Liverpool

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *619*, whether she will now fund a study of the causes of lung cancer in Liverpool; what is the future of the Sefton general hospital chest clinic in Liverpool; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** Research studies which are locally based are the responsibility of the regional health authority and would not normally be funded from the Department's central research budget. It would be for Mersey RHA to consider whether or not to mount a study of the causes of lung cancer in Liverpool in the light of its knowledge of local needs, resources and priorities.

The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. D. H. Tod, the chairman of Liverpool health authority, concerning the future of the Sefton general hospital chest clinic.

### Diabetics

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce prescription charges for insulin-dependent diabetics.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** None.

### Prostate Cancer

**Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 11 June, *Official Report*, column *373*, if she will list the research projects currently being undertaken into the risks from prostate cancer.

**Mr. Sackville:** This information is not routinely collected, but we are aware of several projects including studies in Newport and Bristol.

### Christchurch

**Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest available figures for *(a)* registered disabled, *(b)* registered blind people and *(c)* people in residential nursing homes in the parliamentary constituency of Christchurch.

**Mr. Bowis:** Information is not available in the form requested. The latest available figures for registered disabled and registered blind people are published by local authority in "Register of Physically Disabled Persons (General Classes) at 31 March 1990, England" and "Registered Blind and Partially Sighted People at 31 March 1991, England". The centrally available information on nursing homes is the number of available beds and is published in "Private Hospitals, Homes and Clinics registered under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984, at 31 March 1991, England". Copies of the publications are available in the Library.

**Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate by the Registrar General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years, for the district council area that includes the parliamentary constituency of Christchurch, together with the equivalent year's electoral registration figures, expressed as a percentage of these population estimates.

**Mr. Sackville:** There are 72,211 parliamentary electors on the 1993 register for the Christchurch constituency. Population estimates are not available for parliamentary constituencies. The Christchurch parliamentary constituency comprises almost all—99·5 per cent.—of the parliamentary electors of Christchurch district part—56·7 per cent.—of the electors of West Dorset district and a very small part of—0·02 per cent.—of the electors of New Forest district. The latest population estimates available relate to mid-1991. The estimates for residents aged 17 and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16, at that date are 35,000 in the whole of Christchurch district, 70,800 in the whole of West Dorset district and 130,900 in the whole of New Forest district.

### Pharmaceutical Retail Outlets

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will name the studies on which she has based her predictions as to the future patterns of pharmaceutical retail outlets subsequent to implementation of her proposals for a new pattern of payment to their proprietors.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Community pharmacists are independent commercial businesses: it is for them to determine their development strategies. Through our proposals, the Government will ensure that patients continue to enjoy reasonable access to a local pharmacy.

### NHS Employees

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average annual cost of employing *(a)* a senior manager, *(b)* a consultant, *(c)* a senior house officer, *(d)* a qualified nurse, *(e)* an ambulance driver, *(f)* a porter, *(g)* a medical laboratory, scientific officer and *(h)* a cleaner in the NHS in each year since 1986-87 at (i) cash prices and (ii) 1986-87 prices.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information requested is not readily available. The figures shown in the tables are estimated by combining information from national health service annual accounts and from medical and non-medical censuses.

*£ thousands*

| | *1986-87* | *1987-88* | *1988-89* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Table 1: Average annual cost per whole time equivalent at current prices | | | | | | |
| Senior/General manager[1] | .. | .. | .. | .. | 26·0 | 28·8 |
| Consultant | 38·8 | 43·5 | 46·9 | 48·7 | 53·3 | 57·7 |
| Senior house officer | 20·1 | 22·0 | 23·8 | 24·5 | 27·1 | 29·8 |
| Qualified nurse | 12·2 | 14·7 | 17·6 | 18·5 | 20·0 | 22·2 |
| Ambulance staff[2] | 10·5 | 11·3 | 11·8 | [3]10·9 | 13·1 | 15·0 |
| Ancillary staff[4] | 6·9 | 7·2 | 7·8 | 8·3 | 9·0 | 10·5 |
| Medical laboratory scientific officer | 10·9 | 10·7 | 12·8 | 16·2 | 16·4 | 17·2 |
| Table 2: Average annual cost per whole time equivalent at 1986-87 prices | | | | | | |
| Senior/General manager[1] | .. | .. | .. | .. | 18·7 | 18·9 |
| Consultant | 38·8 | 40·1 | 39·1 | 38·1 | 38·5 | 37·8 |
| Senior house officer | 20·1 | 20·3 | 19·8 | 19·2 | 19·5 | 19·5 |
| Qualified nurse | 12·2 | 13·6 | 14·7 | 14·5 | 14·4 | 14·6 |
| Ambulance staff[2] | 10·5 | 10·4 | 9·8 | [3]8·5 | 9·4 | 9·8 |
| Ancillary staff[4] | 6·9 | 6·7 | 6·5 | 6·5 | 6·5 | 6·9 |
| Medical laboratory scientific officer | 10·9 | 10·7 | 10·7 | 12·7 | 11·9 | 11·3 |

[1] No comparable figures are available for the period 1986-87 to 1989-90.
[2] Includes expenditure for all ambulance staff as cost for an ambulance driver not available separately.
[3] Fall in ambulance staff figure probably due to ambulancemen strike.
[4] Includes expenditure for all ancillary staff as cost for a porter and a cleaner not available separately.

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the numbers of health service directly employed staff by main staff group each year from 1987 to 1992; and if she will give the changes between each year and over the whole period in numbers and percentages.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information available is shown in the table. More comprehensive information about national health service manpower is published in the "Statistical Bulletin on NHS hospital and community health services non-medical staff in England: 1981-1991"

and associated press release—H93/626 NHS Non-Medical Workforce Statistics—dated 12 March 1993, copies of which are available in the Library.

*National health service workforce by staff group*

*Whole-time equivalents*

| Main staff groups | 1987 | 1988 | 1988 compared with 1987 Number | 1988 compared with 1987 Per cent. | 1989 | 1989 compared with 1988 Number | 1989 compared with 1988 Per cent. | 1990 | 1990 compared with 1989 Number | 1990 compared with 1989 Per cent. | 1991 | 1991 compared with 1990 Number | 1991 compared with 1990 Per cent. | 1991 compared with 1987 Number | 1991 compared with 1987 Per cent. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nursing and midwifery staff | 397,910 | 397,650 | −260 | −0·1 | 398,050 | 400 | 0·1 | 395,360 | −2,690 | −0·7 | 392,200 | −3,160 | −0·8 | −5,710 | −1·4 |
| Professions allied to medicine | 34,940 | 35,640 | 700 | 2·0 | 36,710 | 1,070 | 3·0 | 37,300 | 590 | 1·6 | 37,960 | 660 | 1·8 | 3,020 | 8·6 |
| Scientific and professional | 10,860 | 11,600 | 740 | 6·8 | 12,080 | 480 | 4·1 | 12,690 | 610 | 5·0 | 13,530 | 840 | 6·6 | 2,670 | 24·6 |
| Other professional and technical | 33,170 | 32,530 | −640 | −1·9 | 32,370 | −160 | −0·5 | 33,990 | 1,620 | 5·0 | 35,390 | 1,400 | 4·1 | 2,220 | 6·7 |
| Medical and dental | 41,570 | 42,840 | 1,270 | 3·1 | 44,090 | 1,250 | 2·9 | 45,390 | 1,300 | 2·9 | 46,530 | 1,140 | 2·5 | 4,960 | 11·9 |
| Ancillary | 115,050 | 107,620 | −7,440 | −6·5 | 102,360 | −5,260 | −4·9 | 95,690 | −6,670 | −6·5 | 85,890 | −9,800 | −10·2 | −29,170 | −25·4 |
| Administrative and clerical | 113,900 | 114,720 | 820 | 0·7 | 116,840 | 2,120 | 1·8 | 120,040 | 3,200 | 2·7 | 127,370 | 7,330 | 6·1 | 13,470 | 11·8 |
| General and senior managers | 700 | 1,240 | 540 | 77·1 | 4,610 | 3,370 | 271·8 | 9,680 | 5,070 | 110·0 | 13,340 | 3,660 | 37·6 | 12,640 | 1,805·7 |
| Maintenance | 18,470 | 17,330 | −1,140 | −6·2 | 16,540 | −790 | −4·6 | 16,020 | −520 | −3·1 | 15,120 | −900 | −5·6 | −3,350 | −18·1 |
| Works | 5,710 | 5,320 | −390 | −6·8 | 4,640 | −680 | −12·8 | 3,900 | −740 | −15·9 | 3,230 | −670 | −17·2 | −2,480 | −43·4 |
| Ambulance (including officers) | 19,010 | 18,760 | −250 | −1·3 | 18,860 | 100 | 0·5 | 18,130 | −730 | −3·9 | 18,190 | 60 | 0·3 | −820 | −4·3 |

*Source:* NHS Workforce in England/KM49 Census.

*Notes:*

All figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
Information for 30 September 1992 is not yet available.
The table reflects some redesignation between staff groups.
Project 2000 trainees are not included in the above nursing and midwifery figures.
Medical and dental staff figures exclude locums.
Nursing and midwifery figures exclude agency staff.

The increase in managers can largely be explained by a phased introduction of a general and senior manager class which includes many people previously classed under clinical, professional and administrative headings. For example, many senior nurses are now counted as senior managers. Management in the NHS still only represents 1·7 per cent. of the total NHS work force and 3 per cent. of all pay expenditure.

Project 2000 nurse training was introduced in 1989 and will eventually become the only form of general qualified nurse training. At September 1990 there were about 3,000 Project 2000 students; at September 1991 there were 10,500. There were corresponding falls in the number of traditional student nurses. Project 2000 students are considered to be supernumerary and are not included in work force statistics.

The general and senior managers category was introduced in phases from 1984 following the Griffiths report of 1983, which identified a severe shortage of managers in the NHS. The first phase was the appointment of a general manager in each health authority and hospital and community health service—HCHS—unit. In 1987, the first senior managers were appointed—up to seven posts at board level in each health authority. In 1989, the senior manager class was extended to staff below board level, and to those in family health services authorities and HCHS units. Virtually all general and senior management posts created up to 1989 replaced posts formerly counted within the administrative and clerical and other staff groups. In 1990 and 1991, transfers of staff into the senior manager category from other staff groups continued. New funds were provided as a planned strengthening of the personnel, information and finance functions in preparation for the NHS reforms.

## Schizophrenia

**Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all Government-funded research into the causes of schizophrenia, giving the amount of funding in each case; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Bowis:** In 1993-94, the Department is committed to fund projects on schizophrenia costing around £290,000. These projects concern detecting early signs of relapse, the long-term outcome of psychosis in Afro-Caribbean patients and a prospective study of psychoses in British Afro-Caribbean people.

The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, has funded research directly related to schizophrenia to a value of £1·6 million in 1991-92, the latest figures available, and an additional £678,000 was for general mental illness research relevant to schizophrenia.

## Nurses and Midwives

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the whole-time equivalent numbers of *(a)* agency and *(b)* bank nursing and midwifery staff employed in the NHS for each year from 1987 to 1992.

**Mr. Sackville:** The information is shown in the table.

| | Bank | Agency |
|---|---|---|
| 1987 | 4,920 | 6,130 |
| 1988 | 5,830 | 6,240 |
| 1989 | 5,910 | 7,230 |
| 1990 | 6,230 | 6,710 |
| 1991 | 8,540 | 3,930 |

*Note:* Figures are rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalent.

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the numbers of qualified NHS nurses and midwives, unqualified NHS nursing staff and nursing learners representing these as a percentage of the total NHS nursing and midwifery staff, including Project 2000 students for the years *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990, *(c)* 1991 and *(d)* 1992.

**Mr. Sackville:** Figures for 1992 are not yet available. The latest available figures are shown in the table.

*National Health Service Nursing and Midwifery Staff (excluding agency) at 30 September, England (whole-time equivalents)*

| | 1989 | | 1990 | | 1991 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Whole time equivalent* | *Percentage of total* | *Whole time equivalent* | *Percentage of total* | *Whole time equivalent* | *Percentage of total* |
| Total Nursing and Midwifery | 398,050 | 100·0 | 398,360 | 100·0 | 402,700 | 100·0 |
| Qualified | 242,190 | 60·8 | 242,340 | 60·8 | 243,250 | 60·4 |
| Unqualified | 90,880 | 22·8 | 90,450 | 22·7 | 90,550 | 22·5 |
| Traditional Learners | 63,310 | 15·9 | 58,840 | 14·8 | 47,340 | 11·8 |
| Project 2000 | — | 0·0 | 3,000 | 0·8 | 10,500 | 2·6 |
| Unknown | 1,680 | 0·4 | 3,730 | 0·9 | 11,050 | 2·7 |

*Note:*
Figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalent.

## Occupational Therapists

**Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many occupational therapists were employed within each district health authority in each of the last 10 years.

**Dr. Mawhinney** *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* This information will be placed in the Library. The figures show a steady increase over the 10-year period, and in some regions the number has more than doubled.

## $PM_{10}$

**Ms Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, columns *43-44*, whether levels of $PM_{10}$ particulate found in the United Kingdom are within the range of those found in United States studies demonstrating an association between $PM_{10}$ levels and mortality; and what assessment she has made of whether the speciation of $PM_{10}$ is comparable between the two countries.

**Mr. Yeo:** I have been asked to reply.

Of the studies referred to in the reply to the answer of 7 June, the study in the Utah valley was the only one concerned with $PM_{10}$ particulate pollution. The concentrations of $PM_{10}$ measured in that study were, overall, higher than those measured to date in the United Kingdom. The mean $PM_{10}$ value in the Utah valley study was 47 $\mu g/m^3$ while the means in the six United Kingdom cities in 1992 for which data are available ranged from 22-31 $\mu g/m^3$. The highest daily value measured in the Utah valley study was 355 $\mu g/m^3$, while the corresponding United Kingdom values ranged from 72-228 $\mu g/m^3$.

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

## Environmental Health Inspections

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee on what dates environmental health officers inspected food preparation and eating areas relating to *(a)* Westminster Hall Cafeteria, *(b)* the Strangers' Cafeteria, *(c)* the Members' Cafeteria, *(d)* the Members' Tea Room, *(e)* the Strangers' Dining Room, *(f)* the Members' Dining Room and *(g)* the Pugin Room in each of the last four years; what recommendations were made; what action was taken; and what is his estimate of the risk to health from mice.

**Mr. Colin Shepherd:** The health, safety and hygiene needs of the Refreshment Department's kitchens and catering outlets are major elements in the Catering Committee's current inquiry into refreshment services for the House of Commons. I shall ask the Director of Catering Services to write to the hon. Member in reply to the points of administrative detail raised in her question.

## No. 1 Parliament Street

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee (1) what contracts are still outstanding for ongoing maintenance at No. 1 Parliament street with building contractors who were involved in the modernisation of this building; and to what extent they are still liable for the responsibility of repairing defects which now exist within this building;

(2) if he will list the defects which have been reported and repaired at No. 1 Parliament street since January;

(3) if he will make a statement on the reasons for the defects in the cooling and ventilation systems at No. 1 Parliament street; when this system will be working correctly; what action is being taken to disperse cooking smells in the building; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ray Powell:** The main contractor's liability period for engineering defects expired in March 1992, but the company is still carrying out residual work on the circle lock doors and the cooling system which have failed to meet the required standards. No other major defects have been reported or identified although, of course, day-to-day maintenance is undertaken within the building to cover minor items which naturally arise.

There have been few complaints about cooking smells in the building. The capacity and performance of the cooling system will be improved following work to balance the distribution of the output and improve water filters and valves. This work is expected to be completed in July. In addition, the Director of Works is investigating whether the ventilation system is working to full efficiency.

### Parliamentary Estate

**Ms Abbott:** To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what is the size of the parliamentary estate; and how many *(a)* rooms and *(b)* bars and restaurants there are in that part for which this House is responsible.

**Mr. Ray Powell:** The Parliamentary Estate of both Houses comprises some 116,000 $m^2$ of which 87,000 $m^2$ is occupied by this House. Within that part of the Palace and its precincts under the control of the House, there are 1,206 offices and 36 Committee or meeting rooms. It is not possible to provide any meaningful estimate of the total number of rooms; they do, however, contain 14 restaurants or cafeteria and nine bars.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Somalia

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the numbers and locations of Somalis in refugee camps; and what progress has been made in assisting them to return to their homes.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Kenya has hosted some 330,000 Somali refugees, mainly in the east of the country. There are 90,000 including some Ethiopians in Djibouti, with a further 62,000 Somalis in Yemen and 150,000 in Saudi Arabia.

Latest information suggests that up to 150,000 out of a total of 430,000 refugees have now spontaneously returned from Ethiopia to northern Somalia. Some 30,000 Somalis have also been voluntarily repatriated from Kenya, and another 90,000 from Kenya have so far registered with UNHCR for voluntary repatriation as soon as possible.

UNHCR is preparing a regional repatriation plan for several hundred thousand Somali refugees to return from Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen and Djibouti.

### European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

**Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to ensure that the report by the Audit Committee of the European bank for reconstruction and development on financial management is published.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The audit committee of directors of the European bank for reconstruction and development plans to report to the board of directors on July 15. We expect the committee's findings to be made public but this will be a decision for the board as a whole.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Criminal Offences

**Sir Richard Body:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criminal offences have been created by his Department by way of delegated legislation in the last five years.

**Mr. Gummer:** This information can be given only at disproportionate cost.

### MINIS 14 Documents

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) of 11 June, *Official Report*, column *358*, how many copies of his Department's MINIS 14 documents have been printed; at what cost; and to whom he is circulating them.

**Mr. Gummer:** MINIS 14 is printed in eight parts. The number of copies printed for each part is:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Part 1: Local Government Group | 90 |
| Part 2: Housing and Urban Group | 90 |
| Part 3: Planning, Rural Affairs and Water Group | 90 |
| Part 4: Environmental Protection Group | 90 |
| Part 5: Principal Establishments and Finance Officer's Command | 90 |
| Part 6: Construction Directorate | 85 |
| Part 7: Regional Offices | 85 |
| Part 8: Legal Command; Information Directorate and Private Secretaries' Office | 90 |

The cost of printing MINIS 14 was £4,496; full sets of MINIS 14 were circulated to the House of Commons Library, the House of Lords Library, the Annex Library, the Environment Select Committee, the National Audit Office, HM Treasury, the DOE trade union side, the Treasury and Civil Service Committee, the DOE libraries, DOE Ministers, the DOE permanent secretary and DOE deputy secretaries. DOE directors are given copies of their own return. Copies of MINIS 14 are available for sale.

### Waste Recycling

**Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans the Government have to increase the waste recycling target to above 25 per cent. by the year 2000.

**Mr. Yeo:** We have no such plans at present.

**Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will include energy recovered from waste incineration in his Department's waste recycling targets.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Government consider that recovering energy from waste is a legitimate means of recycling. Our current target, to recycle half of all household waste which can be recycled, relates to materials recycling and composting. However, we have said that we will re-examine the idea of setting targets for energy recovery from waste among other ways of encouraging the greater use of this option. I am currently exploring this issue with colleagues at the Department of Trade and Industry.

**Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent assessment he has made as to the feasibility of achieving the target of recycling 25 per cent. of all domestic waste by the year 2000; what steps his Department is making to encourage the reaching of this target; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Government have funded research on a number of the factors which affect the feasibility of recycling 25 per cent. of household waste by the year 2000, including: the costs and benefits of different collection methods; technical and market barriers; and the economic framework for recycling.

Having considered those research results which are already available, we remain committed to our target. The main measures which we are taking to encourage recycling are set out in "This Common Inheritance, The Second Year Report" (Cm 2068). In particular:

—we have allocated £15 million in supplementary credit approvals to local authorities to encourage provision of facilities for recycling in 1993-94;

—we have announced our intention to increase recycling credits from 1 April 1994, so that they reflect the full economic costs of disposal;

—we are holding discussions with a range of industries, with a view to establishing how they might contribute to the achievement of the 25 per cent. target.

### Municipal Waste Disposal

**Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what encouragement he is giving to alternative methods of municipal waste disposal, other than landfill.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Government's policy is to set in place the necessary regulatory and economic framework to ensure that waste disposal operations do not lead to pollution of the environment or harm to human health. Within this framework, the Government believe that the market should generally decide the disposal option for particular waste types.

The Royal Commission on environmental pollution recently recommended the introduction of a levy on waste going to landfill to reflect the full environmental cost of this form of waste disposal. We are currently considering this recommendation, along with other proposals for changing the economic framework for waste disposal.

The Government are keen to promote the development of schemes which derive energy from waste. The non-fossil fuel obligation provides the initial stimulus for such schemes. We also have programmes of work under way to improve composting techniques and to investigate markets for composts.

### Toxic Wastes

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in recent months concerning the import and incineration of toxic wastes.

**Mr. Yeo:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer the then Secretary of State for the Environment gave on 28 April, *Official Report*, columns *949-50*, to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes).

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will launch a comprehensive assessment on the state of toxic tips in the United Kingdom and their effect on groundwater supplies.

**Mr. Yeo:** A research study has been initiated to review the extent and type of groundwater contamination associated with the landfilling of controlled wastes. The work aims to provide information about the significance of any identified groundwater contamination, when compared with background levels and with other sources of contamination, and in relation to drinking water standards. The project is expected to be completed in 1995-96.

### Redundant Farm Buildings

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for the environment what grant aid is available for the purpose of restoring redundant farm houses and associated buildings in order that they may again form the basis of an active farming unit.

**Sir George Young:** There are no grants specifically for this purpose. However, under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, renovation grants may be available in appropriate cases for repairs and improvements to farm houses and other buildings that have planning consent for conversion to residential use.

### Unleaded Petrol

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress his Department has made in meeting its target to provide a monthly analysis of uptake of unleaded petrol.

**Mr. Yeo:** A monthly analysis of the uptake of unleaded petrol is published by the Department of Trade and Industry in its "Advance Energy Statistics" press notice, issued on the first Wednesday of each month.

### United Nations Environment Programme

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in Her Majesty's Government's policy to work to improve the financial, managerial and administrative activities of the United Nations Environment Programme.

**Mr. Yeo:** Our policy remains unchanged. We are major contributors to the United Nations Environment Programme, and we support the efforts the new executive director is making to improve the programme's efficiency and effectiveness.

### Water Services

**Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received the report of the Director General of Water Services for 1992.

**Mr. Yeo:** I am pleased to announce that the director general has prepared his report of 1992 and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

### Condensation

**Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environmment what work the Building Research Establishment has carried out on the effect on people's health of condensation in the home.

**Sir George Young** *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* It is not normally suggested that condensation has a direct effect on physical health. The potential health consequences of condensation relate to its role in permitting the growth of fungi and mites. Airborne fragments of fungi and mites can give rise to respiratory or skin reactions, particularly in sensitive individuals.

The Building Research Establishment executive agency (BRE) is and has long been involved in a range of research which will elucidate the prevalence of condensation, fungi and mites in the home, and the likely health effects of these

levels. A list of the major publications resulting from the work attached. BRE publications are available from the BRE bookshop (Tel. 0923 664444).

### Severn Estuary Special Protection Area

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to designate the middle Severn estuary proposed special protection area for nature conservation and register it with the European Commission.

**Mr. Yeo** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* The Severn estuary is one of a programme of sites on which the Department is currently working to complete the network of special protection areas (SPAs) in the United Kingdom. SPA designation has significant long-term implications for both nature conservation and land use planning. Detailed consultations are essential to ensure that any conflicts of interest are closely examined, together with the scientific evidence, before a site is designated. I am unable to say when a decision about the Severn will be taken. The Government have designated 72 special protection areas, 23 in the past 12 months.

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of EC grants available to those required to replace CFC-dependent machinery; if the Government will facilitate the release of EC grants by matching them with United Kingdom funds; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I have been asked to reply.

There are no EC grants available for those required to replace CFC-dependent machinery. Under the current EC framework governing state aid, member states are, however, permitted to provide grants, within specified limits, to support investments designed to protect the environment.

Over the past three years, the United Kingdom has committed some £12 million of investment support to the development and demonstration of innovative environmental technologies through two schemes, the joint DTI/DOE environmental technology innovation scheme and the DTI's environmental management options scheme. International environmental research and development is also supported through the EUREKA Euroenviron programme.

The Government are now considering how best to take forward then support for environmental technologies, but grants solely to subsidise compliance with minimum legal environmental standards would be contrary to the polluter-pays principle.

## DEFENCE

### Z-berths, Swansea

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the nuclear safety scheme drawn up in association with the designation of Swansea as a Z-berth for nuclear submarines.

**Mr. Hanley:** The document has not yet been completed as work is continuing on the development of a suitable public safety scheme for the Swansea Z-berth.

### Iraq

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer on 10 June, *Official Report*, column *340*, if he will make it his policy to seek further information from the United States Administration about the CIA report on Iraq's military capabilities.

**Mr. Hanley:** Yes.

### Nuclear Tests

**Mr. Peter Shore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many nuclear tests were conducted by the United Kingdom, France, China, the United States of America and the Soviet Union/Russia in each year since 1985.

**Mr. Aitken:** The United Kingdom has carried out the following numbers of nuclear tests since 1985:

| *Year* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1985 | 1 |
| 1986 | 1 |
| 1987 | 1 |
| 1988 | 0 |
| 1989 | 1 |
| 1990 | 1 |
| 1991 | 1 |
| 1992 | 0 |

Nuclear tests carried out by other countries in these

### Admiralty Compass Observatory

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about the radioactive contamination at Admiralty Compass Observatory in Slough; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Aitken:** Following a preliminary radiological monitoring survey carried out by Ministry of Defence staff at the Defence Research Agency site at Ditton Park, Slough, formerly known as the Admiralty Compass Observatory, very low levels of radium-226 contamination have been found within and adjacent to a former luminising workshop used in the manufacture of compasses from about 1940 to the mid 1950s. There is no access by members of the public to the building. The contamination external to the building is held within the soil structure and poses no hazard to members of the public. Further monitoring will be undertaken in the near future to establish more fully the extent of the contamination and to determine what remedial action is required.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, Slough borough council, and the royal borough of Windsor and Maidenhead council have been kept informed of the situation.

### Courts Martial

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel were court-martialled in each of the last three years in *(a)* the Royal Navy, *(b)* the Royal Air Force and *(c)* the Army and the number of service personnel from each of these services discharged from the services as a result of their court martial.

**Mr. Hanley:** The number of service personnel convicted by court martial, and the number consequently dismissed in the most recent years for which figures are available, are as follows:

| | *Royal Navy* | *Army* | *Royal Air Force* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1991* | | | |
| Number of offenders | 38 | 704 | 129 |
| Offenders dismissed | 21 | 281 | 32 |
| *1990* | | | |
| Number of offenders | 31 | 816 | 140 |
| Offenders dismissed | 7 | 322 | 29 |
| *1989* | | | |
| Number of offenders | 52 | 726 | 120 |
| Offenders dismissed | 16 | 270 | 40 |

## Joint Forces Headquarters

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what review was carried out into the operation of the Joint Forces Headquarters in the light of Operation Granby; and what were its main conclusions.

**Mr. Hanley:** The operation of the joint forces headquarters—JFHQ—during Operation Granby was reviewed during the assessment of lessons from the operation. The concept of establishing for major operations a tri-service, in-theatre operational headquarters, and its relationship with the joint headquarters and Ministry of Defence in the United Kingdom, were endorsed. Other lessons included the importance during peacetime of the effective training and exercising of the joint forces operational staff who form the core of the JFHQ, and the need for early deployment of the JFHQ should it become apparent that an operation would require the substantial involvement of more than one of the three services.

## RAF Leuchars

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the intended future use of the facilities recently vacated by 22 squadron search and rescue at RAF Leuchars.

**Mr. Hanley:** Further to the answer my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) gave to the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) on 28 April, *Official Report*, column *406*, I can now confirm that the Aberdeen, Dundee and St. Andrews university air squadron has now relocated within the vacated SAR facility.

## Yugoslavia

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many reservists, of what rank, and in what roles are serving in *(a)* the Croatia theatre and *(b)* the Bosnia theatre in support of the British contribution to UNPROFOR.

**Mr. Hanley:** There is one member of the reserve forces serving in Croatia, a lieutenant commander of the Royal Naval Reserve public affairs branch; there are none serving in Bosnia.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many men and of what rank from *(a)* the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, *(b)* the Gordon Highlanders and *(c)* the Queen's Lancashire Regiment are currently serving with the Prince of Wales Own (Yorkshire) Regiment in Bosnia.

**Mr. Hanley:** The information is as follows:

| *Rank* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| *(a) The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders* | |
| Lieutenant | 1 |
| Sergeant | 1 |
| Corporal | 4 |
| Lance Corporal | 11 |
| Private | 18 |
| *(b) The Gordon Highlanders* | |
| Captain | 1 |
| Lieutenant | 1 |
| Sergeant | 1 |
| Corporal | 2 |
| Lance Corporal | 7 |
| Private | 25 |
| *(c) The Queen's Lancashire Regiment* | |
| Lieutenant | 1 |
| Sergeant | 1 |
| Corporal | 0 |
| Lance Corporal | 10 |
| Private | 24 |

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reports he has received from British forces of fighting between Croat and Muslim forces near the British Army base in Vitez on 16 June; and what representations he intends to make to Croat and Muslim authorities.

**Mr. Hanley:** The security situation around the British forces base at Vitez is closely monitored by troops on the ground there. On 16 June there was fighting between the Croats and Muslims in the Lasva valley near Vitez. No representations were made to the Croat or Muslim authorities.

## Uranium Shells

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has received from the United States Government as to the danger to service men posed by the inhalation or ingestion of uranium dust from uranium tipped shells used during the Gulf conflict.

**Mr. Hanley:** My Department has received no specific formal information from the United States Government regarding the dangers to service men serving in the Gulf resulting from the use of shells tipped with depleted uranium—DU. A comprehensive health evaluation was undertaken prior to the introduction into service of DU tipped shells and the possible risks arising from the inhalation or ingestion of DU dust after impact are well understood. British forces, including those deployed to the Gulf, are issued with prior advice on how to avoid any risk association with the use of DU shells.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Departments since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted-out.

**Mr. Nelson:** The information requested is as follows. It covers new market testing only and does not include the retesting of services which are already contracted-out. It also excludes market tests currently in progress but not yet completed.

| | *Result* |
|---|---|
| *Inland Revenue* | |
| Bulk Mailing (Employers' Annual Pack) | Contracted-out |
| Catering (Telford) | Contracted-out |
| *Customs and Excise* | |
| London HQ typing services | Retained in-house |
| Southend HQ typing services | Retained in-house |
| Regional Executive Units typing services | Retained in-house |
| London HQ messenger services | Retained in-house |
| Internal Audit | Retained in-house |
| Vehicle fleet management | Part retained in-house, part contracted-out |
| *Department for National Savings* | |
| Catering Services | The market test covered four units with a combination of in-house and contracted-out services. The service was retained in-house at one location, the existing external supplier selected at two others, and a fresh external supplier selected at the fourth |

### Interest Rates

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about interest rates and their effect on the economy.

**Mr. Nelson:** A number of such representations have been received.

### Mortgage Arrears

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the number of home owners with mortgage arrears.

**Mr. Nelson:** The Government do not make estimates of the number of home owners with mortgage arrears. The latest figures from the Council of Mortgage Lenders—CML—which relate to the position at the end of 1992, are as follows:

| | *Total* | *Percentage of total mortgages* |
|---|---|---|
| Arrears 6-12 months | 205,010 | 2·07 |
| Arrears over 12 months | 147,040 | 1·48 |

The next CML arrears figures will be published at the end of July.

### European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

**Dr. Hampson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will ensure that the views of the central and eastern European shareholders in the European bank for reconstruction and development are taken fully into account alongside those of the G7 shareholders in determining how the bank should be run and in determining any future changes; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Nelson:** The EBRD's board of directors represents all the bank's shareholders. The central and east European shareholders can express their views about the organisation of the bank through their representatives on the board of directors.

### Waste Packaging

**Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce economic incentives to encourage the increased reclamation and recycling of waste packaging by industry.

**Sir John Cope:** The Government recognise the importance of increased reclamation and recycling of waste packaging. They are currently considering two consultants' reports which they commissioned, "Economic Instruments and Recovery of Resources from Waste" by Environmental Resources Ltd. and "Landfill Costs and Prices: Correcting Possible Market Distortions" by Coopers and Lybrand, and responses by local government, industry and interested individuals. The reports and the responses will help to inform the Government's consideration of whether economic instruments might be used to stimulate higher recovery and recycling rates for waste, including packaging waste.

### Balance of Payments

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the latest position of Britain's balance of payments.

**Mr. Portillo:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) on 17 June, at columns *977-78*.

### Confidential Information (Disposal)

**Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what monitoring has been carried out of the disposal of confidential information collected under the Financial Services Act 1986.

**Mr. Nelson:** Confidential information collected under the Financial Services Act is likely to be information the disclosure of which is restricted under the provisions of sections 179 and 180 of the Act. Each Government Department or regulator which obtains such information is responsible for meeting its confidentiality obligations in relation to the information.

### Public Ownership

**Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the net return to the Exchequer at 1993 prices in their last full year in public ownership of British Gas, British Telecom, the British National Oil Corporation, Enterprise Oil, and each of the nationalised electricity generating and distribution undertakings.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The net return to the Exchequer, defined as the negative external financing requirement in each case, at 1993-94 prices was as follows:

| | £ million |
|---|---|
| British Gas (1986-87) | 1,020 |
| British Telecom (1984-85) | 553 |
| Enterprise Oil (1984-85) | 32 |

British National Oil Corporation had a positive external financing requirement of £48 million in its last year in public ownership—1985-86—in 1993-94 prices.

Comparable figures for the individual electricity companies are not available.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### National Lottery

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what part the regional arts boards and regional sports councils will play in the allocation of funds from the national lottery; and what steps are being taken to ensure an equitable distribution across the country.

**Mr. Brooke:** The role of the regional arts boards and of the regional offices of the Sports Council will be for the distributing bodies themselves to decide. In reporting on the use to which they have put lottery funds, distributors will be expected to show a reasonable and appropriate response to applications throughout the areas they cover.

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish the written guidance issued to the chief officers of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Arts Council or the Sport Council concerning the distribution of proceeds from the national lottery.

**Mr. Sproat:** No such guidance has been issued.

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if projects eligible for Government funding will also be eligible for funding under the proposed national lottery.

**Mr. Sproat:** My right hon. Friend will have powers under clause 24 of the National Lottery etc. Bill to direct the matters to be taken into account by the distributive bodies in exercising their functions under the Bill. My right hon. Friend is not minded to use those powers to direct that projects eligible for Government funding should not be eligible for national lottery funding. It will be for the distributive bodies to determine their own policy in this matter.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Yugoslavia

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what plans he has to raise the threat of military action by Croatian armed forces against the Serbs of Krajina with European Foreign Ministers with a view to planning a swift and common response in the event of such aggression;

(2) further to his answer of 19 May to the hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Faber), *Official Report*, column *165*, what diplomatic and economic measures against the republic of Croatia are under consideration in the event of continuing Croat aggression in Bosnia-Herzegovina or Krajina; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations have been made to General Tudjman regarding the threat of military action by his forces against Serbs in Croatia; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** The conflict in Croatia has been discussed on several occasions by EC Foreign Ministers. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs sent a message to President Tudjman on 15 June expressing our concern that the Croatian Government should not resort to force in order to resolve the situation in the Krajinas, which the international community recognises as Croatian sovereign territory. We welcome a similar message sent on the same day by Chancellor Kohl of Germany.

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what assessment he has made of whether the explosion in the Bosnian town of Sifluk on 17 June was a deliberate or targeted assault against British personnel; and if he will make a statement;

(2) If he will make a statement on the injury of United Kingdom citizens by a remote-controlled mine in the village of Sifluk, Bosnia-Herzegovina on 17 June; and if he will make representations to the Croatian authorities.

**Mr. Goodlad:** British Forces serving under UNPROFOR auspices in central Bosnia have reported this incident to the Ministry of Defence in London. Three people in a routine patrol were injured by a mine which exploded in a tree at a Bosnian Croat checkpoint near Vitez; one of those injured was a British journalist. There is no evidence to suggest that this was a premeditated attack by Bosnian Croat HVO forces. We condemn the deliberate targeting of any UN personnel. The safety of our troops is a prime concern and we shall continue to monitor the situation closely. It was announced on 10 June that we have made reinforcements available if necessary to protect British troops already in central Bosnia. We have made it clear to the Croatian Government that we expect them to use their influence with the Bosnian Croat forces to prevent such attacks.

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the United States Secretary of State on the latter's assessment of the effect of the recognition by Germany of Croatia on the situation in the former Yugoslavia; and if he will convey Her Majesty's Government's opinion on this to the Government of Germany.

**Mr. Goodlad:** There have been no specific discussions between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the United States Secretary of State on this matter. The decision to recognise Croatia was taken by the EC and its member states in the light of a report submitted by the International Conference Arbitration Commission.

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to oppose, in the United Nations Security Council, moves to call a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly with the purpose of rejecting the latest proposals made by Bosnian-Serbs and Bosnian-Croats for the future

Government of their country; and if a policy of self-determination by majority consensus will be applied to all former Yugoslav republics.

**Mr. Goodlad:** We are unaware of any moves in the United Nations to call such a meeting of the General Assembly. The Copenhagen European Council in its declaration of 22 June reaffirmed its conviction that a negotiated settlement in Bosnia has to be based on the principles of the London conference.

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what report he has received from the co-chairman of the conference on the former Yugoslavia of progress made during talks in Geneva on 16 and 17 June; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** The right hon. and noble Lord Owen briefed European Community Foreign Ministers on 20 June on the eve of the Copenhagen European Council on 21 and 22 June. He outlined proposals on Bosnia put forward by Presidents Milosevic and Tudjman on 16 June at talks between the parties in Geneva and President Izetbegovic's reaction, and reported that a further round of talks would take place in Geneva on 23 June.

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to discuss with the United States Administration issues raised during the meeting of the conference on the former Yugoslavia in Geneva on 16 and 17 June.

**Mr. Goodlad:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs spoke to United States Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, on 18 and 20 June to brief him on European Community thinking on the conflict in Bosnia following the latest round of negotiations in Geneva on 16 June. We shall continue to maintain close contact on this question with the United States Administration.

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Bosnian-Muslim leader, Alija Izetbegovic in respect of fighting in Kakanj between 13 and 16 June; and what is his estimate of the numbers of civilians who have been displaced by Bosnian-Muslim forces.

**Mr. Goodlad:** During his meeting with President Izetbegovic on 14 June, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs expressed concern about reports of Muslim atrocities against Bosnian Croats in central Bosnia. Large numbers of civilians have been displaced by military action taken by all three parties in Bosnia; we have no reliable estimates of the numbers displaced by recent fighting in the Kakanj area.

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to President Izetbegovic regarding targeting of civilians by Muslim forces active in Bosnia-Herzegovina;

(2) if he will make a statement following his talks with President Izetbegovic on 14 June.

**Mr. Goodlad:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 16 June, at column *642*.

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Secretary-General of the United Nations about the deployment of United Nations monitors along the border between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

**Mr. Goodlad:** On 11 June, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 838 which calls on the Secretary-General to submit a report on options for the deployment of international observers on the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made no separate representations to the Secretary-General on this subject.

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to oppose the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into three ethnic entities; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** In its declaration of 22 June, the Copenhagen European Council stated that it would encourage the co-chairmen of the international conference for the former Yugoslavia to promote a fair and viable settlement acceptable to all three constituent people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and that it would not accept a territorial solution dictated by the Serbs and Croats at the expense of the Bosnian Muslims.

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what positive steps the Government of Serbia have taken since the beginning of June to assist the international community to find a solution to the Bosnian civil war; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** During discussions in Geneva on 16 June, President Milosevic of Serbia, together with President Tudjman of Croatia, proposed new territorial arrangements within the existing borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina. A political settlement between the parties will require Bosnian Serb withdrawal from territories seized by force and we call on the Government of Serbia to press for this. The Copenhagen European Council stated in its declaration of 22 June that we would not accept a territorial solution dictated by the Serbs and Croats at the expense of the Bosnian Muslims.

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed the possible use of air strikes against Bosnian Serb positions with the United States Administration.

**Mr. Goodlad:** We remain in close contact with the United States on the situation in Bosnia. Recent discussions on the use of air power, notably at the North Atlantic Council in Athens on 10 June, have focused on support for UNPROFOR in the performance of its overall mandate in Bosnia. Both we and the United States have offered aircraft for this purpose.

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the note Verbale S-24900-Add.27 of 16 March from the United Nations Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council.

**Mr. Goodlad:** Yes. A copy of the document will be sent to the library shortly.

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have received from *(a)* the Secretary-General of the United Nations and *(b)* the President of the Security Council about another meeting of the London conference; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** The United Nations Secretary-General has on a number of occasions, including in contacts with Her Majesty's Government, suggested that the international community should consider whether to convene the international conference for the former Yugoslavia. No proposals of this kind have been received from the President of the Security Council.

### Israel (Boycott)

**Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his oral answer of 16 June to the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), *Official Report*, column 850, what information he has to confirm the reports that the Kuwaiti Government have abandoned the application of the boycott of Israel to third countries.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The Kuwaiti authorities have told us that they are no longer applying the secondary and tertiary aspects of the boycott.

### Somalia

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the authority structure of the United Nations effort in Somalia; what is the relationship between the political and military wings of the United Nations effort; and if he will publish the organisational plan for civil objectives.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Admiral Howe is the United Nations Secretary-General's special representative in Somalia. He is the head of mission and has responsibility for all aspects of the United Nations operation there, reporting directly to the Secretary-General. The head of the military component of UNOSOM II is General Bir. There is close co-operation between the military and political wings.

Copies of all the United Nations Secretary-General's reports relating to the structure and objectives of the operation have been placed in the House Library.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place a report in the Library on the diplomatic activities and performance of the UN since the unified task force (UNITAF) was deployed in Somalia.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Copies of all the UN Secretary-General's reports on Somalia since the deployment of UNITAF have been placed in the House of Commons Library.

### Deportees (Sexual Offences)

**Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the number of United Kingdom nationals deported from other countries back to the United Kingdom as a result of convictions for sexual offences against children committed overseas.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** In the period 1 January 1991 to June 1993, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was notified of 439 deportations, one of which, in 1991, followed a conviction for sexual offences against minors.

### Kuwait (Prisoners)

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Iraqi Government for the safe return to Kuwait of the persons taken prisoner during the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** We raised this question on 24 May at the regular review by the UN Security Council on sanctions against Iraq. We will continue to raise the question at each review of sanctions until Iraq fulfils all its obligations under UN Security Council resolutions 686 and 687 to co-operate with the International Committee of the Red Cross in its attempts to gather information on Kuwaiti and other nationals missing in Iraq.

### Serbia and Montenegro (Sanctions)

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to review sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** We continue to review the effectiveness of the UN sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro. Any change to these sanctions would be dependent on the prevailing political situation.

## SCOTLAND

### Nursery Places

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what steps he has taken to provide specific resources to enable local education authorities to provide most nursery places in Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will now consider making the provision of nursery places a statutory duty of local authorities in Scotland.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The Government have no plans to impose a statutory duty on education authorities to provide nursery education. In our view, local authorities are best able to decide the most appropriate level of nursery school provision in their areas taking into account local needs and circumstances. The Government provide local authorities with resources to fund education through the aggregate external finance settlement. Under these arrangements, local authorities have the opportunity to increase nursery education spending where they view this as a priority.

### Forestry Commission

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his current policy in respect of the sale of Forestry Commission assets.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh,

Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), the then Secretary of State for Scotland, on 16 June 1989, *Official Report*, columns *544-45*. This policy has not changed.

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list camp sites, nature trails, cabin sites, picnic areas and other recreational facilities provided by the Forestry Commission, on a country or regional basis.

**Sir Hector Monro:** The Forestry Commission is prepairing a list of its recreation facilities and I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a copy as soon as possible and for further copies to be placed in the Library.

## Trees

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the acreage of tree cover per 1,000 head of population in the United Kingdom; and what comparative information he has for other European Community countries.

**Sir Hector Monro:** The areas of woodland, in hectares, per 1,000 head of population are as follows:

| | *Hectares* |
|---|---|
| United Kingdom | 40 |
| Belgium/Luxembourg | 90 |
| Denmark | 100 |
| France | 260 |
| Germany | 130 |
| Greece | 260 |
| Ireland | 100 |
| Italy | 120 |
| Netherlands | 20 |
| Portugal | 290 |
| Spain | 400 |
| EC Average | 170 |

## Nursery Places

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the ratio of nursery places to population in each of the regional council and local authorities for the most recent years for which figures are available.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The information requested is as follows:

*Education authority nursery pupils as a percentage of the total population in each education authority area: September 1992.*

| *Education Authority* | *Number of pupils as a percentage of total population*[1] |
|---|---|
| *Scotland* | 0·9 |
| Borders | 0·5 |
| Central | 1·0 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 0·8 |
| Fife | 1·3 |
| Grampian | 0·9 |
| Highland | 0·4 |
| Lothian | 1·2 |
| Strathclyde | 0·8 |
| Tayside | 0·9 |
| Orkney | 1·0 |
| Shetland | 1·2 |
| Western Isles | — |
| *Strathclyde Divisions:* | |
| Argyll and Bute | — |
| Ayr | 0·7 |
| Dunbarton | 0·6 |
| Glasgow | 1·3 |
| Lanark | 0·5 |
| Renfrew | 0·8 |

[1]The most recently available.

## Local Government (Mileage Rates)

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the value of the mileage rates for each engine capacity payable to local government representatives; and when the rates were originally set, together with the value these represent at current prices.

**Mr. Stewart:** The information is shown in pence per mile in the following table:

| | *Up to 999cc* | *1000cc-1199cc* | *Over 1199cc* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rate at 6 February 1970 (last change to travel and subsistence regulations) | 4·7 | 5·3 | 5·9 |
| Rate at 6 February 1970 uprated by GDP deflator to 1 January 1993 | 32·6 | 40·2 | 44·7 |
| Current rates from 1 January 1993 | 22·0 | 23·9 | 26·6 |

## Hospitals (Promotion and Publicity)

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to give guidance to health boards and trusts concerning the promotion and publicity of medical treatment within their hospitals.

**Mr. Stewart:** The patients charter, published in September 1991, makes it clear that patients are entitled to accurate, relevant and understandable explanations about their condition and treatment. Hospitals discharge this in a variety of ways—for example, by patient information leaflets provided to patients prior to or at the start of their treatment.

The first survey of users of the NHS in Scotland, published on 5 April 1993, indicates that overwhelmingly people are satisfied with the amount of information and explanation they receive.

We have therefore no plans to issue further guidance on this at present.

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to give guidance to health boards and trusts concerning the duty of confidentiality when dealing with publicity and promotion related to individual patients.

**Mr. Stewart:** A code of practice setting out principles to ensure the confidentiality of personal health information was distributed throughout the NHS in Scotland in June 1990. This supplemented earlier guidance on procedure for dealing with press, radio and television inquiries about patients. The situation is being kept under review.

### Renewables Order

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department in establishing a renewables order for Scotland.

**Mr. Stewart:** I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) on 21 April 1993, *Official Report*, column *113*.

### Consultants

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the mean age at which doctors achieve consultant status in Scotland.

**Mr. Stewart:** The mean age is 36 years as at 30 September 1992, the latest date for which information is available centrally.

### Cocaine Seizures

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many seizures of cocaine by *(a)* police and *(b)* customs in Scotland were recorded in each year since 1980.

**Mr. Stewart:** Information on the number of cocaine seizures by the police and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise since 1981 is published in "Statistics of drug seizures and offenders dealt with, United Kingdom, 1991 —Scotland tables", a copy of which is in the Library. Details of seizures for 1980 are given in the corresponding publication for 1990.

### Pain Relief Clinics

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the current waiting times for appointments at pain relief clinics in those hospitals offering this service.

**Mr. Stewart:** The information, which relates to the average waiting time for first appointments, is set out in the table.

*New outpatient attendances at pain relief clinics—mean wait over period 1 October 1992 to 31 March 1993*

| *Hospital* | *Mean wait (days)* |
|---|---|
| Crosshouse hospital | 53 |
| Ayr hospital | 48 |
| Inverclyde Royal hospital | 45 |
| Victoria hospital | 78 |
| Dunfermline and West Fife hospital | 93 |
| Glasgow Royal infirmary | 65 |
| Stobhill hospital | 91 |
| Victoria infirmary | 77 |
| Southern general hospital | 35 |
| Gartnavel general hospital | 143 |
| Caithness general hospital | 29 |
| Monklands district general hospital | 66 |
| Law hospital | 22 |
| Aberdeen Royal infirmary | 51 |
| Royal infirmary, Edinburgh | 95 |
| Dundee Royal infirmary | 127 |
| Falkirk and District Royal infirmary | 48 |
| Dumfries and Galloway Royal infirmary | 65 |
| All clinics | 78 |

### Drug Overdoses

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the number of hospital treatments for overdoses, listed by each type of drug involved, since 1988.

**Mr. Stewart:** The number of inpatient hospital episodes in Scotland for drug overdose listed by type of drug or agent for the years 1988-1992 is shown in the table. Information on out-patient treatments is not available.

*Emergency inpatient admissions to acute general hospitals with a diagnosis of poisoning by drugs or drug dependence or abuse, 1988-1992*

| *Principal diagnosis* | *Year of discharge* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* | *1992* |
| Poisoning by Antibiotics | 170 | 117 | 152 | 157 | 153 |
| Poisoning by Other Anti-Infectives | 49 | 50 | 46 | 54 | 53 |
| Poisoning by Hormones and Synthetic Substitutes | 132 | 118 | 133 | 130 | 152 |
| Poisoning by Primarily Systemic Agents | 87 | 103 | 121 | 109 | 120 |
| Poisoning by Agents Primarily Affecting Blood Constituents | 113 | 92 | 110 | 118 | 113 |
| Poisoning by Analgesics, Antipyretics and Antirheumatics | 4,138 | 4,316 | 5,094 | 5,788 | 6,578 |
| Poisoning by Anticonvulsants and Anti-Parkinsonism Drugs | 320 | 299 | 335 | 363 | 375 |
| Poisoning by Sedatives and Hypnotics | 486 | 453 | 433 | 481 | 465 |
| Poisoning by Other Central Nervous System Depressants | 14 | 9 | 13 | 12 | 20 |
| Poisoning by Psychotropic Agents | 3,803 | 3,630 | 3,746 | 3,694 | 4,077 |
| Poisoning by Central Nervous System Stimulants | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 27 |
| Poisoning by Drugs Primarily Affecting the Autonomic Nervous System | 93 | 84 | 80 | 111 | 148 |
| Poisoning by Agents Primarily Affecting the Cardiovascular System | 250 | 194 | 231 | 238 | 275 |
| Poisoning by Agents Primarily Affecting the Gastrointestinal System | 59 | 67 | 63 | 65 | 80 |
| Poisoning by Water, Mineral and Uric Acid Metabolism Drugs | 109 | 86 | 83 | 101 | 64 |
| Poisoning by Agents Primarily Acting on Smooth/Skeletal Muscles. Respiration System | 172 | 160 | 192 | 204 | 228 |
| Poisoning by Agents Primarily Affecting Skin Mucous Membrane: Ophth. Otorhin. Dental Drug | 120 | 125 | 119 | 124 | 108 |
| Poisoning by Other and Unspecified Drugs and Medicaments | 1,684 | 1,375 | 1,525 | 1,477 | 1,664 |
| Poisoning by Bacterial Vaccines | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Poisoning by Other Vaccines and Biological Substances | 6 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Total | 11,807 | 11,281 | 12,481 | 13,236 | 14,701 |
| Drug Dependence (See Note 2) | 31 | 26 | 31 | 41 | 35 |
| Nondependent Drug Abuse (See Note 2) | 1,161 | 1,137 | 1,334 | 1,444 | 1,555 |

*Notes:*
1. Cases included in the table were admitted to acute general hospitals as an emergency with poisoning by drugs and medicaments coming within the groups defined in the international Classification of Diseases codes 960-979.
The figures include patients with accidental overdose and deliberate self poisoning but exclude any cases where poisoning was due to drugs in therapeutic use.
2. Also shown are figures for patients who were admitted as an emergency with a primary diagnosis of drug dependence or non-dependent drug abuse and these can include overdoses and abnormal reactions to a variety of drugs.

### Drugs Seizures

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of police seizures of *(a)* MDMA, *(b)* LSD, *(c)* tranquillisers, *(d)* cannabis and *(e)* solvents in Scotland in each year since 1988.

**Mr. Stewart:** Information on police seizures of MDMA, LSD, and cannabis since 1988 is published in "Statistics of drug seizures and offenders dealt with, United Kingdom, 1991—Scotland tables", a copy of which is in the Library. Tranquillisers, along with hypnotics, although not separately identified in the tables, comprise the main drugs in class C, for which the number of seizures is shown. Solvents are neither illegal substances nor subject to the kind of controls placed on pharmaceutical products; and the question of police seizures does not, therefore, arise.

### Drug Misuse

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will carry out an annual survey on the extent of drug misuse in Scotland.

**Mr. Stewart:** Because the unauthorised possession and supply of many addictive drugs is an illicit activity, there are obvious difficulties in producing accurate figures of the number of drug misusers in Scotland on a recurring basis. Among other indicators, however, the Scottish drug misuse database, which was established in 1990, is contributing increasingly to current knowledge of drug misuse prevalence, and the scope for its further development is kept under review. Research also has an important role and relevant projects are commissioned and funded as appropriate.

### Nuclear Industry

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with Scottish local authorities concerning the nuclear industry in Scotland.

**Mr. Stewart:** My right hon. Friend has had no recent discussions with local authorities about the general question of the nuclear industry in Scotland.

### Jury Trials

**Mr. George Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* guilty, *(b)* not guilty and *(c)* not proven verdicts were handed down in jury trials in Scottish courts in each of the last five years.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The available information is given in the table.

*Persons called to solemn procedure courts by outcome 1987-1991*
*Scotland*

| Year | PNGA[1] of deserted | Acquitted not guilty | Acquitted not proven | Charge proved | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *High Courts* | | | | | |
| 1987 | 36 | 147 | 72 | 858 | 1,113 |
| 1988 | 51 | 95 | 77 | 801 | 1,024 |
| 1989 | 50 | 96 | 73 | 746 | 965 |
| 1990 | 61 | 111 | 70 | 757 | 999 |
| 1991 | 81 | 94 | 78 | 743 | 996 |
| *Sheriff Court* | | | | | |
| 1987 | 88 | 426 | 140 | 2,789 | 3,443 |
| 1988 | 149 | 272 | 135 | 2,686 | 3,242 |
| 1989 | 247 | 310 | 166 | 2,613 | 3,336 |
| 1990 | 323 | 354 | 172 | 2,749 | 3,598 |
| 1991 | 361 | 281 | 130 | 2,619 | 3,391 |

[1] Plea of not guilty accepted.

### Courts (Decrees and Extracts)

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will institute an inquiry into the procedures to be followed and the factors to be taken into account when a change in the rate of interest in decrees and extracts of the Scottish courts takes place.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I have no plans to bring forward amendments to the existing statutory provisions which place responsibility on the Lord President of the Court of Session for changes in the rate of interest on decrees and extract decrees of the Scottish courts.

### Act of Sederunt

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he had with the Lord President of the Court of Session before the Act of Sederunt (Interest in Sheriff Court Decrees and Extracts) 1993 and the Act of Sederunt (Rules of the Court of Session Amendment) (Interest in Decrees and Extracts) 1993 both became law.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** None.

### Education Authorities

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the annual expenditure on administration by each local education authority in each of the last three years.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* Based on information provided by local authorities in local financial returns, the figures set out in the table detail net expenditure—excluding loans and leasing charges and revenue contributions to capital—on administration by individual local authority education departments for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92. Information for 1992-93 is not yet available.

£000's

| | 1990-91 | 1991-92 |
|---|---|---|
| Borders | 2,576 | 2,958 |
| Central | 5,427 | 5,583 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 3,437 | 3,844 |
| Fife | 6,726 | 7,823 |
| Grampian | 7,765 | 5,416 |
| Highland | 4,056 | 3,939 |
| Lothian | 17,130 | 18,147 |
| Strathclyde | 31,517 | 22,803 |
| Tayside | 11,022 | 5,562 |
| Orkney | 577 | 445 |
| Shetland | 757 | 1,083 |
| Western Isles | 1,087 | 2,097 |
| Scotland | 92,077 | 79,700 |

### Health Board Salaries

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total cost of salaries for all *(a)* general managers and chief executives, *(b)* directors of finance or equivalent, *(c)* directors of human resources, personnel or equivalent, *(d)* directors of nursing services or equivalent and *(e)* chief medical officers or equivalent in January 1992 for all Scottish health boards prior to reorganisation of the NHS; and what is the current cost in each category for all health boards and NHS trusts in Scotland.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]*: The information requested is not available centrally.

### Water and Sewerage

**Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a detailed breakdown of his estimate of the costs associated with upgrading the Scottish water and sewerage system to meet EC standards; what improvements to the system were assumed; what assumptions were made of the sources from which capital would be raised; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]*: The European Community directives with the most significant financial implications for capital expenditure are the drinking water directive and the urban waste water treatment directive which are estimated at £1·2 billion and £1·3 billion respectively over the next 15 years.

The estimates are based on improvements to water mains, water treatment works, sewerage, and sewage treatment and disposal works, and are unaffected by the source of capital.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### War Widows (Pensions)

**Mr. Butcher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the net cost, allowing for a reduction in income support, of topping up the pensions of British widows of New Zealand soldiers currently residing in the United Kingdom to the same level as the widows' pension received by British war widows.

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the net cost of increasing the pensions of British widows of New Zealand service men now residing in the United Kingdom to the level of the widows' pension received by British war widows.

**Mr. Hague:** The information to enable us to estimate costs accurately is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, on the basis that there are 38 such widows, it is estimated that the gross cost would be in the region of £200,000 per year.

### New Age Travellers

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures he has taken to ensure that benefit payment officers will operate all relevant rules, including the genuinely seeking work rule, on new age travellers claiming benefits this summer.

**Mr. Burt:** I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wansdyke (Mr. Aspinwall) on 18 June at column *751*.

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in *(a)* Fife and *(b)* North East Fife are in receipt of the mobility component of the disability living allowance.

**Mr. Scott:** I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Water Charges

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many requests nationally, and by region, for direct payments from a recipient's income support were made last year and the year before for help paying water debt; and how many were refused.

**Mr. Burt:** Regions were replaced by territories in April 1990. The information requested in respect of each of the Benefits Agency's three territories for the years April 1991 to March 1992 and April 1992 to March 1993 is in the table.

| | Scotland[1] and North Territory | Wales and Central England Territory | Southern Territory | National total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1991-92* | | | | |
| Number of applications made | 28,328 | 69,665 | 34,239 | 132,232 |
| Number of applications rejected | 5,439 | 12,812 | 7,288 | 25,539 |
| *1992-93* | | | | |
| Number of applications made | 34,657 | 77,691 | 56,694 | 169,042 |
| Number of applications rejected | 5,584 | 11,347 | 10,566 | 27,497 |

[1] Figures refer to North Territory only as different arrangements for payment of water charges apply in Scotland.
*Note:* The figures used are based on Management Information Statistics collected by the Benefits Agency in the two 12, month periods ending March 1992 and March 1993. These figures are provisional and may be subject to amendment.

## Attendance Allowance

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many attendance allowance claims have been refused, broken down by the reasons for refusal, in each month since May 1992 at each disability benefit centre and for the country as a whole.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 22 June 1993:*

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many attendance allowance claims have been refused, broken down by the reasons for refusal, in each month since May 1992 at each disability benefit centre and for the country as a whole.

The information you requested is shown in the attached appendix.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report* and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

*Appendix*

*Refusals for claims to attendance allowance by month and by disability benefit centre*

*May 1992*

| | *Medical* | *Others* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh | 297 | 0 | 297 |
| Newcastle | 592 | 0 | 592 |
| Leeds | 653 | 0 | 653 |
| Manchester | 648 | 0 | 648 |
| Bootle | 373 | 0 | 373 |
| Birmingham | 1,462 | 0 | 1,462 |
| Bristol | 316 | 0 | 316 |
| Cardiff | 147 | 0 | 147 |
| Wembley | 1,393 | 1 | 1,394 |
| Sutton | 584 | 1 | 585 |
| Glasgow | — | — | — |
| TOTALS | 6,465 | 2 | 6,467 |

*June 1992*

| | *Medical* | *Others* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh | 1,261 | 0 | 1,261 |
| Newcastle | 423 | 0 | 423 |
| Leeds | 449 | 0 | 449 |
| Manchester | 560 | 0 | 560 |
| Bootle | 342 | 0 | 342 |
| Birmingham | 1,189 | 0 | 1,189 |
| Bristol | 311 | 0 | 311 |
| Cardiff | 590 | 0 | 590 |
| Wembley | 1,034 | 1 | 1,035 |
| Sutton | 798 | 0 | 798 |
| Glasgow | — | — | — |
| TOTALS | 6,957 | 1 | 6,958 |

*July 1992*

| | *Medical* | *Others* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh | 796 | 0 | 796 |
| Newcastle | 532 | 1 | 533 |
| Leeds | 526 | 0 | 526 |
| Manchester | 900 | 0 | 900 |
| Bootle | 586 | 0 | 586 |
| Birmingham | 961 | 0 | 961 |
| Bristol | 566 | 0 | 566 |
| Cardiff | 2,406 | 0 | 2,406 |
| Wembley | 801 | 0 | 801 |
| Sutton | 1,320 | 0 | 1,320 |
| Glasgow | — | — | — |
| TOTALS | 9,394 | 1 | 9,395 |

*August 1992*

| | *Medical* | *Others* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh | 622 | 0 | 622 |
| Newcastle | 565 | 0 | 565 |
| Leeds | 660 | 0 | 660 |
| Manchester | 1,106 | 0 | 1,106 |
| Bootle | 468 | 0 | 468 |
| Birmingham | 1,388 | 0 | 1,388 |
| Bristol | 539 | 0 | 539 |
| Cardiff | 1,372 | 0 | 1,372 |
| Wembley | 446 | 0 | 446 |
| Sutton | 1,029 | 2 | 1,031 |
| Glasgow | — | — | — |
| TOTALS | 8,195 | 2 | 8,197 |

*September 1992*

| | *Medical* | *Others* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh | 1,905 | 0 | 1,905 |
| Newcastle | 922 | 0 | 922 |
| Leeds | 1,070 | 1 | 1,071 |
| Manchester | 1,230 | 1 | 1,231 |
| Bootle | 959 | 0 | 959 |
| Birmingham | 2,674 | 1 | 2,675 |
| Bristol | 791 | 0 | 791 |
| Cardiff | 1,338 | 0 | 1,338 |
| Wembley | 1,219 | 1 | 1,220 |
| Sutton | 2,288 | 0 | 2,288 |
| Glasgow | — | — | — |
| TOTALS | 14,396 | 4 | 14,400 |

*October 1992*

| | *Medical* | *Others* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh | 3,194 | 0 | 3,194 |
| Newcastle | 689 | 0 | 689 |
| Leeds | 1,163 | 0 | 1,163 |
| Manchester | 1,110 | 3 | 1,113 |
| Bootle | 912 | 0 | 912 |
| Birmingham | 3,527 | 2 | 3,529 |
| Bristol | 884 | 5 | 889 |
| Cardiff | 1,086 | 0 | 1,086 |
| Wembley | 1,544 | 2 | 1,546 |
| Sutton | 1,405 | 1 | 1,406 |
| Glasgow | — | — | — |
| TOTALS | 15,514 | 13 | 15,527 |

*November 1992*

| | Medical | Others | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh | 1,836 | 0 | 1,836 |
| Newcastle | 666 | 0 | 666 |
| Leeds | 828 | 2 | 830 |
| Manchester | 1,018 | 3 | 1,021 |
| Bootle | 718 | 0 | 718 |
| Birmingham | 1,709 | 2 | 1,711 |
| Bristol | 423 | 5 | 428 |
| Cardiff | 554 | 0 | 554 |
| Wembley | 945 | 4 | 949 |
| Sutton | 719 | 0 | 719 |
| Glasgow | — | — | — |
| TOTALS | 9,416 | 16 | 9,432 |

*December 1992*

| | Medical | Others | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh | 1,175 | 0 | 1,175 |
| Newcastle | 524 | 2 | 526 |
| Leeds | 772 | 0 | 772 |
| Manchester | 557 | 4 | 561 |
| Bootle | 430 | 1 | 431 |
| Birmingham | 1,435 | 1 | 1,436 |
| Bristol | 442 | 1 | 443 |
| Cardiff | 792 | 0 | 792 |
| Wembley | 657 | 1 | 658 |
| Sutton | 760 | 1 | 761 |
| Glasgow | — | — | — |
| TOTALS | 7,544 | 11 | 7,555 |

*January 1993*

| | Medical | Others | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh | 1,441 | 0 | 1,441 |
| Newcastle | 464 | 1 | 465 |
| Leeds | 1,114 | 0 | 1,114 |
| Manchester | 966 | 2 | 968 |
| Bootle | 747 | 0 | 747 |
| Birmingham | 2,173 | 1 | 2,174 |
| Bristol | 583 | 0 | 584 |
| Cardiff | 1,043 | 0 | 1,043 |
| Wembley | 760 | 0 | 760 |
| Sutton | 1,584 | 1 | 1,585 |
| Glasgow | — | — | — |
| TOTALS | 10,875 | 5 | 10,880 |

*February 1993*

| | Medical | Others | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh | 1,279 | 0 | 1,279 |
| Newcastle | 516 | 1 | 517 |
| Leeds | 1,093 | 1 | 1,094 |
| Manchester | 1,155 | 0 | 1,155 |
| Bootle | 726 | 0 | 726 |
| Birmingham | 1,452 | 0 | 1,452 |
| Bristol | 551 | 1 | 552 |
| Cardiff | 903 | 0 | 903 |
| Wembley | 695 | 1 | 695 |
| Sutton | 1,840 | 0 | 1,840 |
| Glasgow | — | — | — |
| TOTALS | 10,210 | 4 | 10,214 |

*March 1993*

| | Medical | Others | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh | 758 | 0 | 758 |
| Newcastle | 643 | 0 | 643 |
| Leeds | 1,533 | 7 | 1,540 |
| Manchester | 1,612 | 1 | 1,613 |
| Bootle | 923 | 0 | 923 |
| Birmingham | 2,173 | 3 | 2,176 |
| Bristol | 863 | 0 | 863 |
| Cardiff | 1,306 | 0 | 1,306 |
| Wembley | 1,328 | 3 | 1,331 |
| Sutton | 2,274 | 4 | 2,278 |
| Glasgow | 1,101 | 0 | 1,101 |
| TOTALS | 14,514 | 18 | 14,532 |

*April 1993*

| | Medical | Others | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh | 526 | 0 | 526 |
| Newcastle | 514 | 0 | 514 |
| Leeds | 1,448 | 0 | 1,448 |
| Manchester | 1,200 | 3 | 1,203 |
| Bootle | 725 | 0 | 725 |
| Birmingham | 1,953 | 7 | 1,960 |
| Bristol | 783 | 0 | 783 |
| Cardiff | 936 | 1 | 937 |
| Wembley | 1,371 | 2 | 1,373 |
| Sutton | 1,881 | 5 | 1,886 |
| Glasgow | 1,540 | 0 | 1,540 |
| TOTALS | 12,877 | 18 | 12,895 |

*May 1993*

| | Medical | Others | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh | 472 | 0 | 472 |
| Newcastle | 515 | 0 | 515 |
| Leeds | 1,351 | 5 | 1,356 |
| Manchester | 880 | 2 | 882 |
| Bootle | 663 | 0 | 663 |
| Birmingham | 1,472 | 1 | 1,473 |
| Bristol | 764 | 1 | 765 |
| Cardiff | 591 | 0 | 591 |
| Wembley | 1,183 | 4 | 1,187 |
| Sutton | 2,548 | 2 | 2,550 |
| Glasgow | 892 | 0 | 892 |
| TOTALS | 11,331 | 15 | 11,346 |

*Cumulative 1993*

| | Medical | Others | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh | 15,562 | 0 | 15,562 |
| Newcastle | 7,565 | 5 | 7,560 |
| Leeds | 12,660 | 16 | 12,676 |
| Manchester | 12,942 | 19 | 12,961 |
| Bootle | 8,572 | 1 | 8,573 |
| Birmingham | 23,568 | 18 | 23,586 |
| Bristol | 7,816 | 13 | 7,829 |
| Cardiff | 13,064 | 1 | 13,065 |
| Wembley | 13,376 | 20 | 13,396 |
| Sutton | 19,030 | 17 | 19,047 |
| Glasgow | 3,533 | 0 | 3,533 |
| TOTALS | 137,688 | 110 | 137,798 |

*Notes:*

1. These figures exclude a small and unknown number of claims decided at the Attendance Allowance Unit.
2. The other reasons for refusal are on the grounds of residence or presence conditions not being satisfied or because of overlapping with Constant Attendance Allowance.
3. The term "medical" used in the table heading means rejection on the grounds of the *effect* of any given medical condition as opposed to rejection because of the type of condition.

### Resettlement Units

**Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have been accommodated in the course of the last two years in the resettlement units managed by the resettlement units executive agency.

**Mr. Hague:** The management of the Resettlement Agency is a matter for Mr. Tony Ward, the chief executive. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Tony Ward to Mr. Nick Raynsford, dated 22 June 1993:*

As the Resettlement Agency is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you directly to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him, about the numbers of people that have been accommodated in the course of the last two years in resettlement units. This is something which falls within the responsibilities he has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Before the dates of 1 June 1991-31 May 1993, 827,090 bed spaces were occupied in resettlement units managed by the Resettlement Units Executive Agency. You will appreciate that the number of beds occupied masks a complex situation. Some customers stay for one night, and others for considerably longer, whilst some customers have presented themselves for admissions at different units over the two year period. If you would like any further information, please let me know.

### Pensions (Payment)

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many senior citizens in the Durham city area collect their state retirement pensions from post offices and sub-post offices.

**Mr. Hague:** The administration of retirement pension is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Gerry Steinberg, dated 22 June 1993:*

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many senior citizens in the Durham city area collect their state retirement pensions from post offices and sub-post offices.

As at 02/05/93, approximately 10,650 customers in the Durham city area were receiving state retirement pensions from post offices and sub-post offices.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list all the market tests that have taken place in her Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

**Mr. Jack:** Since November 1992 the following market tests have taken place:

Free Advice on Farm Diversification
Free Advice on Farm Woodlands
Building Estates Management (Part)
General Recruitment (Up to Grade 7)
Library Services (Books and Journals)
Royal Navy Surface Surveillance (Fisheries Protection Contract)
Relocation Work (Central Science Laboratories)

In the cases of free advice on farm diversification, and farm woodlands the provision in question is being ended as part of public expenditure decisions.

In all the other cases the services listed in the table have been contracted out.

### Fallen Animals

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has had on the cost and inconvenience to farmers arising from new regulations for slaughtering injured or fallen animals; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Soames:** The Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992 require that if a "casualty" animal slaughtered outside an abattoir is to go for human consumption, it must receive an ante-mortem inspection from a veterinarian who should then observe the correct bleeding of the animal and certify the carcase.

There has been some concern about the logistical problems of getting the slaughterman and vet together on the farm at the same time and the associated costs of a failure to do so. We are considering the problem in the context of the review of the regulatory burdens which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has commissioned. In the meantime, I cannot advise anyone to ignore the law.

The welfare of the animal must be paramount. If it is necessary to prevent suffering, animals should be slaughtered on the spot even if this means that the carcase cannot be sold for human consumption.

### Lindane

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received concerning the sale in the United Kingdom of chocolate containing traces of the pesticide Lindane; and what information she has as to which countries ban the use of Lindane.

**Mr. Soames:** I have not received any representations concerning the traces of Lindane found in samples of chocolate in the United Kingdom. Within the European Community, Lindane is authorised for use in all member states. We understand from data supplied to UNEP's international register for potentially toxic chemicals that Lindane is banned for use in Argentina, the former Soviet Union and Sweden.

### Hydrocarbons (Coastal Waters)

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what regular monitoring her Department carries out of background levels of hydrocarbons in United Kingdom coastal waters.

**Mr. Jack:** This Ministry's Directorate of Fisheries Research has monitored hydrocarbon concentrations in United Kingdom coastal waters since the 1970s. The results are published regularly in the directorate's aquatic environment monitoring report series. The latest relevant reports, numbered 26 and 30, are available in the Library.

### Agriculture Council (Voting)

**Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) on 15 June, *Official Report*, column *483*, what were the voting figures for each decision taken at the European Community's Agriculture Council held on 14 June; and if she will make it her policy to include in future statements on Council meetings information on whether formal votes were taken.

**Mr. Jack:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 21 June, at columns *70-71*.

## EDUCATION

### Agency Teachers

**Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what action he is taking to ensure that teachers recruited through commercial teacher recruitment agencies are properly vetted by the police prior to their taking up their teaching posts; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he is taking to inform head-teachers recruiting agency teachers about the status of overseas teachers with respect to their qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The Department is currently consulting other Government Departments with a view to preparing a code of practice for teacher employment agencies and detailed guidelines to schools on the employment of teachers through agencies.

### School Tests

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of schools in each local education authority did not carry the recent tests for 14-year-old pupils.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** This information is not available.

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will estimate the number of hours per week teachers are occupied in marking test papers for pupils aged *(a)* seven, *(b)* 11 and *(c)* 14 years.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The information is not available in the precise format requested. On average, teachers of seven-year-olds should be able to administer this Summer's tests in English, mathematics and science in a total of roughly 24 hours. This excludes the time taken to test pupils' ability to read aloud. Teachers have discretion to spread out these tests between half-term in the spring term and four weeks before the end of the summer term.

Tests for 11-year-olds are not yet mandatory. One of the main purposes of this summer's pilot of prototype tests for this age group is to shed light on what is manageable for teachers including marking times.

Based on experience in the trials, it is estimated that a subject teacher with a typical class of 27 14-year-olds, might spend roughly seven to 11 hours marking the mathematics tests; just over 11 hours marking the science papers, between 11 and 13·5 hours marking the English papers, and 7·5 hours on the technology papers.

### Teacher Training

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on his proposal to train primary school teachers on 12-month courses; what assessment he has made of how the quality of training will compare with conventional teacher training courses; and what salary structure he expects teachers trained by this scheme to receive.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** My right hon. Friend has recently issued for consultation proposals for new one-year courses for the training of specialist nursery and infant teachers. Entry to such courses would be restricted to mature people, with considerable experience of working with young children, who possess the qualifications for entry to higher education and are capable of attaining the required competences within one year. My right hon. Friend has invited views about the nature, organisation and content of such courses, which would complement and not replace existing routes into primary teaching. Those successfully completing the courses would receive specialised qualified teacher status which entitled them to teach pupils up to the end of key stage 1. Qualified teachers are paid in accordance with the scales and other provisions set out in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document.

### Parents Charter

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the independent market research among parents on their views on the parents charter referred to on page 12 of the first report on the citizens charter, column 2101.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The market research was carried out to enable officials to prepare advice for Ministers. It is not the usual practice of my right hon. Friend to publish either officials' advice or the research underlying it.

### Further Education Colleges

**Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for education how much money was given to further education colleges in 1992-93 to prepare them for incorporation; and what provision was made in the conditions of grant for bonuses to senior staff.

**Mr. Boswell:** Transitional funding of some £18·3 million was made available in 1992-93 by the Further Education Funding Council to institutions joining the further education sector in England. All colleges in England received a minimum of £35,000, which they could use for any purpose that directly assisted with their preparations for independence. The position in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

### Bursaries

**Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will announce the postgraduate bursary and studentship rates payable by his Department for the academic year 1993-94.

**Mr. Boswell:** The main maintenance rates under the Department's own postgraduate awards scheme for certain professional and vocational courses in the academic year 1993-94 will be as follows—1992-93 rates are shown in brackets:

| | £ | £ |
|---|---|---|
| *Bursaries* | | |
| London | 3,170 | (3,085) |
| Elsewhere | 2,500 | (2,435) |
| Parental home | 1,890 | (1,840) |
| *Studentships* | | |
| London | 5,340 | (5,195) |
| Elsewhere | 4,245 | (4,130) |
| Parental home | 3,130 | (3,045) |

These represent increases of 2·75 per cent. on the current year's rates. The relevant supplementary allowances will be increased broadly in line.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Building Workers (Training Levy)

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what complaints he has received on the imposition of a training levy on building workers with 714 or SC60 certificates; and if he will make it his policy that such deductions should be halted forthwith.

**Miss Widdecombe:** We have received no complaints about the imposition of a training levy from building workers who have identified themselves as having 714 or SC60 certificates.

Under the legislation the liability to pay Industry Training Board levy lies with the employer. If the employer attempts to pass the levy on to the employee or sub contractor, there is no legal obligation for them to pay it.

### Part-time Work

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females were working part-time in Great Britain in April 1992; and what proportion of these workers earned between *(a)* £5·20 and £5·50 per hour, *(b)* £5·50 and £5·60 per hour, *(c)* £3·90 and £4 per hour and *(d)* £3·20 and £3·30 per hour.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Estimates of the numbers of employees in employment at March 1992 in Great Britain were 1,048,000 part-time men and 4,709,000 part-time women.

The corresponding information for the distributions of hourly earnings can be found in the table.

*Part time employees on adult rates—pay unaffected by absence*
*Proportion with gross hourly earnings between the following amounts*
*April 1992*

| | *Males* *Per cent.* | *Females* *Per cent.* |
|---|---|---|
| £3·20 to £3·30 | 3·2 | 3·9 |
| £3·90 to £4·00 | 3·7 | 3·0 |
| £5·20 to £5·50 | 2·6 | 3·6 |
| £5·50 to £5·60 | 1·0 | 1·0 |

*Source:* New Earnings Survey.

## WALES

### Taf Merthyr Colliery

**Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he and the agencies in Wales he supports financially intend to take to alleviate the problems arising from the closure of the Taf Merthyr colliery, Bedlinog.

**Mr. Redwood:** A regeneration programme for those areas affected by the coal review valued at £43 million was announced by my predecessor last October. This includes a wide range of measures for the Taff Merthyr area by my Department, the Welsh Development Agency, the relevant training and enterprise councils and the Employment Service, in addition to significant initiatives taken by British Coal Enterprise.

Following the closure of Taff Merthyr colliery, I am relaxing eligibility conditions of the Government's adult training programmes to allow immediate entry to training, retraining and business start up for ex-colliery employees and others within the affected area. I will formally approve further training and employment measures for the areas affected by coal closure in the near future.

### NHS Staff

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many NHS staff were employed as *(a)* general/senior managers and *(b)* administrators and clerical staff in Wales in each year since 1989-90.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 18 January, at column 57. The validated 1992 figure for clerical and administrative staff is 8,347.

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the numbers of NHS nursing and midwifery staff by pay grades within the groups of senior nursing and midwifery staff, educational staff, clinical nursing and midwifery staff, learners and other staff; and if he will list the number of Project 2000 nursing students in 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992, and the percentage change between each year.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The requested information is given in the table.

| | *Staff in post as at 30 September (whole-time equivalents)* | | | | *Percentage change* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* | *1992*[1] | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92*[1] |
| Learner nurses: | | | | | | | |
| NA21 Pupil nurse | 288 | 176 | 137 | 74 | −38·3 | −22·2 | −46·0 |
| NA31 Student nurse | 2,830 | 2,891 | 2,774 | 1,872 | 2·2 | −4·1 | −32·5 |
| NA41 RGN/RSCN | — | 8 | 23 | 23 | n.a | 193·7 | 1·3 |
| Project 2000 student bursaries: | | | | | | | |
| NB21 Under 26 years | — | — | — | 62 | n.a | n.a | n.a |

| | | Staff in post as at 30 September (whole-time equivalents) | | | | Percentage change | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992[1] | 1989-90 | 1990-91 | 1991-92[1] |
| NB31 | 26 years and over | — | — | — | 37 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Day nursery staff: | | | | | | | | |
| NM11 | Nursery assistant (19 and over) | — | — | 1 | — | n/a | n/a | −100·0 |
| NM21 | Nursery nurse—NNEB | 2 | 3 | 6 | 10 | 32·2 | 140·7 | 53·0 |
| NM41 | Deputy matron | — | — | 1 | 1 | n/a | n/a | 0·0 |
| NM61 | Matron | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0·0 | 100·0 | 0·0 |
| Clinical grades: | | | | | | | | |
| NP01 | Grade A (under 18) | 5 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 21·1 | −62·7 | 126·4 |
| NP06 | Grade A (18 and over) | 5,899 | 5,607 | 5,530 | 5,897 | −4·9 | −1·4 | 6·6 |
| NP16 | Grade B | 1,162 | 1,414 | 1,476 | 1,440 | 21·7 | 4·4 | −2·4 |
| NP21 | Grade C | 1,247 | 986 | 872 | 758 | −20·9 | −11·5 | −13·0 |
| NP26 | Grade D (2nd level enrolled nurse) | 3,317 | 3,370 | 3,177 | 2,924 | 1·6 | −5·7 | −8·0 |
| NP31 | Grade E (1st level registered nurses) | 1,023 | 1,201 | 1,504 | 1,854 | 17·4 | 25·2 | 23·3 |
| NP36 | Grade E | 5,178 | 5,262 | 5,339 | 5,511 | 1·6 | 1·5 | 3·2 |
| NP41 | Grade F | 1,820 | 1,860 | 1,868 | 1,955 | 2·2 | 0·5 | 4·7 |
| NP46 | Grade G | 3,755 | 3,764 | 3,728 | 3,611 | 0·2 | −1·0 | −3·1 |
| NP51 | Grade H | 568 | 600 | 631 | 670 | 5·6 | 5·2 | 6·1 |
| NP56 | Grade I | 410 | 424 | 383 | 347 | 3·3 | −9·7 | −9·4 |
| Education staff: | | | | | | | | |
| NR01 | Grade 1 | 51 | 61 | 50 | 34 | 21·1 | −17·7 | −32·6 |
| NR11 | Grade 2 | 244 | 250 | 263 | 237 | 2·4 | 5·4 | −10·2 |
| NR21 | Grade 3 | 39 | 42 | 28 | 10 | 7·7 | −33·3 | −64·3 |
| NR31 | Grade 4 | 18 | 20 | 29 | 43 | 11·1 | 45·0 | 48·3 |
| NR41 | Grade 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 6 | −50·0 | 100·0 | 200·0 |
| NR51 | Grade 6 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 25·0 | −60·0 | −50·0 |
| NR61 | Grade 7 | — | 1 | 2 | 2 | n/a | 100·0 | 0·0 |
| Senior nurses[2]: | | | | | | | | |
| NT11 | Senior nurse 6 | 36 | 11 | 1 | — | −69·8 | −92·6 | −100·0 |
| NT16 | Senior nurse 5 | 14 | 15 | 1 | — | 7·1 | −93·3 | −100·0 |
| NT21 | Senior nurse 4 | 35 | 30 | 5 | 1 | −14·3 | −83·3 | −80·0 |
| NT26 | Senior nurse 3 | 16 | 18 | 4 | 2 | 12·5 | −77·8 | −50·0 |
| NT31 | Senior nurse 2 | 8 | 8 | 3 | — | 0·0 | −60·7 | −100·0 |
| NT36 | Senior nurse 1 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 4 | −22·2 | −42·9 | 0·0 |
| NT41 | Senior nurse 1+ | 1 | — | 1 | — | −100·0 | n/a | −100·0 |
| Senior nurses/midwives[2]: | | | | | | | | |
| NX01 | District/unit | — | — | 59 | 79 | n/a | n/a | 33·9 |
| NX02 | District/unit | — | — | 4 | 3 | n/a | n/a | −25·0 |
| NX11 | Unit—1st level | — | — | 30 | 34 | n/a | n/a | 13·3 |
| NX12 | Unit—1st level | — | — | 2 | 1 | n/a | n/a | −50·0 |
| NX21 | District—1st level | — | — | 3 | 3 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| NX31 | Region | — | — | 1 | 1 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Obsolete grades[2]: | | | | | | | | |
| NW | Senior nurse—education | 10 | 6 | 2 | — | −40·0 | −66·7 | −100·0 |
| NC | Nursing officer | 2 | — | — | — | −100·0 | n/a | n/a |
| ND | Director of nurse education | 39 | 40 | 9 | 5 | 2·6 | −77·5 | −44·4 |
| NF | CANO | 4 | 5 | 2 | — | 25·0 | −60·0 | −100·0 |
| | Project 2000 nursing students[3] | — | — | — | 421 | n/a | n/a | n/a |

n/a = Not applicable.

[1] The 1992 figures exclude about 64 Wte nursing and midwifery staff employed by Pembrokeshire NHS Trust on local payscales to whom the standard pay grades do not apply. In addition to the figures shown there were about 1,000 student nurses at 30 September 1992 who had been reclassified as students following the introduction of Project 2000 nursing education reforms.

[2] Since 1 January 1991 staff on "obsolete" grades shown and senior nurse payscales have been eligible to transfer to new senior nurse payscales (NX).

[3] As at 31 March.

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the numbers of health service directly employed staff by main staff group for each year from 1987 to 1992; and if he will give the changes between each year and over the whole period in numbers and percentages.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The requested information is shown in the table:

*Staff in post as at 30 September*
*(whole-time equivalents)*

| | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Medical and Dental | 2,471 | 2,545 | 2,602 | 2,691 | 2,708 | n/a |
| Nursing and Midwifery | 27,764 | 27,920 | 28,037 | 28,093 | 27,962 | [1]27,583 |
| Professional and Technical | 4,993 | 5,111 | 5,318 | 5,452 | 5,788 | 5,877 |
| Administrative and Clerical[4] | 7,087 | 7,279 | 7,565 | 8,069 | 8,733 | 9,195 |
| Ambulance staff | 1,589 | 1,566 | 1,579 | 1,548 | 1,565 | 1,547 |
| Ancillary staff | 9,810 | 9,117 | 8,644 | 8,239 | 7,631 | 7,312 |
| Works staff | 476 | 447 | 415 | 388 | 335 | 362 |
| Maintenance staff | 1,692 | 1,609 | 1,576 | 1,545 | 1,504 | 1,436 |
| Unknown[2] | — | — | — | — | 42 | 237 |

*Change*

| | 1987-88 | | 1988-89 | | 1989-90 | | 1990-91 | | 1991-92 | | 1987-92 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Per cent. | Number | Per cent. | Number | Per cent. | Number | Per cent. | Number | Per cent. | Number | Per cent. |
| Medical and Dental | 74 | 3·0 | 57 | 2·2 | 89 | 3·4 | 17 | 0·6 | n/a | n/a | 237 | [3]9·6 |
| Nursing and Midwifery | 156 | 0·6 | 117 | 0·4 | 56 | 0·2 | −131 | −0·5 | −379 | −1·4 | −181 | −0·7 |
| Professional and Technical | 118 | 2·4 | 207 | 4·1 | 138 | 2·5 | 336 | 6·2 | 89 | 1·5 | 884 | 17·7 |
| Administrative and Clerical[4] | 192 | 2·7 | 286 | 3·9 | 504 | 6·7 | 664 | 8·2 | 462 | 5·3 | 2,108 | 29·7 |
| Ambulance staff | −23 | −1·4 | 13 | 0·8 | −51 | −2·0 | 17 | 1·1 | −18 | −1·2 | −42 | −2·6 |
| Ancillary staff | −693 | −7·1 | −473 | −5·2 | −405 | −4·7 | −608 | −7·4 | −319 | −4·2 | −2,498 | −25·5 |
| Works staff | −29 | −6·1 | −32 | −7·2 | −27 | −6·5 | −53 | −13·7 | 27 | 8·1 | −114 | −23·9 |
| Maintenance staff | −83 | −4·9 | −33 | −2·1 | −31 | −2·0 | −41 | −2·7 | −68 | −4·5 | −256 | −15·1 |
| Unknown[1] | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 195 | 464·3 | n/a | n/a |

n/a = Not available.
[1] In addition there are about 1,000 student nurses who have been reclassified as students following the introduction of Project 2000 nursing education reforms.
[2] Staff paid on locally devised payscales who can no longer be allocated to a specific staff group. This affects the comparability of 1991 and 1992 figures for all staff groups.
[3] 1987 to 1991.
[4] Including general and senior managers.

## Nurses and Midwives

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the numbers of whole-time equivalent NHS nursing and midwifery staff employed on each grade and pay point of the clinical grades, educational grades and senior nursing and midwifery pay spine in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Due to the complex nature of the data requested, I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of the information in the Library of the House.

## Nursing Education

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the numbers of entrants to initial pre-registration nursing education by course of study and by the academic qualifications possessed by entrants in each year since 1989.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The number of initial entrants to pre-registration nursing education is shown in the table. Information on the qualifications possessed by these students is not readily available.

| | 1989-90[1] | 1990-91[1] | 1991-92[1] | 1992-93[1,2] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Nursing qualification to which initial training leads:* | | | | |
| Registered General Nurse | 786 | 788 | 269 | — |
| Bachelor of Nursing | 34 | 39 | — | — |
| Enrolled Nurse (General) | 47 | 74 | — | — |
| Registered Mental Nurse | 140 | 142 | 53 | — |
| Enrolled Nurse (Mental) | — | — | — | — |
| Registered Nurse Mental Handicap | 33 | 41 | 18 | — |
| Enrolled Nurse (Mental Handicap) | — | — | — | — |
| Registered Sick Children's Nurse | — | — | — | — |
| Registered Midwife | — | — | 10 | 15 |
| Registered Health Visitor | — | — | — | — |
| Project 2000[3]: Adult Nursing | n/a | n/a | 277 | 699 |
| Mental Health | n/a | n/a | 53 | 138 |
| Mental Handicap | n/a | n/a | — | 35 |
| Children's Nursing | n/a | n/a | 42 | 73 |
| Total | 1,040 | 1,084 | 722 | 960 |

n/a = Not available.
[1] 1 April to 31 March.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Courses phased in from September 1991.
*Source:* Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting Annual Reports.

### Student Statistics

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total amount spent on each student in the university of Wales and university of Glamorgan respectively, in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The total amount spent on each student in the university of Wales, since 1979-80 is as follows. Information relating to 1991-92 is not yet available. Equivalent information for the university of Glamorgan is not available centrally.

*University of Wales: annual expenditure[1] per full time equivalent student*

| | *Expenditure[1] per full time student (£ per thousand)* |
|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 2,131·6 |
| 1980-81 | 2,807·7 |
| 1981-82 | 3,013·0 |
| 1982-83 | 3,363·0 |
| 1983-84 | 3,946·1 |
| 1984-85 | 4,058·0 |
| 1985-86 | 4,248·9 |
| 1986-87 | 4,444·1 |
| 1987-88 | 4,530·3 |
| 1988-89 | 4,891·2 |
| 1989-90 | 4,996·2 |
| 1991-92 | 5,241·3 |

[1] Expenditure is defined as that relating to all cost centres including departmental recurrent expenditure (specific expenditure and that from general income) and that on departmental equipment. Annual expenditure per student is derived by dividing the expenditure by the total full-time equivalent student load.

*Source:*

1979-80 "Statistics of Education; Vol. 6 Universities" published by University Grants Committee. 1980-81 onwards "University Statistics; Finance" published annually by Universities' Statistical Record.

### Consultants

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the mean age at which doctors achieve consultant status in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The mean age at which doctors in Wales, in post at 30 September 1991, achieved consultant status was 37.

### Training and Enterprise Councils

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to include specific references to equality of opportunity in the annual strategic and planning guidance issued by his Department to training and enterprise councils in Wales.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The importance of equality of opportunity is already recognised in the guidance given to Welsh training and enterprise councils by the Welsh Office, and we will ensure that it continues to be so.

### Coastal Water (Pollution)

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what regular or recent monitoring his Department carries out of background levels of hydrocarbons and other pollutants in Cardigan bay and other Welsh coastal waters.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The Welsh Office does not carry out such monitoring. However, monitoring for a wide range of contaminants, including hydrocarbons, is undertaken at various locations off the Welsh coastline by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the National Rivers Authority and the Countryside Council for Wales.

### Radon

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many grants have been approved for households which have recorded radon concentrations *(a)* over 200 becquerels per cubic metre and *(b)* up to 200 becquerels per cubic metre in Wales and postal district SA since 1989.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The information is not held centrally.

### Welsh Development Agency

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is now in a position to announce the appointment of the new chairman of the Welsh Development Agency.

**Mr. Redwood:** I am pleased to announce that I am appointing Mr. David Rowe-Beddoe to be the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency with effect from 1 July.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Assisted Areas

13. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he is going to publish the revised assisted areas map.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I hope to announce the new assisted areas map before the House rises for the summer recess.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to make an announcement on the future of assisted area status for Glanford and Scunthorpe.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) on 17 June, *Official Report*, column 715.

### Aerospace Industry

15. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of the future prospects for the British aerospace industry; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** My Department has a close and continuing dialogue with the industry on the challenges it is facing, and the most appropriate ways for the Government to help.

### Pit Closures

16. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many of the pits originally scheduled for closure have been closed; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Eggar:** British Coal has decided it no longer wishes to operate 18 of these pits, and coaling has ceased at them. British Coal has given a commitment to offer all such pits to the private sector and has so far invited bids for nine of them. I understand that British Coal will be offering the remainder in the next few weeks.

### Shipbuilding Industry

17. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to assist the shipbuilding industry.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The shipbuilding industry continues to receive assistance from the shipbuilding intervention fund and the home credit guarantee scheme.

### Industrial Competitiveness

18. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much the competitive position of United Kingdom industry has changed in the last 12 months.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The competitive position of United Kingdom industry has strengthened considerably in the 12 months to April this year, during which period manufacturing productivity has increased by nearly 8 per cent.

### Lithuania

19. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what Government-backed export credit arrangements there are for Lithuania.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Cover for short-term credit is available from NCM Credit Insurance Ltd. under tight conditions and with 100 per cent. reinsurance by the Export Credits Guarantee Department. Cover is not available for exports on medium-term credit, although the position is currently under review.

### Northern France

20. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on the availability of measures taken by the French Government which encourage relocation of business in northern France in preference to east Kent.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I understand that a range of assistance is available. It includes grants for job creation and a variety of tax concessions at both local and national levels.

### Regional Policy

21. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are his plans for further changes in regional policy.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The effectiveness of regional policy is kept under continuous review.

24. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's plans for regional policy.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** We are currently reviewing the assisted areas map and hope to make an announcement before the House rises for the summer recess.

### Manufacturing Industry

22. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to meet the president of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss manufacturing industry.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade meets the president and director-general of the CBI regularly to discuss a wide range of issues. He last visited the CBI on 17 June and met a number of CBI representatives.

26. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the performance of manufacturing industry in the north-west during the past year.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Manufacturing industry in the north-west has shared in the national improvement in the economy in the last year benefiting from the fall in interest rates to the lowest level for 16 years. In the three months from January to April 1993, seasonally adjusted unemployment in the region fell by 6,500.

30. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received on the decline in numbers of jobs in manufacturing industry over the last five years.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has received a number of representations about the decline in manufacturing jobs over the last five years. Improved competitiveness remains the key to growth in manufacturing employment.

31. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the prospects for manufacturing industry in the black country and the west midlands in the next two years.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The prospect for manufacturing industry throughout the west midlands are constantly assessed by my Department through the work of the west midlands regional office.

### Political Parties (Donations)

23. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to review the Companies Act 1985 in relation to those sections dealing with political contributions.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** I have no plans to review these sections.

### Government Purchases

25. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the measures he is taking to ensure that purchases by Government are of British manufacture.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Government purchasing is based on value for money. The role of my Department is to ensure that competition for Government purchases from overseas is fair. The Treasury's central unit on purchasing advises Government purchasers on the best purchasing practices to ensure that the advantages of competition are secured.

### Northern Cyprus

27. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current trade deficit with northern Cyprus.

**Mr. Needham:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 19 May 1993, *Official Report*, column *238*.

33. **Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to meet representatives of the Turkish republic of northern Cyprus in order to discuss the prospects for trade with the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Needham:** None. We do not recognise the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus". The timing of any possible meeting must be carefully considered in the light of the continuing inter-communal negotiations on Cyprus under United Nations auspices.

**Mr. Barnes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to meet his counterpart in northern Cyprus to discuss bilateral trade arrangements.

**Mr. Needham:** None. We do not recognise northern Cyprus. The timing of any such meeting can only be carefully considered in the light of the continuing inter-communal negotiations on Cyprus under United Nations auspices.

### Norway

28. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was *(a)* the value of imports from Norway last year and *(b)* the projected value for the current year.

**Mr. Needham:** In 1992, the value of invisible imports from Norway was £3·84 billion. My Department does not make projections on United Kingdom trade with individual countries.

### Transport Equipment

29. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of the future prospects for the transport equipment sector; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** My Department's sponsor divisions make continual assessments of the competitiveness and future prospects of the sectors for which they are responsible, including those sectors which fall within the generic description of transport equipment.

### Trade Statistics

32. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's estimate of the value of Britain's total *(a)* exports and *(b)* imports for January to May.

**Mr. Needham:** Figures for total trade over the period are not yet available. In the period January to May, the value of the United Kingdom's non-EC visible exports was £22·7 billion and the value of imports was £27·8 billion.

### Telecommunications

**Mr. Carrington:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has received a report by the Director General of Telecommunications for the year 1992 as required under section 55 of the Telecommunications Act 1984.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Yes. The ninth report by the Director General of Telecommunications is being published today. It covers the period 1 January to 31 December 1992. Copies of the report have been laid before each House of Parliament.

### Inntrepreneur Scheme

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will reply to the question tabled by the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby for answer on 10 June relating to investigations into the Inntrepreneur scheme.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 21 June, *Official Report*, column *23*.

### Trade Marks

**Mr. Hoon:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his proposed timetable for legislation relating to trade marks.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** A Bill to implement the proposals in the White Paper "Reform of Trade Marks Law"—Cm 1203—has been fully drafted, and will be introduced as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

### Auditing

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions auditors have acted as company secretaries in each year since 1990.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** This is a matter for Companies House. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from David Durham to Mr. Austin Mitchell, dated 21 June 1993:*

As this is a matter which is within my responsibility as Chief Executive and Registrar of Companies, I am writing to you direct.

I should explain that the Companies Act does not prohibit an auditor from acting as secretary to a company provided, of course, that he does not carry out the audit of that company's accounts. We, therefore, have no reason to compile figures of this nature, and it would involve disproportionate costs to identify from company records occasions where an auditor has acted as company secretary.

We have, since 1990, received one complaint which suggests that an auditor is acting as secretary to the company whose accounts he is auditing. That complaint was received this year and we are currently investigating the matter. We have also dealt with one case where the secretary of the company carried out the audit of the company's accounts. He was formally warned that he would be liable to prosecution if he repeated the offence.

I hope that the above information is helpful to you.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his representative on the Auditing Practices Board has made of the going concern exposure draft circulated to the One Hundred Group of Directors.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** My Department has sent comments on the draft guidance for directors of listed companies on going concern and financial reporting direct to the secretary of the working group on going concern, in response to an invitation from the chairman of that group.

## Leyland DAF

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he has taken against Leyland DAF for late filing of its annual accounts at Companies House.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** This is a matter for Companies House. I have therefore, asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from David Durham to Mr. Austin Mitchell, dated 21 June 1993:*

As this is a matter which is my responsibility as Registrar of Companies House, I am writing to you direct.

I have checked the register and can find only two companies within the Leyland DAF group who have failed to submit up-to-date accounts. They are Leyland DAF Limited and Leyland DAF Holdings Limited.

I can confirm that Companies House was aware of the failure of the directors of these companies to deliver accounts for the period ended 31 December 1991. This was followed up with the companies in accordance with normal procedures.

I was subsequently notified that an administrative receiver had been appointed for both companies on 3 February 1993. The receiver submitted the relevant receivership documents. The company will not now be pursued for statutory documents but the receiver has an obligation to send me accounts of the receipts and payments to cover the first twelve months of the receivership and 6 monthly periods thereafter.

Should the companies survive the receivership and emerge as active and wishing to remain on the register, the directors will be obliged to deliver outstanding statutory documents including those which became outstanding prior to the appointment of the receiver.

I hope this reply has covered the points tabled in your question.

## Reporting Accountants

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to ban reporting accountants from subsequently acting as receivers and liquidators for the same business.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** None.

## Company Investigations

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade for which companies he has published an interim report by his Department's inspectors since 1979 but a final report remains unpublished.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** Dunlop Holdings Ltd. and Ramor Investments Ltd. Substantial interim reports were published on 17 February 1981 and 22 March 1983 respectively.

## Modified Accounts

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many small and medium-sized companies have filed modified accounts at Companies House in each year since 1990; and in how many cases the filing of such accounts was found to be unwarranted.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** This matter is for Companies House. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from David Durham to Mr. Austin Mitchell dated 21 June 1993:*

As the information requested is part of my responsibility as Registrar of Companies, I have been asked to reply to you direct.

The following modified or abbreviated accounts were accepted for filing:

| | *Small* | *Medium* |
|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 252,368 | 3,767 |
| 1991-92 | 270,754 | 4,386 |
| 1992-93 | 303,125 | 5,202 |

Of these, in the years in question, in 6, 5 and 4 cases respectively the accounts were subsequently found to have been accepted in circumstances where the company did not meet the relevant criteria.

## Sellafield

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what safeguards will ensure the safe transport of radioactive waste to, and reprocessed fuel from, the Sellafield site; and what security measures will be in force to prevent unauthorised access to the reprocessed fuel in transit.

**Mr. Eggar:** Radioactive materials are only transported in extremely robust containers designed and built to meet or exceed stringent internationally agreed standards laid down by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Appropriate measures are taken to ensure the security of these movements.

## THORP

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what uses, other than use in power stations, are planned for the reprocessed fuel produced from the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

**Mr. Eggar:** The thermal oxide reprocessing plant is a civil facility and the nuclear materials arising from it must be used for peaceful purposes only. In practice, these are normally electricity generation or research.

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what restrictions are envisaged on the uses of reprocessed fuel from the thermal oxide reprocessing plant; and how the restrictions on the use of reprocessed fuel will be policed and monitored.

**Mr. Eggar:** Nuclear materials arising from the thermal oxide reprocessing plant will be used for peaceful purposes only. This will be subject to verification by inspectors under international safeguards agreements.

## Patents

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many patents have been awarded by the United States of America for United Kingdom-based work in each year since 1988; and what information he has on the number of patents awarded by the United States of America to *(a)* France, *(b)* Germany and *(c)* Japan in the same period.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The annual report for the fiscal year 1991 of the United States Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks shows the number of patents issued by the United States to residents of the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Japan to be as follows:

| Year | Place of residence | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | United Kingdom | France | Germany (Fed. Rep) | Germany (Dem. Rep) | Japan |
| 1988 | 2,677 | 2,829 | 7,587 | 47 | 16,704 |
| 1989 | 3,378 | 3,310 | 8,756 | 58 | 20,907 |
| 1990 | 2,946 | 3,032 | 7,727 | 38 | 20,170 |
| 1991 | 2,974 | 3,094 | 7,584 | 0 | 21,464 |

The territorial base of the work leading to the patents is not recorded.

The report for 1992 has not yet been received.

### Research and Development

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish figures showing the level of business enterprise research and development as a proportion of gross domestic product for *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the United States of America *(c)* Italy, *(d)* France, *(e)* Germany and *(f)* Japan during 1991 and 1992.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The information is available from the OECD's publication "Main Science and Technology Indicators", published in 1992, and the Central Statistical Office's bulletin "Business Enterprise Research and Development 1991", published on 25 February 1993, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

### Renewable Energy

**Mr. Thomason:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to take account of the contribution of the waste-to-energy industry in his Department's renewable energy strategy review.

**Mr. Eggar:** The Government are working towards 1500 MW of new renewable energy electricity generating capacity by the year 2000 supported by a continuing research and knowledge programme. We plan to take the potential of waste to energy projects into account when developing policy for renewables.

### Warren Spring Laboratory

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answers to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith), of 27 May, *Official Report*, column *692* and to the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), of 10 June, *Official Report*, column *303*, which organisation will inherit the Warren Spring Laboratory's membership of the European network of environmental research organisations.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on 22 June, *Official Report*, column *141*.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what expenditure has been committed, either directly or in penalty clauses, to the construction of the replacement Warren Spring Laboratory in Welwyn Garden City.

**Mr. McLoughlin** *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply regarding the estimated cost of a replacement laboratory on 22 June, *Official Report*, column *142*. Around £6 million has been committed to the purchase of the site at Welwyn Garden City and preparatory work for the construction of the replacement laboratory. The site will be resold.

### Consumers Association

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met the Consumers Association; and what was discussed.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has not met the Consumers Association. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms has met them on the following occasions over the last year:

9 June 1992: Discussion included reform of the Sale of Goods Act, EC Directive on Unfair Contract Terms, UK Presidency and the Monopolies and Mergers Commissions' report on car prices.

17 July 1992: Visit to CA Research laboratory in Harpenden.

15 February 1993: Discussion centred on arrangements for the provision of effective advice and enforcement of consumer protection.

8 December 1992: To discuss proposals relating to the tying in of services to loans secured on land.

### Coal

**Mr. Tipping:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further discussions he has had about financial subsidy for additional coal contracts between British Coal and the generators; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Eggar:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 16 June, *Official Report*, columns *603-5*.

### Offshore Exploration

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the blocks in the 14th round from which licence applications have been withdrawn because of the impact of proposed petroleum revenue tax changes.

**Mr. Eggar:** In any licensing round, information on blocks applied for but not awarded is regarded as commercially confidential.

### EC Technology and Industry Conference

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to participate in the European Commission's conference on its fourth framework programme on technology and industrial policies in London on 6 July.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** My Department has been asked to participate in the one day conference entitled "The Future of EC R&D and Industrial Policy", in London on 6 July. One of my officials, Mr. Adrian Grilli of the innovation policy division has agreed to chair this event being run by the Institute of European Trade and Technology.

Mr. Allan Mayo will be speaking for the Office of Science and Technology which is responsible for co-ordinating all United Kingdom policy on EC research and development.

### Scott Inquiry

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what have been the costs incurred to date by the Scott inquiry.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* The DTI is responsible for meeting the direct costs incurred by the Scott inquiry which, to date, total about £150,000.

## Offshore Pollution

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the type and quantity in tonnes of *(a)* drilling chemicals and *(b)* production chemicals notified to him as discharged by offshore operations in each year since 1979; and what is his best estimate of the proportion this represents in each year of the total amount of each chemical discharged into United Kingdom waters.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* Prior to 1987 the Department did not collect details of the tonnages of chemicals discharged offshore. A trial collection of data was made in 1987 and another in 1990, but there are doubts as to the completeness of the returns for those years. The first comprehensive annual return was that for 1991 which is set out in the table; the 1992 data are currently being collated. The products covered by the return are not in general discharged to the sea except from offshore installations.

*Chemicals used/discharged 1991*

| *Chemical Product* | *Drilling* | *Production* | *Quantity (tonnes) discharged* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Antifoam | X | X | 5 |
| Asphalts/asphalt based products | X | | 32 |
| Biocides | X | X | 252 |
| Carrier Solvent | X | X | 1 |
| Coagulants/Deoilers | X | X | 119 |
| Corrosion inhibitors | X | X | 568 |
| Cutting wash fluids | X | | 16 |
| Defoamers | X | | 83 |
| Demulsifiers | | X | 119 |
| Detergents/Cleaning fluids | | X | 742 |
| Dispersants | X | | 268 |
| Drilling lubricants | X | | 163 |
| Dyes | X | | 32 |
| Emulsifiers | X | | 565 |
| Fluid loss control | X | | 628 |
| Gas Treatment | | X | 1,934 |
| Gels | X | | 5,361 |
| Inorganic chemicals | X | | 24,873 |
| Lignosulphonates lignites | X | | 245 |
| Lost circulation material | X | | 1,882 |
| Oxygen scavengers | | X | 116 |
| Polymeric viscosifiers and filtrate reducers | X | | 2,577 |
| Shale inhibitors | X | X | 3,300 |
| Shale inhibitors/encapsulators | X | | 1,100 |
| Thinners | X | | 83 |
| Viscosifiers | X | | 3,284 |
| Weighting agents and inorganic gelling agents | X | | 152,649 |
| Total | | 200,997 | |

## Bank Auditors

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for legislation under which auditors of banks would be appointed by a body similar to the Audit Commission.

**Mr. Nelson:** I have been asked to reply.

There are no such proposals. The appointment of auditors remains a matter for individual banks.

## Timber Imports

**Mr. Gallie:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the monthly cost of United Kingdom imports of timber for each month from March 1992 to March 1993.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* The available information is given in the table.

*United Kingdom imports of timber*[1]

*£ thousand*

| | *EC*[2] | *Non-EC* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1992* | | | |
| March | 10,497 | 66,466 | 76,963 |
| April | 10,606 | 75,053 | 85,659 |
| May | 9,760 | 76,383 | 86,143 |
| June | 10,508 | 86,998 | 97,506 |
| July | 10,973 | 82,644 | 93,617 |
| August | 8,069 | 75,624 | 83,693 |
| September | 10,387 | 77,335 | 87,722 |
| October | 10,351 | 77,720 | 88,071 |
| November | 9,993 | 78,090 | 88,083 |
| December | 7,281 | 61,550 | 68,831 |
| *1993* | | | |
| January | n/a | 67,742 | n/a |
| February | n/a | 62,220 | n/a |
| March | n/a | 68,775 | n/a |

*Notes:*

1. Timber is defined as heading 245.01, 246, 247 and 248 of the Standard International Trade Classification (revision 3).
2. Figures for EC trade will be available later in the year.

*Source:* Business Monitor MM20, Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Thursday 24 June 1993*

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Home Relocation

**Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on the tax treatment of bridging loan finance costs incurred during home relocation.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The Government's policy is that the tax treatment of bridging loan finance costs incurred during home relocation should be subject to the usual tax rules, as well as those in clause 76 and schedule 5 of the current Finance (No. 2) Bill.

**Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on the tax treatment of capital depreciation costs incurred during home relocation where either an employer or a relocation company purchases the employee's property at its current market value.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The Government's policy on capital depreciation costs on relocation, which are assumed to be loss on sale payments under guarantee sale price schemes, is that they should not qualify for tax relief under the new relief for relocation costs in clause 76 and schedule 5 of the current Finance (No. 2) Bill.

### Private Security Firms

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the names of the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value for each financial year since 1987.

**Mr. Nelson:** Forward: Civil Service Catering is the only part of the Treasury currently employing private security firms. Individual contracts are arranged at local level. During 1992-93, three security firms were employed by Forward at a total cost of £122,000. Details for the current year and for earlier years are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Correspondence

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North of 29 April regarding the business sponsorship incentive scheme for sport.

**Mr. Sproat:** I can find no trace of the hon. Member's letter of 29 April ever having been received within my Department. Now that the hon. Member has sent my office a copy of the letter, I shall ensure that a reply is sent to him without delay.

### ITV

**Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement following his meeting with ITV company chairmen on whether large ITV companies will be permitted to merge with each other.

**Mr. Brooke:** The meeting was helpful. I am reflecting on the various views put to me.

### Boxing

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he received a copy of the British Medical Association's report into the risks associated with boxing; and if he proposes to set up an independent inquiry into these risks.

**Mr. Brooke:** My Department obtained a copy of the report upon its publication. I do not believe that the risks associated with boxing are sufficient to justify an inquiry.

### Farm Buildings

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if it is possible to abstract from the listing of historic buildings farm houses and outbuildings which are no longer occupied or no longer serve an agricultural purpose.

**Mr. Brooke:** No. The statutory lists do not contain this information.

### Press Regulation

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he will publish his proposals on the regulation of the press.

**Mr. Brooke:** The Government will set out their proposals on press regulation in their response to the report of the National Heritage Select Committee on privacy and media intrusion. We hope to publish this before the summer recess.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Royal Family

**Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answers of 7 June, *Official Report*, columns *82-83*, and of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *645*, on which of the visits by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh the Royal Yacht and the Queen's Flight were used; and to what extent.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Aircraft of the Queen's flight were used for travel from the United Kingdom in the case of each of the visits listed. In the case of the visit to Malta, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh embarked on the royal yacht in Palermo, Italy, and continued to use it throughout the visit. In the case of the visit to France, the royal yacht was used while the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh were in Bordeaux. In the case of the Duke of Edinburgh's visit to the Caribbean, the royal yacht was used throughout the visit.

**Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his

answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *645*, into what categories his Department divides the expenditure on visits by members of the royal family.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Expenditure by the Department in support of official overseas visits undertaken by members of the royal family falls into the following categories:

(a) travel
(b) hotel expenses
(c) official presents and donations
(d) salaries—additional staff
(e) bank, postal, telephone and telegraph charges
(f) miscellaneous (insurance, reconnaissance visits partly for security purposes, and so on)

**Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answers of 7 June, *Official Report*, columns *82-83*, and of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *645*, whether clothing formed part of the costs incurred by Government Departments in respect of visits by members of the royal family.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Yes.

**Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answers of 7 June, *Official Report*, columns *82-83* and of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *645*, which costs of the visits made by members of the royal family were met by other Government Departments; and if he will list the Departments.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** With the exception of visits by the Duke of Kent, no costs of overseas official visits undertaken by members of the royal family during the financial year 1992-93 were met by other Government Departments except for the costs of the royal yacht, the Queen's flight and other RAF aircraft, which were met by the Ministry of Defence. The costs of the visits by the Duke of Kent to Japan and Germany as vice-chairman of the British Overseas Trade Board were met by the Department of Trade and Industry.

**Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, columns *82-83*, what was the cost to his Department of each of the visits taken by *(a)* the Prince and Princess of Wales, *(b)* Prince Edward, *(c)* the Princess Royal, *(d)* Princess Margaret, *(e)* the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, *(f)* the Duke of Kent and *(g)* Princess Alexandra; on which of these visits the Queen's Flight was used; which Department bore the international travel costs; and what was the involvement of the Royal Yacht.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The information is as follows.

The cost to the Department of the overseas visits undertaken by the members of the Royal Family as listed is as follows:

| *Country* | *Date* | *Cost* £ |
|---|---|---|
| *The Prince and Princess of Wales* | | |
| Egypt | 10–15 May | 26,600 |
| Korea | 2–5 November | 57,600 |
| Hong Kong | 5–7 November | 12,700 |
| France | 13–15 November | 2,400 |
| France | 17–19 November | 1,400 |
| United States of America and Mexico | 12–18 February | 22,600 |
| Nepal | 2–6 March | 9,900 |
| *The Prince Edward* | | |
| British Indian Ocean Territory, Brunei, Western Samoa | 2–18 October | 27,000 |
| *The Princess Royal* | | |
| Norway, Sweden, Finland | 11–19 May | 9,400 |
| India | 10–15 September | 23,200 |
| *The Princess Margaret* | | |
| The Netherlands | 23–25 June | 3,900 |
| *The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester* | | |
| Belgium | 12–13 October | 4,700 |
| *The Duke of Kent* | | |
| Japan | 14–23 May | Nil |
| Italy | 30 June–1 July | 6,700 |
| Germany | 9–10 November | Nil |
| *Princess Alexandra* | | |
| United States of America | 22–25 April | 23,000 |
| Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada | 30 October—7 November | 35,200 |

All these visits involved use of the Queen's flight/RAF aircraft and scheduled flights, except for that by the Duke of Kent to Italy, which involved only the former. The costs of the Queen's flight and other RAF aircraft are met by the Ministry of Defence. The costs of scheduled flights are met by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The royal yacht was used during the visit to Mexico by the Prince of Wales.

**Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, columns *82-83*, if he will list the official engagements on each visit by *(a)* the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, *(b)* the Prince and Princess of Wales, *(c)* Prince Edward and *(d)* the Princess Royal.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I shall write to the right hon. Gentleman with details.

## Somalia

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has as to the extent and source of continuing supplies of weapons to Somalia.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** An arms embargo was imposed on Somalia in January 1992 by the United Nations. We have received no reports of any violation of the embargo, but large amounts of arms undoubtedly remain in Somalia from the former regime.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment the United Nations has made as to the extent of the systematic use of rape as a weapon during the disturbances in Somalia; and what is being done to bring the offenders to justice.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** There are no reports of the systematic use of rape as a weapon in the current disturbances.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has

been made in Somalia on an area-by-area basis to reconstruct a civil society; and who is responsible for such work.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Reconstruction of a civil society is ultimately the responsibility of the Somalis themselves. As a part of this process district councils are being established in several areas with the support of UNOSOM II. Clan elders are also playing a constructive role in the process.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what disciplinary action has been taken following review of the performance of the United Nations or its associated organisations in Somalia.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The Secretary-General has announced an investigation into the tragic shooting of Somali demonstrators by United Nations peacekeeping forces. The investigation has yet to be completed.

### United States of America

**Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has further to improve diplomatic relations between the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Diplomatic relations with the United States are in excellent shape. I am pleased to say that we and the United States Administration remain in the closest contact.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Sustainable Development

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 17 June, *Official Report*, column *686*, if he will give further details of the OECD meeting in Paris to which the report on sustainable development was presented.

**The Prime Minister:** The United Kingdom progress report to the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development was made available to delegates attending the third meeting of the environment policy committee of the OECD held in Paris on 9 to 11 June. This was one of a regular series of meetings which enables Governments of industrialised countries to exchange views on issues of environmental policy. On this occasion the agenda included a review of the follow-up to last year's Earth summit. The committee will next meet in December.

### Engagements

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 June.

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 June.

**The Prime Minister:** This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

### Irish Republic (President)

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Prime Minister on what dates since taking office the President of the Irish Republic made visits to Northern Ireland for which facilities were made available by Her Majesty's Government; which of those visits were *(a)* private and *(b)* official; what period of notice was given to Her Majesty's Government for each private visit; when invitations were issued by Her Majesty's Government in respect of official visits; what arrangements were made for Her Majesty's Government (i) to be informed of and (ii) to approve the itinerary of each visit; and if he will make a statement.

**Prime Minister** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* President Robinson has made private visits to Northern Ireland on 16 December 1990, 2 February 1992, 22 May 1992, 6 and 7 September 1992 and 18 and 19 June 1993. The usual courtesies for a visiting Head of State have been extended to the President on each occasion and Northern Ireland Office officials have been present at all venues, apart from Whiterock college of education on 18 June 1993. The period of notice given for the visits was three days, two months, 10 days, 10 days and three weeks respectively, but, in respect of the latest visit, particulars of those participating in the West Belfast item, and of its venue, were made known only three days before the visit.

No invitations have been extended by Her Majesty's Government apart from that to a reception given by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 2 February 1992. For each visit, Irish Government officials informed HMG of the proposed itinerary, which does not require HMG's approval.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### School Milk

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she had made to the European Commission concerning future funding arrangements for the EC school milk scheme.

**Mr. Jack:** The Commission has not yet presented its detailed proposals for expenditure under the school milk scheme in 1994. When it does, our position on the matter will be determined by a thorough examination of the provisions contained therein.

### Equine Disease

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent additional precautions have been taken to protect against the importation into the United Kingdom of horses infected with equine viral arteritis from third countries.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** The state veterinary service will increase the level of post-import testing of stallions imported from third countries. All those giving seropositive results will be re-exported to their country of origin.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of compliance with the procedures governing the import of equidae from Poland over the last two years.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** The compliance with either Community or, in their absence, national rules in respect of the import of live animals from third countries is kept under continuous review.

Since June 1991 a small number of horses has been re-exported to Poland following seropositive test results for EVA. The matter was taken up with the Polish veterinary authorities which were reminded of our import requirements.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence her Department has as to the number of occasions over the last five years on which measures designed to protect the United Kingdom from the importation of equine viral arteritis have not been complied with.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** The Department has evidence of 10 occasions during the last five years when measures designed to prevent the introduction of equine viral arteritis have not been compiled with.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the protection offered under article 20(2) of EC directive 90/426/EEC in respect of equidae imported into the United Kingdom, in circumstances where it is known that a third country has failed to comply fully with the conditions set out in the directive.

**Mr. Gillian Shephard:** Article 20 of directive 90/426/EEC was revoked by directive 91/496/EEC laying down the principles governing the organisation of veterinary checks on animals entering the Community from third countries. The latter permits member states to require, as appropriate, the detention in quarantine or isolation, or the slaughter or re-export of any animal which is found to be diseased or suspected of being diseased, or which does not fully meet the import requirements laid down in Community or national import rules; or where it is established that the exporting third country has not complied with the requirements provided for in Community or national rules.

### Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will provide a breakdown of expenditure under the farm and conservation grant scheme in cash and real terms, for each financial year since the inception of the scheme in 1989.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** The breakdown requested is shown in the table.

*Grant paid under the F&CGS 1989-93 in England and Wales*

| *Financial year* | *Cash £'000s* | *(Real Terms) £'000s*[1] |
|---|---|---|
| 1989-90 | 6,663 | 6,663 |
| 1990-91 | 26,732 | 24,385 |
| 1991-92 | 35,713 | 31,089 |
| 1992-93 | 32,618 | 27,535 |

[1] Calculated using the Retail Price Index taking 1989-90 as the base year.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for what purpose the farm and conservation grant scheme was established.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** The farm and conservation grant scheme is designed to help farmers maintain efficient farming systems while also meeting the often heavy cost of combating pollution and conserving the countryside and its wildlife. The scheme focuses on those investments which cut costs by updating existing resources and on those which help to achieve good countryside management. A special priority of the scheme is to help farmers install and improve waste handling facilities in order to meet their obligations to minimise pollution risks.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reasons account for the decision to allow farmers under 40 years of age to qualify for an additional allowance under the farm and conservation grant scheme; and what is the amount of the additional allowance.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** The extra grant for young farmers—those under 40—implements a provision of EC regulation 2328/91 on agricultural structures. An additional 25 per cent. of the normal rates of grant is payable to young farmers on first improvement plans under the farm and conservation grant scheme.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minster of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if access to the farm and conservation grant is conditional on the applicant fulfilling any residential qualifications.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** So that grant is paid only to viable businesses, the farm and conservation grant scheme requires that a farm business for which grant is sought must have been operational for at least a year. In addition, farmers situated in less-favoured areas are eligible for grant aid on the regeneration of grassland using lime and/or fertiliser and for enhanced rates of grant for some other investments. Otherwise, there are no conditions relating to residence.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the farm and conservation grant for repairs and reinstatement of farm buildings encompasses farm houses and outbuildings which have been unoccupied for a six-month or longer period, but which are to be brought back into agricultural use.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** It is a condition of the grants available under the farm and conservation grant scheme for the repair or refurbishment of traditional farm buildings that the building for which grant is sought must be in current agricultural use and have been in use during the 12 months prior to the application being received. However, no grant aid is available for the restoration of dwellings on farms.

### Milk Quotas

**Mr. Stern:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans the Government have for the administration of milk quotas under the new milk marketing arrangements provided for in the Agriculture Bill *[Lords]*.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** Much of the day-to-day administration of milk quotas is currently carried out by the milk marketing boards. It would be wrong for this work to be passed on to the boards' successor bodies since it would give them access to commercially sensitive

information about the operations of their competitors. The Government intend, therefore, that from the beginning of the next quota year on 1 April 1994 the Intervention Board executive agency should assume overall responsibility for the administration of milk quotas in the United Kingdom, including those functions currently carried out by the milk marketing boards. A further announcement will be made when detailed arrangements have been finalised.

As well as transferring responsibility for the administration of milk quotas to an independent agency, we are also considering whether any other changes are necessary in the operation of the quota system to ensure that it does not tilt the playing field to anyone's advantage. We are looking in particular at the arrangements for leasing quota between producers and we will be consulting the industry on this and other issues before deciding what amendments to make to the quota regulations.

### Livestock Imports (Poland)

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what import precautions were in force in respect of the import of horses and farmed livestock before September 1992; and what additional precautions were in force in respect of such imports from Poland.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** Imports of horses and farmed livestock were subject to harmonised Community or, in their absence, national rules. Such import conditions differed according to species and the animal health status of the country of origin. Among other things, such conditions included pre-export or post-import testing and isolation, as appropriate, and, in all cases, that consignments were accompanied by a health certificate signed by an official veterinarian of the exporting country confirming that the animals fully complied with our import requirements.

From 1 July 1992 imports of live animals were also subject to veterinary checks in accordance with the provisions of Council directives 90/425/EEC and 91/496/EEC. In view of the safeguards provided, it was not considered to be necessary to take any special precautions in relation to such imports from Poland.

## ENVIRONMENT

### THORP

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) of 11 June, *Official Report*, column *357*, if he will place in the Library *(a)* copies of the communications from the Swedish and Danish Environment Ministers on THORP and *(b)* copies of the information on the Paris Commission.

**Mr. Yeo:** It is not normal practice to place in the Library of the House confidential correspondence with foreign Governments. I have placed in the Library the two draft Parcom recommendations requested, together with the final recommendation.

### Radioactive Waste

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the preferred option for the disposal of radioactive spent fuel from advanced gas-cooled reactors, as between reprocessing and dry storage; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo:** It is for the owners of spent fuel to decide on safety, technical and economic grounds whether to reprocess spent fuel from advanced gas-cooled reactors or place it in dry storage.

### Homelessness

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for homeless households in temporary accommodation in England and Wales.

**Sir George Young:** The latest available estimate for the number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation relates to 31 March and appears in table 4(d) of "Households found accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act 1985: England. Statistics for the first quarter of 1993", a copy of which is in the Library.

For information about Wales, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

### Bed-and-breakfast Accommodation

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate of the cost to local authorities of placing homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

**Sir George Young:** The most recent year for which information is available is 1990-91, when it is estimated that English local authorities' revenue expenditure, defined as net current expenditure, on bed and breakfast and similar accommodation was £66·632 million.

### Housing Completions

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the housing completion figures in *(a)* 1987 and *(b)* 1992.

**Sir George Young:** Estimates of housebuilding completions for England and Great Britain are shown in the publication "Housing and Construction Statistics". Figures for 1987 are in tables 6.1(a) and 6.1(d) of the 1981 to 1991 annual edition; and provisional figures for 1992 are in tables 1.2(a) and 1.2(d) of the December quarter 1992 edition—issue No. 52. Copies of this publication are in the Library.

### Gipsy Sites

**Sir David Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to extend the period of consultation on his draft advisory circular on gipsy sites and planning to the end of October 1993 to take account of the local authority holiday season and the absence of gipsies from their normal habitats in July and August.

**Mr. Curry:** Our policy is to allow a reasonable time for interested parties to express their views. In order to clarify

gipsies' position in the planning system, it is important that the guidance is issued as soon as possible. I do not therefore propose to extend the two-month consultation period beyond the end of July.

### District Councils

**Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each district council with no overall political control *(a)* the total population, *(b)* the total capital budget for 1993-94 and *(c)* the total revenue budget for 1993-94

**Mr. Baldry:** I have arranged for the available information to be placed in the Library of the House.

### Urban Regeneration Agency

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the selection of a chief executive for the Urban Regeneration Agency.

**Mr. Gummer:** Lord Walker of Worcester, as chairman-designate of the URA, has selected Mr. David Taylor, currently the managing director of AMEC Developments Ltd., to be the agency's first chief executive. Mr. Taylor has been chosen in open competition from a field of 178 applicants. He will bring to the agency a wealth of experience in regeneration gained during his private sector career. Subject to enactment of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Bill, he will be appointed chief executive by the agency when established later this year.

### European Regional Development Fund

**Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he is making for the issue of supplementary credit approvals to local authorities in England in respect of ERDF grants in 1993-94.

**Mr. Curry:** Supplementary credit approvals will be issued quarterly for ERDF expenditure defrayed on approved projects for which local authorities have submitted grant claims. In addition, temporary increases in authorities' aggregate credit limits will be available on request to assist the financing of expenditure on approved ERDF projects in the period before supplementary credit approvals are received. Local authorities in England are being advised by letter today of these arrangements.

### Building Management Businesses

**Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made in selling the Building Management Business.

**Mr. Curry:** I hope to exchange contracts with purchasers of the Building Management Businesses shortly. We are proceeding with individual sales as negotiations are completed. Parliamentary approval of new expenditure to enable the vendor to complete the sales will be sought in a winter supplementary estimate for the sale of PSA Services businesses vote—class VII vote 13. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

### Ground Maintenance Work, Chester

**Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has decided to take against the city of Chester following the notice served on the authority on 1 April, under section 13 of the Local Government Act 1988, in respect of ground maintenance work.

**Mr. Baldry:** My right hon. Friend has given careful consideration to the response which the City of Chester has made to the notice served on 1 April 1993, and has today given a direction under section 14 of the Local Government Act 1988 in respect of ground maintenance work. The direction places restrictions on the extent to which the authority can undertake ground maintenance work without the express agreement of the Secretary of State.

## HEALTH

### Boxers

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many boxers have been killed, or brain damaged by boxing in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Sackville:** The information requested concerning deaths for the period 1987 to 1991 in England and Wales is routinely published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in its monitor entitled "Fatal accidents occurring during sporting and leisure activities" series DH4; information for 1992 is not yet available.

During this period, one death was registered in 1987.

The information requested for the incidence of brain damage is not available centrally.

### District Nurses

**Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of whole-time equivalent district nurses in 1992.

**Mr. Sackville:** The latest information shows that in England, at 30 September 1991, there were 9,900 whole-time equivalent district nurses.

At October 1992, there were 9,120 whole-time equivalent practice nurses.

### Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department will establish a joint research programme with the Medical Research Council into the physical origins and treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis.

**Mr. Sackville:** A task force on myalgic encephalomyelitis—ME—is preparing a report which should provide a basis for considering a more structured approach to research in this field. Both the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and the Department will continue to receive and evaluate individual proposals for ME research.

### Thames Region Provider Units

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many neuroscience, plastic surgery, cancer, cardiac and renal beds there are in each provider unit in the Thames region;

(2) if she will list the provider units in the Thames region at present in respect of each of paediatric, neuroscience, plastic surgery, cancer, cardiac and renal services; and the number of beds in each unit.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The number of ordinary and day case patients treated by specialty for districts and trusts have been published in "Ordinary and day case admissions for England 1991-92", a copy of which is available in the Library. Information on beds by specialty is not available centrally.

### Speech Therapy

**Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many children have been identified as requiring speech therapy in the city of Newcastle in each of the last five years;

(2) what has been the average waiting time, for each of the last five years, for children in the city of Newcastle waiting to receive speech therapy from the point at which speech therapy is recommended to the date at which treatment commences.

**Mr. Bowis:** The information requested is not available centrally. However, for children aged 15 or under in Newcastle, 670 new episodes of speech therapy treatment were started in 1989-90, 695 in 1990-91 and 727 in 1991-92.

### Residential Care

**Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to initiate a public inquiry into the running of all residential care establishments in connection with allegations of maltreatment of children in such establishments; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Bowis:** None. Since 1991, there have been a number of inquiries into specific aspects of residential child care. Where there are specific allegations of mistreatment, the Government are always concerned to ensure that they are thoroughly investigated by the managing authorities, as laid down in procedures for child protection and that appropriate action is taken in the event of the confirmation of such allegations. We have recently established a residential child care support force whose prime purpose will be to promote improvements in the quality and delivery of the service for these young people.

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the terms of reference of the support force for children's residential care.

**Mr. Bowis:** We are currently consulting on draft terms of reference which are as follows:

1. a. to offer advice to individual authorities on quality of care and management issues in children's residential care, with particular reference to the appointment and selection, personnel management, and development and internal training of children's residential care staff.
   b. to offer advice to individual authorities and, where appropriate, groups of authorities on suitable mechanisms for matching need and supply in their localities or regions, taking account of the potential contributions of voluntary, private and public sectors; and on related commissioning and contractual issues. A particular focus of the work will be to assist authorities and others to improve occupancy rates and hence reduce unit costs in children's residential homes where this is appropriate.
   c. to prepare material for a code of employment practice, for discussion with employer and other interests.
2. The Children's Residential Care Support Force will work under Department of Health auspices, and from time to time as requested, report on its programme and progress. It will work with social services and, as appropriate, other agencies by invitation in a consulting and facilitating role. The Social Services Inspectorate's advice will be available to it. It will work within the framework of the Children Act 1989 and regulations and guidance issued following that and other relevant legislation; the Warner report and Government decisions in it; and other material that may be relevant. Its remit is for a period of two years from the summer of 1993. Ministers will then review the progress made.

I expect to be able to announce next month the membership of the support force.

### Cervical Smear Tests

**Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how frequently in each district health authority area *(a)* women between the ages of 20 years and 35 years and *(b)* women over 35 years receive cervical smear tests.

**Mr. Sackville:** The information is not available centrally, but a report by the National Audit Office in 1992 found that at 31 March 1991, 46 per cent. of districts in England recalled women every five years, 39 per cent. recalled every three years and the remaining 15 per cent. recalled different women at different intervals.

The central method of collecting information on the cervical screening programme is currently being revised, and it is intended that this information will be available from the financial year 1994-95.

### Nurse Regrading

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurses have been waiting five years or more to complete the appeals procedure for regrading.

**Mr. Sackville:** None.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to buy out nurses regrading appeals; and if she will make a statement on the situation *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the Nottingham area.

**Mr. Sackville:** Local managers have been asked to consider the use of buy-outs where they judge such measures will be cost effective. Some appellants in the Nottingham area have accepted buy-out offers and others will be considering doing so.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping), of 15 June, *Official Report*, column *510*, if she will give the information on outstanding nurses' grading appeals by grade of nurse, including auxiliaries.

**Mr. Sackville:** Information on the number of appeals outstanding by grade at employing authority level is not available centrally. At regional level, no reliable data are currently available. The information on the number of appeals outstanding by grade at national level for England is shown in the table.

*Nurses and midwives clinical grading appeals outstanding as at 31 May 1993*
*England*

| *Grade claimed* | *National level* |
|---|---|
| B | 465 |
| C | 214 |
| D | 160 |

| Grade claimed | National level |
|---|---|
| E | 188 |
| F | 415 |
| G | 437 |
| H | 248 |
| I | 27 |

### Respiratory Distress Syndrome

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is being taken to reduce the number of new-born babies dying from respiratory distress syndrome; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville** *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* Information about the effectiveness of clinical treatments is available to doctors through professional journals and other scientific publications. The results of widespread clinical trials have been published which suggest that artificial surfactant is an effective treatment for premature babies suffering from, or at high risk of, respiratory distress syndrome. The use of this treatment has grown rapidly within the national health service, even though it only became available commercially 18 months ago.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

### Potatoes

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many tonnes of potatoes have been supplied as aid to each region or nation in the former Yugoslavia; for what purposes they were provided; where they were sourced; what was the price per tonne paid to the growers; what was the price per tonne paid by his Department; what information he has that seed potatoes so provided were actually planted; and what further aid is contemplated in respect of the agricultural industry.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** At the request of UNHCR we supplied 2,000 tonnes of seed potatoes to the Tuzla region of Bosnia in March of this year. These were provided as part of our humanitarian aid programme to the former Yugoslavia to provide a cost-effective food source for the local population during 1993. They were procured through a supplier in Scotland who obtained supplies from more than 30 growers. The price paid to the supplier, reflecting both the urgency and the requirement for export-grade super elite standard potatoes, was £140 per tonne for 1,000 tonnes of Desiree potatoes and £145 per tonne for 1,000 tonnes of Pentland Squire potatoes. In addition to the costs of purchase this price included grading, bagging, marking and certification.

Our representatives in the former Yugoslavia have confirmed that the seed potatoes have been planted, and that the aid was well received and used. We have no plans for any further such projects at present.

### Somalia

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the number of Somalis dependent for food aid on foreign donors.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** In February the World Food Programme/Food and Agriculture Organisation crop and food supply assessment mission estimated that 200,000 tonnes of imported food aid would be required to support approximately 2·5 million Somalis in the period March to August 1993.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the number of children currently dying in Somalia from measles, dysentery, diarrhoea, tuberculosis, malaria and other illnesses.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The demise of health services in Somalia makes it extremely difficult for relief agencies to compile reliable statistics on the incidence of child mortality.

Since January 1992 and in response to individual requests from relief agencies, we have committed £2·8 million in humanitarian aid funds in support of health care activities. This includes support for mother and child health care programmes and an expanded programme on immunisation, both of which are helping to reduce the incidence of disease in children.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in removal of mines in Somalia; and what assistance his Department has given.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The British company Rimfire has been training and supervising more than 400 local people in a major mine clearance programme in north-west Somalia, the worst affected region, for the last 19 months. Over that period, we have contributed £673,000 to the Hargeisa part of the operation. Work in Hargeisa has now been completed. Later this year we expect UNOSOM II to put forward a plan to address the mine clearance needs of the whole of Somalia. In the meantime Rimfire's multi-donor funded operation in the north-west continues.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in involving Somali professionals in the reconstruction of the country.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** UNOSOM II employs some Somali professional staff and relief agencies rely heavily on Somali staff, many of whom are professionals, to help plan and implement their programmes. We shall encourage the employment of Somali professionals wherever appropriate and expect the numbers employed to accelerate as the process of recovery gets under way.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Training

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many complaints have been received about the standard of training at agencies to which his Department refers clients.

**Miss Widdecombe:** There is no central record of such complaints. Local training and enterprise councils contract with providers to deliver Government funded training programmes in their areas. TECs are required to operate quality control procedures and will take up any complaint made to them by a client.

### Disabled People

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement outlining the current training provision given to disability employment advisers concerning the interpretation of reasonable cause for the dismissal of registered disabled people from employment.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The question whether there is reasonable cause for a particular dismissal is a matter of fact for the court to decide in the light of all the circumstances of the case. Disability employment advisers do not advise on such matters and, therefore, receive no specific training on the interpretation of this provision.

### Youth Training

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of young people who are eligible for youth training schemes under the youth training guarantee are receiving such training; and if he will make a statement.

**Miss Widdecombe:** In May there were around 241,000 young people in England on youth training—YT—or participating in youth credits, there were a further 4,000 young people who were covered by the YT guarantee and had been waiting for a YT place for eight or more weeks, of whom 1,600 had already received an offer.

Information on how many young people who are in training and were covered by the guarantee is not available.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Sunday Trading

12. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have taken place on breaches of the Sunday trading laws in the last 12-month period for which figures are available.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** In 1991, the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available, 522 prosecutions were brought under part IV of the Shops Act, of which 86 were brought to successful conclusions.

### Street Violence

13. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what priority he attaches to initiatives addressed to street violence and mugging.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** A high priority is given to such initiatives. Many of the schemes funded by the safer cities programme have been targeted at street violence.

### Fire and Civil Defence Authorities

14. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when next he plans to meet representatives of the fire and civil defence authorities to discuss their funding requirements for 1994-95.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** There are no immediate plans for such a meeting.

### Prison Privatisation

15. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department's prison privatisation programme.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Following the contracting out of the Wolds remand prison and Her Majesty's prison Blakenhurst, tenders for Her Majesty's prison Doncaster are to be invited in July. The market testing of Manchester prison is proceeding and a decision on the service supplier is expected in July.

17. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will allow the existing prison service to bid to run the prison in future prison privatisation.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The Prison Service will not be bidding in the next competitive tender to run Her Majesty's prison Doncaster. This continues the policy of no in-house bids for new establishments in the current building programme, which ends with Doncaster. The service will concentrate on preparing in-house bids for the next tranche of market testing of existing establishments.

### Police Service (Changes)

16. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans next to meet representatives of the Superintendents Association in the north-west to discuss the Government's proposed changes to the police service.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to meet north-western representatives of the Superintendents Association.

### Sentencing

18. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding appeals against lenient sentences; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** We receive representations from time to time both about individual cases and about the scope of the powers vested in my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General under the Criminal Justice Act 1988. His careful and discriminating use of those powers has repeatedly proved the wisdom of that legislation.

### Juvenile Offenders

19. **Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research his Department has carried out into current methods of dealing with persistent juvenile offenders.

**Mr. Maclean:** The Home Office has commissioned more than 47 research projects on various aspects of juvenile crime since 1979; but the Government's conclusion that the existing powers of the courts to deal with persistent juvenile offending are unsatisfactory also took account of views firmly expressed by experienced practitioners within the criminal justice system. Currently an in-depth survey of persistent juvenile offending, and the response made to it, is being carried out in two London

boroughs and one midlands county as part of the preparation for the introduction of the new secure training order for persistent juvenile offenders which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) announced in his statement on 2 March 1993, *Official Report*, columns 139-42.

22. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of current measures to deal with persistent juvenile offenders.

**Mr. Maclean:** My right hon. and learned Friend shares the view of his predecessor that the powers currently available to the courts when they have to deal with persistent juvenile offenders are unsatisfactory. He intends therefore to take forward the proposals for the secure training order which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) announced to the House on 2 March 1993, *Official Report*, columns 139-42, and to bring the necessary legislation before the House as soon as possible.

**Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers to discuss the problems arising from juvenile offenders; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** My right hon. and learned Friend met the President of the Association of Chief Police Officers on 28 May 1993 although he has not yet had the opportunity to discuss the subject of juvenile offending with representatives of the association. He is, however, aware of the views which they have expressed about it, for example in evidence given earlier this year to the Select Committee on Home Affairs.

### Crime Levels, Yorkshire

20. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to visit Yorkshire in the near future to discuss levels of crime.

**Mr. Maclean:** My right hon. and learned Friend has, at present, no plans to make such a visit; but we have, and will maintain, regular contacts with services, organisations and individuals knowledgeable about crime in Yorkshire.

### Security Services

21. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy towards parliamentary accountability of the security services.

**Mr. Howard:** Government policy on the accountability of the Security Service was set out in their reply to the report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs which was published on 27 May.

### British Summer Time

23. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the extension of British summer time.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** As I explained in my reply to a question from the hon. Member on 30 November 1992, *Official Report*, column 7, the Government will bring forward proposals on future summer time arrangements when the outcome of the current review by the European Commission is clear.

### Car Crime

24. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with car manufacturers about reducing the incidence of car theft.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders is represented on the Home Office advisory committee on car crime prevention, one of the main aims of which is to consider what practical steps car manufacturers and others can take to reduce the incidence of car theft.

**Mr. James Hill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions his Department has had with fleet buyers in seeking to prevent car crime.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association is represented on the Home Office advisory committee on car crime prevention which meets regularly to discuss what more can be done to help prevent car crime.

In addition, a senior officer from the Home Office crime prevention centre sits on the panel which assesses entries for the BVRLA's prestigious vehicle anti-theft award. I shall be presenting this year's award later this month.

### National Board for Crime Prevention

25. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representative of business and commerce have been included in the membership of the National Board for Crime Prevention.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Three of the 11 members of the National Board for Crime Prevention have commercial or business backgrounds. They are: Keith Ackroyd, the managing director of the retail division of the Boots Company plc, and chairman of the British Retail Consortium; Peter Batchelor, the executive director of sales and marketing at Vauxhall Motors; and David Sieff, a director at Marks and Spencer.

### Rape

26. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies he has commissioned about the length of sentences for rape.

**Mr. Maclean:** My right hon. and learned Friend has commissioned no such studies. But information about the length of custodial sentences imposed for all indictable offences is published regularly in the series of Command Papers entitled "Criminal Statistics", copies of which are in the Library of the House. They show that virtually all persons convicted of rape offences—including attempted rape—are sentenced to immediate custody and that, excluding cases in which the court has imposed the maximum sentence of life imprisonment, the average sentence length, which was just over four years in 1985, rose to approximately six years in 1987 and has remained at that level ever since.

### Domestic Violence

27. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research his Department has conducted into domestic violence.

**Mr. Maclean:** Relevant factual information is regularly obtained through the British crime survey and recorded crime statistics. In addition, the Home Office has undertaken studies into the nature of domestic violence as well as the response to the problem. A review of existing research in 1989—Home Office research study 107: "Domestic Violence": Lorna J. F. Smith—provided fresh insight into the nature of domestic violence and contributed to the guidance that was issued in July 1990 to the police and Crown Prosecution Service to ensure a quick and effective response. A current Home Office research study is assessing the effects of the new policies. In the area of action research, the Home Office is also funding a number of local innovative projects into violence and in particular domestic violence which are intended to inform future policy development.

### Carl Bridgewater Case

28. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to complete his review of the Carl Bridgewater case; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** I would refer the hon. Member to the oral reply given earlier today to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn).

### Feltham Young Offender Centre

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase the allowance of food to the young people in Feltham young offender and remand centre.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange a reply.

*Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated June 1993:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Question about what plans he has to increase the allowance of food to the young people in Feltham Young Offender and Remand Centre.

The daily food allowance was increased on 1 May 1993. In the case of Feltham this resulted in an increase from £1·22 to £1·35 per prisoner per day. There are no plans for a further increase in the allowance or the amount of food provided, which we believe is adequate.

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what structured training programmes he intends to introduce at Feltham young offender and remand centre.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply.

*Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated June 1993:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your Question about the structured training programmes that are to be introduced at Feltham Young Offender and Remand Centre.

Sentenced young offenders will be provided with their own training plans by the end of September which will take account of their needs, behaviour, attitude, education and work options. There will be modules which challenge offending behaviour and 'relapse prevention' training. Opportunities for achieving National Vocational Qualifications in a range of subjects including Gardening, Painting and Decorating, Catering, Industrial Cleaning and Business Administration will be offered in appropriate cases. Discussions with the local NVQ advisor will be held by the end of July with a view to introducing the NVQ arrangements before the end of 1993.

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce a probation department at Feltham young offender and remand centre.

**Mr. Maclean:** Feltham remand centre has a team of one senior and five main grade probation officers. The young offender institution has a single senior probation officer whose main role is to develop and maintain the operation of the personal officer scheme and act as liaison point between the institution and the outside supervising services.

### Drug Abuse

**Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to prevent young people from becoming victims of drug abuse.

**Mr. Maclean:** One of the primary tasks of 20 Home Office local drug prevention teams is to work with local communities in finding effective ways of tackling misuse, particularly among high-risk groups such as young people.

### Prisoners (AIDS)

**Mr. Keith Hill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners with AIDS have been granted early parole under section 36 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** None.

### New Age Travellers

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what requests he has had from police authorities in the west of England for assistance in helping to meet the extra costs incurred by dealing with past and expected new age traveller invasions; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** None.

### Police (Stress-related Illnesses)

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many working days have been lost through stress-related illnesses in each police force area in the United Kingdom in each year since 1990.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The information requested is not held centrally and could be collected from individual forces only at disproportionate cost.

## Palace of Westminster (Fire Safety)

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the dates in the past 10 years when the Palace of Westminster and parliamentary outbuildings have been inspected for compliance with the fire safety regulations and standards which apply; if he will give details of all fire safety regulations and standards which apply; if he will list those areas where the inspections have found non-compliance with the relevant requirements; and what steps he has taken to rectify the situation in those areas.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** During the past 10 years, members of Her Majesty's fire service inspectorate have visited the Palace of Westminster on nine scheduled occasions to monitor the progress of an agreed programme of work necessary before the issue of a fire certificate under the Fire Precautions Act 1971.

These visits were in:

November 1983
October 1984
April 1987
January 1988
July 1989
January 1990
February 1990
January 1991
February 1991

Numerous other visits have been made to address specific points and the work should be complete in 1994.

There are nine parliamentary outbuildings which are dealt with individually for the purpose of fire certification. Some hold certificates, and some have applications under consideration. I will write to the hon. Member with full details.

## Police (Red Tape)

**Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to reduce red tape in the police force.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** An extensive study into police paperwork is being undertaken. It will propose ways in which the administrative procedures following an arrest can be streamlined without jeopardising the rights of suspects. A review was also undertaken last year to examine ways in which the demands on the police for statistical and other information from the Home Office could be reduced. Computerisation and civilianisation are also being pursued as ways of relieving operational officers of administrative tasks.

## Custody Officers

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish figures showing the total number of custody officers in each police force in England and Wales in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1992.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The post of custody officer was introduced by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which did not come into effect until 1 January 1986. The table shows the total number of custody officers in 1992 in those police forces in England and Wales for which figures are available. I understand that those forces for which figures are not shown appoint custody officers from their complement of sergeants as and when they are needed.

*Custody officers in police forces in England and Wales for 1992*

| *Force title* | *Number of custody officers in post* |
|---|---|
| Avon and Somerset | 64 |
| Bedfordshire | 15 |
| Cambridgeshire | 25 |
| Cheshire | 32 |
| City of London | n/a |
| Cleveland | 25 |
| Cumbria | 29 |
| Derbyshire | 21 |
| Devon and Cornwall | 40 |
| Dorset | 10 |
| Durham | 31 |
| Dyfed Powys | 12 |
| Essex | 38 |
| Gloucestershire | 22 |
| Greater Manchester | 273 |
| Gwent | 21 |
| Hampshire | 6 |
| Hertfordshire | 46 |
| Humberside | 57 |
| Kent | 12 |
| Lancashire | 98 |
| Leicestershire | 49 |
| Lincolnshire | 13 |
| Metropolitan | n/a |
| Merseyside | 27 |
| Northumbria | 81 |
| North Wales | 23 |
| Norfolk | 14 |
| Northamptonshire | 21 |
| North Yorkshire | 14 |
| Nottinghamshire | 64 |
| South Wales | 63 |
| South Yorkshire | 27 |
| Staffordshire | 58 |
| Suffolk | 12 |
| Surrey | n/a |
| Sussex | n/a |
| Thames Valley | 45 |
| Warwickshire | 23 |
| West Mercia | 9 |
| West Midlands | 201 |
| West Yorkshire | 47 |
| Wiltshire | 17 |
| Total | 1,685 |

## Prison Escort Service

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the highest number of escapes in a week from the prison escort service *(a)* since 1988 and *(b)* since Group 4 Security has operated the service.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Nigel Evans, dated June 1993:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the highest number of escapes in a week from the Prison Escort Service *(a)* since 1988 and *(b)* since Group 4 Court Services Ltd has operated the service.

From 1988 until Group 4 Court Services Ltd became involved in the Court Escort Service, the highest number of prisoners who escaped in one week was 12. On 5 April 1993 Group 4 Court Services Ltd began operating in one area, the East Midlands and Humberside—replacing both Prison Service and the substantially more numerous police escorts in

that area. Since 5 April the highest number of prisoner escapes in one week, up to the end of May, was 6. These figures include all escorts from prisons in England and Wales staffed by Prison Service personnel or Group 4 Court Services Ltd staff, but excludes escapes from police escort.

This information is derived from incidents reported to the Incident Management Support Unit, a part of the Directorate of Custody.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Company Investigations

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total cost of each of the company investigations currently in progress and the manner in which it has been disbursed to the relevant individual inspectors.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The cost of current Companies Act inspections charged to date, inclusive of VAT, is as follows:

| *Investigation* | *Accountant inspector and support staff from his firm including disbursements* £ | *Legal inspector and support including disbursements* £ | *Total cost* £ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Guinness Plc | 1,510,000 | 389,000 | 1,899,000 |
| Pennine Commercial Holdings Plc | 343,000 | 34,000 | 377,000 |
| James Ferguson Holdings Plc<br>Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Limited | 3,748,000 | 1,350,000 | 5,098,000 |
| Consolidated Gold Fields Plc | 2,949,000 | 299,000 | 3,248,000 |
| Atlantic Computers Plc<br>Atlantic Computer Systems Plc | 4,036,000 | 1,460,000 | 5,496,000 |
| London United Investments Plc<br>CR Driver and Company Limited | 1,805,000 | 394,000 | 2,199,000 |
| Wace UK Holdings Limited<br>Tinsley Robor Plc<br>European Colour Plc | — | — | [1]222,000 |
| Mirror Group Newspapers Plc | 2,321,000 | 412,000 | 2,733,000 |

[1] Inspectors are both DTI officers.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total cost of each of the company investigations completed by his Department during the year to 31 March and the manner in which such costs have been disbursed to the relevant individual inspectors.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The cost of Companies Act inspections, completed during the year to 31 March 1993, inclusive of VAT, is as follows:

| *Investigation* | *Accountant inspector and support staff from his firm including disbursements* £ | *Legal inspector and support including disbursements* £ | *Total cost* £ |
|---|---|---|---|
| National Westminster Bank Plc | 2,101,000 | 477,000 | 2,578,000 |
| Norton Group Plc | 842,000 | 156,000 | 998,000 |
| Edencorp Leisure Plc | — | — | [1]207,000 |
| James Neill Holdings Plc; Francis Industries Limited; FH Lloyd Holdings Plc; The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company; Metal Closures Group Plc; Winchmore Plc | 129,000 | 125,000 | 254,000 |

[1] Inspectors were both DTI officers.

### Accounting Standards Board

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has held with the Accounting Standards Board on its priorities.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** I discussed the work of the Accounting Standards Board with the chairman and members of the board last July. I expect to have further discussions with them in due course.

### Ernst and Young

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he has taken against Ernst and Young following criticisms of the firm's standards by his inspectors; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The inspectors' reports concerned have been referred to the firm's supervisory body, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. As a recognised supervisory body, the institute is responsible for taking any disciplinary or regulatory action against an auditor registered with it.

### Industrial Development

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss the financing of industrial development.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** My Department keeps in regular contact with the Bank of England on a range of matters. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade last met the Governor in January.

### Electricity Interconnector

**Mr. Nicholson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the recent trend in the amount for electricity imported and exported via the channel interconnector, and on the prospects of the remainder of 1993.

**Mr. Eggar:** Net imports across the interconnector in the three months from February to April 1993 were 4.29 TWh. The future pattern of trade will depend on the operation of commercial contracts, including a contract for the export from the United Kingdom of increasing quantities of electricity at periods of peak demand in France during the winter.

### Export Licences

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many export licence applications were referred to Ministers for *(a)* Iran and *(b)* Iraq for each year from 1980; and of those for each country in each year how many were *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused.

**Mr. Needham:** No reliable information is available from 1980-84. Export licence applications for Iran from 1985 to 1992, and for Iraq from 1985 to August 1990, were considered by the interdepartmental committee—IDC—which consisted of representatives from the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. All applications for the IDC are referred to FCO and MOD Ministers to give final approval to the military, atomic and nuclear list goods. Final approval for industrial list goods rests with the DTI unless the FCO has overriding political considerations.

DTI Ministers become involved only if there is a policy issue which needs to be resolved. In 1992 DTI procedures were changed, and all IDC cases are now referred to DTI Ministers.

Since August 1990, as only humanitarian exports have received exports for Iraq, no licence applications have been referred to DTI Ministers.

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many export licence applications for *(a)* Iran and *(b)* Iraq were received for each year from 1980; and how many in each year for each country were (i) granted, (ii) refused, (iii) withdrawn or (iv) cancelled.

**Mr. Needham:** Export licence applications before 1985 have not been preserved, following a regular programme of destruction of routine documents.

From 1985 to 1992 export licence applications for Iran were processed by the interdepartmental committee—IDC—which was composed of representatives from the Department of Trade and Industry, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence. The most accurate figures available are as follows:

| | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* | *1992* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Received | 259 | 298 | 593 | 607 | 568 | 675 | 1,081 | 814 |
| Approved | 218 | 256 | 405 | 457 | 396 | 377 | 558 | 337 |
| Refused | 10 | 17 | 61 | 51 | 71 | 44 | 143 | 109 |
| Cancelled/withdrawn | 31 | 25 | 127 | 99 | 101 | [1]254 | [2]270 | [2]133 |
| No licence required | — | — | — | — | — | — | 70 | 53 |
| Outstanding at year end | — | — | — | — | — | — | 40 | 182 |

*Note:*

The basis on which the figures were collected changes after 1990. Up to 1990 the figures show the final outcome for all licences received in each year. For 1991 and 1992, the figures show the position at the end of the year for all licences received that year. So: the figure marked [1] includes pending cases at end 1990, and [2] includes cases still pending at the end of the previous year.

From 1985 to August 1990, export licence applications for Iraq were processed by the IDC. The figures are as follows:

| | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* | *1989* | *[1]1990* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Received | 367 | 295 | 315 | 401 | 410 | 241 |
| Approved | 323 | 272 | 272 | 327 | 345 | 118 |
| Refused | 11 | 6 | 16 | 25 | 19 | 28 |
| Cancelled/withdrawn | 33 | 17 | 27 | 49 | 46 | 95 |

[1] Until August.

Since August 1990 UN sanctions have been enforced against Iraq. Licences are granted only for humanitarian purposes. Applications for licences are considered carefully on a case-by-case basis, not only in the United

Kingdom, but by the UN sanctions committee in New York which has, since October 1992, have issued letters of authorisation for each export. The figures are:

| | [1]1990 | 1991 | 1992 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Received | 117 | 423 | 1,043 |
| Approved | 7 | 342 | 696 |
| Refused | 18 | 21 | 154 |
| Pending at year end | 92 | 60 | 193 |

[1] August-December.

### Iran and Iraq

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total value of United Kingdom exports to *(a)* Iran and *(b)* Iraq for each year from 1980, broken down into civil and defence-related exports for each country.

**Mr. Needham:** Information on United Kingdom visible trade is pubished in the "Annual Abstract of Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library.

For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it has been the consistent policy of successive Governments not to disclose particulars of defence trade with other countries. It is therefore not possible to provide a breakdown into civil and defence-related exports.

### Export Credits Guarantee Department

**Mr. Bates:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the future of the transitional reinsurance facility provided by ECGD to the privatised successor of its Insurance Services Group.

**Mr. Needham:** At the time of privatisation of ECGD's Insurance Services Group, the Government undertook to top up the reinsurance available from the private sector as necessary for up to three years to ensure that the reinsurance needs of the privatised operation would be met.

It has become clear that in the immediate future capacity in the private reinsurance market may well not expand sufficiently to meet the likely demand for short-term export credit insurance. This, in turn, reflects the current rapid growth in our exports.

The Government have, therefore, decided to extend the transitional reinsurance facility until at least the end of 1997. It nevertheless remains the Government's objective to maximise the extent to which reinsurance is provided by the private market and it will take all necessary measures to encourage that process. The Government retain the right, however, to terminate this facility, but, in order to provide a stable framework of support for both insurers and United Kingdom exporters, it undertakes to give two years' notice of any such decision. The case for continuation of the facility beyond 1997 will be reviewed annually from 1995.

Given the significant change in the nature of this facility, the Government have also decided that they should, in principle, be available to other credit insurers who give support to our exporters.

I am pleased to be able to make this statement in response to the representations which have been made to me by the principal export credit insurers, exporting companies and their representative organisations. It further underlines the Government's commitment to promoting exports in order both to protect and provide jobs and reinforce our emergence from recession.

### Director General of Fair Trading

**Mr. Bates:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to publish the report by the Director General of Fair Trading for the year 1992.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The 19th annual report by the Director General of Fair Trading has been published today. It covers the period from 1 January 1992 to 31 December 1992. Copies of the report have been laid before Parliament.

### Nuclear Industry

**Mr. Bates:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will report on progress to implement the United Kindom's voluntary offer to provide the International Atomic Energy Agency under the terms of INFCIRC/415 with information on international transfers of nuclear materials and equipment.

**Mr. Eggar:** Information on licensed United Kingdom transfers of nuclear equipment to countries outside the European Community will be provided quarterly by my Department. Information on nuclear materials, licensed for export to a country outside the European Community, is being provided on behalf of the Twelve by the Commission of the European Community. We consider the provision of this information to the agency to be in the public interest as part of continuing efforts to strengthen IAEA safeguards.

Commercial confidentiality will be respected. The agency has undertaken to treat the information with the same level of confidentiality as that applied to information under a safeguards agreement.

### Company Failures

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the number of company insolvencies and liquidations in the Greater London area during each of the last three years.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** No geographical information on creditors' voluntary liquidations is available. For compulsory liquidations and bankruptcy orders, the only geographical information is by the court in which the order was made. This is not a good basis for analysing business location, since many cases in England and Wales are dealt with in London regardless of the business's location, and work may be moved between courts according to differing workloads.

Information for businesses in Greater London could be obtained only by scrutinising individual case files, which would involve disproportionate cost.

### Nuclear Facilities

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade which nuclear facilities are incapable of meeting a dose constraint of 0·3 mSv of radiation per year for members of the public.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** I have been asked to reply.

None, although in some cases this could involve disproportionate cost. A constraint of 0·3 mSv of radiation

per year for members of the public has recently been recommended as a design and planning target for new plant.

## WALES

### Strikes

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many work days were lost through strike action in Wales for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** The information requested is given in the table.

*Stoppages of work due to industrial disputes*

| *Year* | *Days lost (thousands)* |
|---|---|
| 1979 | 1,642 |
| 1980 | 2,918 |
| 1981 | 292 |
| 1982 | 283 |
| 1983 | 353 |
| 1984 | 3,527 |
| 1985 | 940 |
| 1986 | 78 |
| 1987 | 203 |
| 1988 | 116 |
| 1989 | 307 |
| 1990 | 84 |
| 1991 | 20 |
| 1992 | 10 |

*Source:* Employment Department.

### NHS Staff

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will give details of the total number and whole-time equivalent number of health care assistants or health assistants or health care support workers employed wholly or primarily in nursing roles by the NHS in 1990, 1991 and 1992;

(2) if he will give details of the whole-time equivalent numbers of *(a)* agency and *(b)* bank nursing and midwifery staff employed in the national health service for each year from 1987 to 1992.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Information is not held centrally in sufficient detail to enable breakdowns of nursing staff employed by health authorities and national health service trusts into occupational groups such as those requested.

### Acorn Nursery, Cardiff

**Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by what amount the Welsh Office subsidises the Acorn private nursery in Cardiff.

**Mr. Redwood:** The interdepartmental civil service nursery in Cardiff is currently managed under contract by Acorns Nurseries, which is not subsidised by the Welsh Office.

### Foreign Investment

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures of the total number of jobs created by foreign investment in Wales by companies from *(a)* Japan, *(b)* Germany, *(c)* France and *(d)* the United States of America in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** The total number of new and safeguarded jobs promised by inward investment projects recorded in the past five financial years is shown in the table. These figures are based on information provided by the companies at the time and take no account of subsequent developments.

As the figures show, the United States and Japan have been especially good generators of jobs in Wales.

| *Year* | *Japan* | *Germany* | *France* | *USA* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 984 | 1,688 | 177 | 3,460 |
| 1989-90 | 1,926 | 291 | 630 | 3,718 |
| 1990-91 | 1,129 | 586 | 1,683 | 3,399 |
| 1991-92 | 2,264 | 1,559 | 587 | 3,052 |
| 1992-93 | 530 | 415 | 772 | 3,983 |
| TOTALS | 6,833 | 4,539 | 3,849 | 17,612 |

### Forest Land

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the areas of forest land which *(a)* were offered for sale on 16 June 1989 and *(b)* have been put up for sale since that date, indicating which have been sold to the private sector and the receipts, by county, accruing to the Forestry Commission from such sales.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** Information on the areas of forest land which were offered for sale on and after 16 June 1989 is not readily available and could be provided only at disporportionate cost. Lists giving details of the areas of forest land sold by the Forestry Commission from the start of the disposals programme in July 1981 to December 1992 are held in the Library of the House. Records of the receipts accruing from these sales are not held on a county basis.

### Children

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to give one of his Ministers special responsibility for children.

**Mr. Redwood:** I have no such plans.

### Hepatitis A

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *132*, what was the total number of cases of hepatitis A recorded in Wales for each county in each year since 1979.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The number of cases of hepatitis A recorded in Wales for each county in each year since 1987 is given in the table. Information prior to 1987 is not available.

| | *1987* | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 4 | 5 | 11 | 15 | 37 |
| Dyfed | 6 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 5 |
| Gwent | 10 | 23 | 8 | 25 | 71 |
| Gwynedd | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 |

| | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mid Glamorgan | 6 | 7 | 2 | 21 | 68 |
| Powys | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| South Glamorgan | 5 | 37 | 31 | 50 | 19 |
| West Glamorgan | 4 | 15 | 4 | 27 | 39 |

*Source:* Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

### Prince of Wales Orthopaedic Hospital

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority in relation to the suspension of the director of the treatment centre at the Prince of Wales orthopaedic hospital, Rhydlafar in Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** None. No further comment can be made while the issues are under consideration by the health authority.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Overseas Incapacity Provision

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on incapacity provision abroad.

**Mr. Scott:** The Department collects information on foreign social security schemes, including the provision of incapacity benefits, from a wide range of sources. These include the following publications which are held in the Library:

"Social Security Programmes Throughout the World"
"Social Protection in the Member States of the Community"
"Mercer's International Benefit Guidelines"

### Unemployment Register

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were removed from the unemployment registers in each month during the last two years; and how many of them were removed from the registers *(a)* for making fraudulent claims, *(b)* for not genuinely seeking work and *(c)* unreasonably refusing a job offer.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** I have been asked to reply.

Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones, dated 24 June 1993:*

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about the number of people removed from the unemployment register in the last two years for making fraudulent claims, not genuinely seeking work and unreasonably refusing a job offer. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

I would first like to apologise for the delay in replying to this question, which was due for reply on 10 May. The delay occurred because the question was originally tabled to the Welsh Office. I understand that, following receipt of the question, the Welsh Office contacted the Department of Social Security (DSS) who accepted responsibility for preparing a reply. The question was then transferred to the DSS. The Table Office last week contacted the DSS to enquire as to when the question had been passed to the Employment Department for reply. While the Employment Department officials have no record of being contacted by the DSS, we accept that the question is the responsibility of the Employment Service and have prepared the following reply.

On the question itself, it may help if I first explain that the monthly unemployment count includes all people claiming unemployment benefits, such as unemployment benefit (UB), income support (IS) or National Insurance credits, on the day of the count and who, on that day, were signed on as unemployed and available for work. Essentially, all people who sign as unemployed are counted irrespective of whether they are actually receiving benefit. A person ceases to be included in the count only if they choose not to continue signing for whatever reason.

Below are the quarterly figures for the number of people who, over the last two operational years, have withdrawn their claims to benefit or have started to declare part-time earnings, not previously disclosed, as a direct result of an investigation by an Employment Service Inspector. Monthly figures are not available.

| *Quarterly Periods* | *Withdrawn/Modified claims* |
|---|---|
| 1 April 1991 to 30 June 1991 | 12,451 |
| 1 July 1991 to 31 September 1991 | 13,351 |
| 1 October 1991 to 31 December 1991 | 12,528 |
| 1 January 1992 to 31 March 1992 | 14,691 |
| 1 April 1992 to 30 June 1992 | 17,747 |
| 1 July 1992 to 31 September 1992 | 18,555 |
| 1 October 1992 to 31 December 1992 | 15,150 |
| 1 January 1993 to 31 March 1993 | 12,259 |

Figures are not collected for the number of people who choose not to continue signing as a result of their benefit being disallowed for failing to actively seek work or for refusing employment. People who continue to sign while a disallowance is in force are included in the unemployment count.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

## TRANSPORT

### Bus Services

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the annual number of bus journeys by passengers in each year since 1985-86 *(a)* by region and *(b)* in Great Britain.

**Mr. Freeman:** The number of bus journeys made by passengers in Great Britain in each year since 1985-86 is given in the table. Regional data are not available. Area figures for local bus journeys in London, English metropolitan areas, English shire countries, Scotland and Wales are given in table 2.1 of "Bus and Coach Statistics 1991-92", a copy of which has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

*Bus passenger journeys in Great Britain*

*Million*

| *Year* | *Local journeys* | *Non-local journeys* | *All journeys* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1985-86 | 5,641 | 537 | 6,178 |
| 1986-87 | 5,341 | 572 | 5,913 |
| 1987-88 | 5,292 | 592 | 5,884 |
| 1988-89 | 5,215 | 563 | 5,778 |

| Year | Local journeys | Non-local journeys | All journeys |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1989-90 | 5,074 | 594 | 5,668 |
| 1990-91 | 4,852 | 619 | 5,471 |
| 1991-92 | 4,669 | [1]— | [1]— |

[1]— Passenger journey data for non-local bus services have not been collected since 1990-91.
*Source:* Statistical returns from PSV operators.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many successful applications have been made to the traffic commissioners to run a new bus service; and how many were for new routes in each year since 1986 *(a)* by region and *(b)* in Great Britain;

(2) how many changes in bus services were registered with the traffic commissioners in each year since 1986 *(a)* by region and *(b)* in Great Britain.

**Mr. Freeman:** The number of registrations of new bus services and variations to services in Great Britain since 1986 are set out in the table. Details are not available on a regional basis, but are given for each traffic area office. Figures on the number of new routes are not available.

*Number of registrations and variations accepted by traffic area offices*

| Year | Metropolitan | South East | East | West | South Wales | West Midlands | North West | North East | Scotland | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1986-87 (Breakdown of figures by TAO region not available)* | | | | | | | | | | |
| New Registrations | | | | | | | | | | 2,469 |
| Variations | | | | | | | | | | 3,562 |
| *1987-88* | | | | | | | | | | |
| New Registrations | 340 | 802 | 1,189 | 626 | 280 | 496 | 1,656 | 1,371 | 652 | 7,412 |
| Variations | 1,153 | 2,338 | 3,120 | 1,610 | 1,101 | 1,801 | 3,694 | 4,342 | 3,701 | 22,860 |
| *1988-89* | | | | | | | | | | |
| New Registrations | 286 | 548 | 854 | 620 | 384 | 375 | 1,321 | 1,912 | 719 | 7,019 |
| Variations | 635 | 1,860 | 2,340 | 1,562 | 1,030 | 1,345 | 3,120 | 3,317 | 2,566 | 17,775 |
| *1989-90* | | | | | | | | | | |
| New Registrations | 290 | 545 | 1,070 | 387 | 360 | 441 | 1,699 | 1,842 | 971 | 7,605 |
| Variations | 763 | 1,562 | 2,649 | 1,073 | 754 | 1,440 | 2,776 | 3,773 | 2,306 | 17,096 |
| *1990-91*[1] | | | | | | | | | | |
| New Registrations | 329 | 548 | 915 | 354 | 440 | 353 | 1,053 | 1,468 | 570 | 6,030 |
| Variations | 638 | 1,457 | 2,399 | 1,024 | 878 | 1,213 | 2,730 | 3,198 | 2,197 | 15,734 |
| *1991-92*[1] *SEMTA (South East and Metropolitan merged this year)* | | | | | | | | | | |
| New Registrations | 508 | | 788 | 559 | 443 | 805 | 1,340 | 1,442 | 736 | 6,621 |
| Variations | 1,016 | | 1,968 | 1,681 | 714 | 1,567 | 3,836 | 3,180 | 1,764 | 15,726 |

[1] Figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are not directly comparable with earlier years in all cases. Traffic Area Offices were reorganised in 1991, involving some redistribution of work.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the grounds for his recent overturning of the traffic commissioner's decision to impose traffic regulation conditions on bus services in Sheffield.

**Mr. Freeman:** The traffic commissioner's decision was not overturned; it was varied. The reasons are set out in full in the decision letter which I will send to the hon. Member.

### Trains (Bicycles and Luggage)

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail on the arrangements for, and costs of, carrying bicycles and luggage by train *(a)* within the existing structure of the rail network and *(b)* after the introduction of franchising.

**Mr. Freeman:** None. At present this is a matter for British Rail. After privatisation, the Government believe that private sector operators will be keen to respond to passengers' demands, tailoring their services to make them more attractive and thus maximise fare revenue.

## SCOTLAND

### Kilgarth Tip

**Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to make a decision on applications before him in respect of Kilgarth tip, Coatbridge.

**Mr. Lang:** Submissions on the appeal by Glasgow district council against conditions imposed by Monklands district council on the waste disposal licence for Kilgarth tip, Coatbridge, were completed on 6 April. They are now under consideration and the decision will be made as soon as possible.

### Access Funds

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the amounts to be allocated to each of the access funds for education in Scotland for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 18 June 1993]:* A total of £3·606 million will be available for the access funds for higher and further education institutions in Scotland for academic year 1993-94; individual allocations to the three funds have yet to be determined. In the academic year 1992-93, a total of some £3·3 million was disbursed in access funds to higher and further

education institutions, including universities, in Scotland. The overall provision for 1993-94 thus represents an increase of about 9·6 per cent. over 1992-93.

With the change in funding arrangements for higher education under the Further and Higher Education Acts 1992, responsibility for the provision of access funds for students at previously Universities Funding Council-funded universities in Scotland has been transferred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

### Improper Expenditure (Surcharges)

**Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what statutory rights he has to surcharge members of *(a)* health boards, *(b)* health trusts, *(c)* local enterprise companies, *(d)* other non-departmental public bodies and *(e)* elected local authorities; what plans he has to make any change to the current situation, and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* I have no statutory powers to surcharge members of health boards, national health service trusts or local enterprise companies. As far as local authorities are concerned the position is that, following recommendations made by the Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland relating to unlawful or improper expenditure incurred by any local authority, I am empowered by section 104 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to consider the possibility of surcharging the person or persons concerned, a sum not exceeding the amount of unlawful or improper expenditure in question. Under the same section of that Act, I am empowered also to surcharge members of river purification boards, which are non-departmental public bodies. I have no statutory powers to surcharge members of non-departmental bodies. I have no plans to change the present arrangements in respect of any category of body.

## DEFENCE

### Maintenance Depots

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the maintenance depots which carry out *(a)* first and *(b)* second-line repair services; indicating (i) which of them use contractors and (ii) the number of inspectors at each depot to check contractors' work; and how many vehicles were sent back to contractors because of unsatisfactory work in the latest year for which figures are available.

**Mr. Aitken:** First and second-line maintenance is normally undertaken by service or civilian personnel at the units where the vehicles or equipment are actually in use. For example, RAF first and second-line work is usually undertaken by service and civilian personnel at operational/training flying stations.

In the Army, work is also carried out by the Army Base Repair Organisation which provides facilities for second-line repair at:

26 District Workshop Stirling
27 District Workshop Warminster
31 District Workshop Catterick
36 District Workshop Colchester
43 District Workshop Aldershot
44 District Workshop Ashford
Eng Res Workshop Long Marston

Contractors are not employed for this work.

The Royal Navy does, however, use contractors for scheduled maintenance, which includes first and second-line repair, of Royal Navy helicopters and aircraft at:

RNAS Portland
RNAS Yeovilton
RNAS Culdrose
RNAS Roborough

Figures are not available for the number of vehicles, if any, sent back to contractors following first or second-line repair, or the number of staff whose duties include inspection of contractors work, and compilation of such data would involve disproportionate cost.

### AWE Aldermaston

**Mr. Rendel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the report produced by AWE Aldermaston on the radiological contamination of soil at Aldermaston court.

**Mr. Aitken:** Yes.

**Mr. Rendel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has issued his Department with the equivalent of an administration order to remove radiologically contaminated soil around manhole covers of the pipeline used by AWE Aldermaston to discharge radioactive waste to the Thames; if he will place in the Library the results of the soil analysis carried out by AWE Aldermaston; if he will publish a list of the landowners involved; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Aitken:** Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is aware of the low-level contamination found in small areas of soil immediately adjacent to a pipeline taking treated liquid effluent from AWE Aldermaston. Our plan for its removal will be submitted to them for approval.

Our discussions with the landowners are in confidence and it is not for us to make their identities public. I will write to the hon. Member about the soil analysis carried out by AWE Aldermaston.

**Mr. Rendel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *111*, if he will place a copy of the results of the inquiry into the incident at AWE Aldermaston on 8 December 1992 in the Library.

**Mr. Aitken:** The report of the inquiry into the incident at AWE on 8 December 1992 was written for management purposes and it would not be appropriate to make it available. However, a copy of the report has been passed to the Health and Safety Executive and I have written to the director general asking him to consider it carefully as part of their independent safety review, following which a report will be published.

### Expenditure

**Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the annual defence expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product from 1963.

**Mr. Hanley:** The information is as follows:

| | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| 1963-64 | 6·0 |
| 1964-65 | 5·7 |
| 1965-66 | 5·7 |

| | Per cent. |
|---|---|
| 1966-67 | 5·6 |
| 1967-68 | 5·5 |
| 1968-69 | 5·1 |
| 1969-70 | 4·7 |
| 1970-71 | 4·8 |
| 1971-72 | 4·9 |
| 1972-73 | 4·7 |
| 1973-74 | 4·7 |
| 1974-75 | 4·7 |
| 1975-76 | 4·9 |
| 1976-77 | 4·9 |
| 1977-78 | 4·6 |
| 1978-79 | 4·5 |
| 1979-80 | 4·6 |
| 1980-81 | 4·9 |
| 1981-82 | 5·0 |
| 1982-83 | 5·2 |
| 1983-84 | 5·2 |
| 1984-85 | 5·3 |
| 1985-86 | 5·1 |
| 1986-87 | 4·8 |
| 1987-88 | 4·4 |
| 1988-89 | 4·0 |
| 1989-90 | 4·0 |
| 1990-91 | 4·0 |
| 1991-92 | 4·2 |
| 1992-93 | 4·0 |

*Notes:*
1. Figures include exceptional expenditure on Falklands/Gulf conflict but exclude Gulf burden sharing contributions from other Governments.
2. Figures from 1978-79 take account of the technical changes in the treatment of Armed Forces and civilian pensions described in the 1992 Autumn Statement (Cm 2096) and other classification changes. It has not been possible to adjust figures for years before 1978-79 on to a fully consistent basis and comparisons with 1978-79 and later years may therefore be unreliable.
3. Figure for 1992-93 as at Spring Supplementary Estimate.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the level of the United Kingdom's defence spending in each of the last 10 years in *(a)* cash prices *(b)* constant prices and *(c)* as a proportion of gross national product.

**Mr. Hanley:** Detailed information on the level of the United Kingdom's defence spending between 1983-84 and 1992-93 was set out in the "Statistical Supplement to the 1992 Autumn Statement", Cm 2219.

### Electronic Warfare Training

**Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the contract for the provision of electronic warfare training to the RAF.

**Mr. Hanley:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) on 14 June, *Official Report*, columns *479-80*.

### Hawk Aircraft

**Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what after-sales monitoring takes place to ensure that Hawk aircraft sold for training purposes are not converted to fighter aircraft.

**Mr. Aitken:** Consideration is always given to the use to which defence equipment might be put before an export licence is granted. Assurances as to the end use of the Hawk aircraft will also be sought prior to supply.

### Arms Sales (Indonesia)

**Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what after-sales monitoring takes place to ensure that arms sold to Indonesia are not used for repressive purposes.

**Mr. Aitken:** All exports of defence equipment require an export licence, and applications are carefully scrutinised case by case. We do not allow the export of equipment likely to be used indiscriminately for the repression of civilian population. We have no evidence that British equipment supplied to Indonesia in the past has been used for civilian repression.

### Trooping the Colour

**Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost to public funds of the annual ceremony of Trooping the Colour.

**Mr. Hanley:** No additional costs are incurred for the horses or the men, as they are funded in any event. Other costs associated with Trooping the Colour include drycleaning of ceremonial uniforms, accommodation services including facilities, fuel and transport costs, rations and communication costs. Full details are not recorded separately however and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Medication

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the amount spent by each service on medication in the last financial year; and what are the arrangements for the payments for medication by service men *(a)* on active service and *(b)* not on active service.

**Mr. Hanley:** The amount spent on medication—drugs and dressings—for each service in financial year 1992-93 was as follows:

*£ million*

| *Service* | *Amount* |
|---|---|
| Royal Navy | 3·293 |
| Army | 12·190 |
| Royal Air Force | 5·615 |
| TOTAL | 21·098 |

Service personnel are entitled to free medication whether or not they are on active service.

### Maralinga Nuclear Test Site

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *130*, if he will make a statement on the outcome of his meeting with Australian Ministers about the Maralinga nuclear test site in Australia.

**Mr. Hanley:** Australian and United Kingdom Ministers and officials met on 17 and 18 June to discuss the question of further clean-up of the former British nuclear weapon test sites in Australia. A proposal has been developed which Australian Ministers believe provides the basis for settling outstanding Australian claims against Britain. The solution envisages an ex gratia payment by

the United Kingdom to the Australian Government in full and final settlement of their claims. The proposal is to be considered by the Australian Cabinet.

### Army Personnel Centre

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answers to the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey) of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *12*, how many married quarters there are in the Stockport and Glasgow areas for any personnel located in either area, for the proposed new Army personnel centre.

**Mr. Hanley:** It has been estimated that five existing married quarters in the Stockport area and 17 in the Glasgow area could be made available for military personnel if the new centre were established at either location.

### Mine Clearing

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution has been made by the United Kingdom to mine-clearing operations overseas in terms of financial costs and other forms of support.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I have been asked to reply.

Since April 1991 the ODA has funded the following humanitarian mine clearance operations:

| *Country and Project* | *1991-92* £ | *1992-93* £ | *1993-94*[1] £ |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Afghanistan* Mine Clearance | — | 188,900 | 290,631 |
| *Afghanistan* Minefield surveying planning and management; mine awarness; clearance training; clearance | — | 1,000,000 | 500,000 |
| *Cambodia* Mine Clearance, training and mine awareness programme | 60,000 | 199,886 | 232,520 |
| *Cambodia* Public awareness (radio programmes) | — | 6,451 | — |
| *Somalia* Mine clearance training; clearance management; mine awareness in the north-west | 300,000 | 373,540 | — |
| | 360,000 | 1,768,777 | 1,023,151 |

[1] To date.

In addition, an allocation of £710,000 has recently been agreed for a project to establish and monitor three locally trained demining teams in the Zambezia province of Mozambique. Once the project has been formally agreed by the peace commission in Mozambique the Halo Trust will implement it.

Apart from these humanitarian operations, United Kingdom military personnel are providing training in mine clearance as part of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, and advice to the Government of Kuwait on mine clearance operations.

The European Community also supports humanitarian mine clearance operations in for instance Afghanistan and northern Iraq. Part of the funding for such operations is borne by the United Kingdom.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Friday 25 June 1993*

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Contract and Estate Law

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) what expressions of concern he has received *(a)* from small businesses and *(b)* from others about the current law of privity of contract and estate in England and Wales;

(2) what representations he has received in support of the reform of privity of contract and estate.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The Lord Chancellor has received a considerable number of expressions of concern about the law in this area, the majority from small businesses and organisations representing their interests; but there have also been representations from landlords and property investors. It would not be practicable to list the representations that have been received. The Lord Chancellor is well aware of the respective interests of both tenants and landlords, and has already announced the Government's decision to implement the Law Commission's recommendations in this area for future leases.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Sunday Trading

**Sir George Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what account will be taken, in any reform of the law on Sunday trading, of public demand for all shops to be free to open for some period during the day on Sundays.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** We intend to offer Parliament a choice between the four main options for reform of Sunday trading law. Hon. Members will no doubt take public opinion into account before choosing between these options.

### Immigration

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the total number of non-United Kingdom nationals admitted for settlement in the United Kingdom in each year since 1982, indicating whether these originated in *(a)* the new Commonwealth, *(b)* the Republic of Ireland, *(c)* eastern Europe and *(d)* elsewhere; and if he will give an estimate of what proportion of this total was of working age.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The numbers of persons accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom, by nationality, are published in table 14 of the Home Office Command Paper "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom 1990" (Cm 1571) for the years 1982-89 and in table 1 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 14/93 "Control of Immigration: Statistics—Third and Fourth Quarters and Year 1992" for 1990-92. Copies of both these publications are in the Library. These figures do not include citizens of the Republic of Ireland, who are generally able to move freely within the common travel area.

The readily available information on age is for non-EC nationals accepted for settlement on removal of the time limit on their stay (ie subsequent to initial admission for a limited period) in 1992. These acceptances comprised the large majority of total settlement in 1992 (88 per cent.). Around 80 per cent. were aged between 16 and 60.

### New Age Travellers

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice he is giving local authorities to assist them in coping with large-scale acts of trespass on local authority or private land by new age travellers this summer; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** In 1991 we issued a leaflet giving general guidance to land owners, including local authorities, relating to trespass on land and we encourage all local authorities to liaise closely with the police if they suspect that any land in their areas is vulnerable to mass trespass. Officials have met representatives of the Malvern Hills district council and Salisbury district council to discuss their applications to the Home Secretary for orders under section 13 of the Public Order Act 1986.

### Custody Officers

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the number of physical attacks against custody officers within each police force area in England and Wales in each year since 1985.

**Mr. Maclean:** The information requested is not collected centrally.

### Illegal Employment Prosecutions

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been initiated in the last five years for the illegal employment of non-EC persons who do not possess a work permit.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Although it is an offence to take work in breach of conditions of stay, employers do not commit an offence simply by virtue of employing such people.

### Wolds Remand Centre

**Ms Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates were involved in the incident at the Wolds remand centre on 11 and 12 June; how many staff were on duty at the time and how many extra staff were called in; what is the value of the damage done by inmates during the course of the incident; for what reason the emergency services were called; and if he will call for a detailed inquiry.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange a reply.

*Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 24 June 1993:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking about an incident at the Wolds Remand Prison on 11th and 12th June.

49 prisoners, all in one unit, refused to return to their cells at lock-up on 11 June. 23 staff were on duty at the time. Contingency plans were put into operation, but for obvious reasons it is our policy not to give operational details of them for any establishment. It is standard procedure for emergency services to be alerted to an incident. The unit was quiet by 0015 and complete control was secured by 0135. The value of the damage caused by prisoners is put at £8,000. The Home Office controller, based at Wolds, monitors the contractor's performance and will provide a full report; the incident on 11 June does not merit a separate inquiry.

## TRANSPORT

### New Age Travellers' Vehicles

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 3 July 1992, *Official Report*, column *726*, what recommendations the vehicle inspectorate and the police forces have received underlying the policy of prohibiting from road use vehicles *(a)* not carrying tax discs or *(b)* which are unroadworthy; and if he will make a statement on any extra measures he is taking in respect of expected movements of new age travellers in the coming summer.

**Mr. Key:** The vehicle inspectorate normally imposes an immediate prohibition on vehicles which are in a dangerous condition. This prevents or restricts their use on the road until the defect has been rectified. Where there is a lesser defect, it may impose a delayed prohibition, which comes into effect only if the defect has not been rectified within a specified time limit. The police can only impose immediate prohibitions. Policy on prohibitions is a matter for chief constables, but generally the police use the same criteria as the vehicle inspectorate in deciding whether a defect is serious enough to merit an immediate prohibition. There are no powers for either the police or the vehicle inspectorate to prohibit vehicles not displaying valid tax discs.

Most of the vehicle inspectorate enforcement resources are used to ensure that lorries, buses and coaches are safe, although some private vehicles are checked with police co-operation. No extra measures by the vehicle inspectorate are planned at present in respect of new age travellers. The deployment of police resources is a matter for chief constables.

However, vehicles not displaying valid tax discs may be stopped by the police and the keepers prosecuted/fined. The maximum penalty is £1,000 or five times the annual rate of duty whichever is the greatest. Furthermore, a valid tax disc cannot be obtained unless the keeper is in possession of a valid roadworthiness test certificate.

### Rail Privatisation

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria he will use to judge the effectiveness and value for money of his rail privatisation proposals.

**Mr. Freeman:** Our proposals are intended to enable the railways to provide a higher quality of service, with greater responsiveness to customers' needs, and to offer better value for money to the public who travel by rail.

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements he has made to ensure that business travellers will still be able to use rail warrants to pay for tickets after the franchising of rail passenger services.

**Mr. Freeman:** Future participation in warrant schemes will be a matter for negotiation with operators. Arrangements to facilitate this are still under discussion.

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which authority will become responsible, under his proposals for the privatisation of BR, for handling telephone inquiries for the inquiry bureaux currently operated by British Rail; and what steps he is taking to ensure that they continue to provide information for the whole of the national rail network.

**Mr. Freeman:** The provision of co-ordinated passenger information over the telephone is still under discussion. If necessary, it will be possible to impose suitable obligations through licences or franchise agreements.

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that rail franchise operators will continue to accept Inter-Rail and Rail Europe Senior railcards after privatisation of British Rail.

**Mr. Freeman:** Franchisees will be required to honour existing tickets. Future participation in international ticketing offers will be a matter for commercial negotiation, as it is now for British Rail, within joint industry arrangements as necessary.

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the first rail passenger franchises to be offered to the private sector; and which services these will be.

**Mr. Freeman:** I expect the first franchises to be offered to the private sector in 1994. These are likely to be the seven service groupings announced in February. The Victoria-Gatwick express is in the vanguard of the restructuring process and is expected to be offered to the private sector ahead of other services.

### Rail Services (East Anglia)

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to seek discussions with British Rail over changes in levels of services announced in Norfolk and Suffolk; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** None. British Rail must be free to match service levels to demand. I understand that the changes in the winter Sunday services reflect the high cost of providing these lightly-used services, many of which cater for a largely seasonal trade.

### Disabled Rail Travellers

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to place a duty on the Rail Regulator to consult the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee with the view of drawing up a national code of practice for disabled rail travellers.

**Mr. Freeman:** It is our intention to bring forward an amendment to the Railways Bill which places such a duty on the Regulator.

### Channel Tunnel Rail Link

**Sir Keith Speed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations about the channel tunnel rail link his Department has received since 23 March from *(a)* the county of Kent and *(b)* the borough of Ashford.

**Mr. Freeman:** Until 24 June, 650 from the county of Kent and from Kent Members of Parliament, including 384 from Ashford postal addresses and from the hon. Member for Ashford. A separate total of representations from within the borough boundaries is not readily available.

### Railway Rolling Stock

**Sir Keith Speed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with British Rail about their proposed order for rolling stock allowed for in the lease finance announced in last October's financial statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** British Rail is currently considering what rolling stock to acquire on lease using the £150 million facility made available in last year's autumn statement. The choice between the two options—dual-voltage Networkers for Network SouthEast or IC225s for the west coast main line—is entirely a matter for British Rail in the light of negotiations with suppliers and lessors. I expect a decision in the summer.

I will support further leasing deals provided that they comply with the Treasury's guidelines.

## EDUCATION

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The Department's policy is to take full account of the environmental implications of all decisions involving the purchase and use of resources. An environmental policy statement has been issued to all staff which reaffirms our commitment to increase the use of recycled paper, reduce and eventually eliminate the use of non-renewable resources, and to reduce the use of hazardous substances.

### Further and Higher Education

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what statistics he has on the percentage of students who take up further and higher education in each EC country.

**Mr. Boswell:** In 1992-93 some 71 per cent. of 16-year-olds and 55 per cent. of 17-year-olds participated in full-time education in schools, sixth-form colleges and further education colleges in England. In the same year the age participation index in Great Britain (defined as the number of young home initial entrants to higher education expressed as a percentage of the averaged 18 to 19-year-old population) was some 28 per cent. Further details are shown in tables 17 and 21 of the Departmental Report, CM 2210. Comparisons with certain EC countries are shown on pages 16 and 17 of "Education Statistics for the United Kingdom", 1992 edition, a copy of which is in the Library.

### Public Appointments

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

**Mr. Boswell:** The names of those who have been appointed to the Department's public bodies are given in the table, together with details of changes as they apply to posts, salaries or allowances since publication of "Public Bodies 1992". Information relating to occupations and current employers of appointees could be supplied only at disproportionate cost, but we are satisfied that the members of our public bodies represent an appropriately wide range of backgrounds and are appointed on the basis of their aptitude, merit and suitability.

MEMBERSHIP OF DFE PUBLIC BODIES WITH DETAILS OF CHANGES TO POSTS, SALARIES OR ALLOWANCES MADE SINCE 1 APRIL 1992

*Business and technology education council*

*Chairman:*
Mr. Parry Rogers

*Members:*
Mrs. Gillian Armitage
Mr. Barry Barker
Mr. Derek Betts
Dr. John Capey
Mr. Richard Davies
Mrs. Patricia Haikin
Mr. Garry Hawkes
Dr. Philip Hunter
Mr. Michael Lickiss
Mr. Morton Neal
Mr. Keith Ratcliffe
Mr. John Spence
Ms Lynda Purser
Mr. John Stoddard

*Central bureau for educational visits and exchanges*

*Chairman:*
Mr. J. A. Carter

*Members:*
Mr. D. A. L. Avery
Mr. R. Bailess
Mr. M. Brackenbury
Mrs. P. G. Collings
Mr. I. Fraser[1]
Mrs. S. Greenfield
Mr. D. J. Hatfield
Mr. N. H. Holmes
Mrs. A. Longley
Rev. D. Peacock
Dr. R. Rix
Mrs. J. Shackleton
Mr. B. Tanner
Dr. P. Troughton

[1] Appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland.
One additional member appointed since 1 April 1992.

*Centre for information on language teaching*

*Chairman:*
Professor Martin Harris

*Members:*
Mr. Jim Beadle
Mrs. Madeleine Bedford
Dr. Ann Dowling
Mr. Barry Jones
Mr. David Jones
Ms. Janet Little
Mr. David Mallen[1]
Ms Mary Ryan
Ms Valerie Stone
Professor Gareth Thomas
Mr. Richard Townsend
[1] Appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

*Council for the accreditation of teacher education*
*Chairman:*
Professor Sir William Taylor

*Members:*
Professor Robin Alexander
Mr. John Burn
Sister Vincent Duggan
Dr. Richard Evans
Mrs. Gay Firth
Professor Malcolm Frazer
Ms. Carolyn Hayman
Mr. Douglas Keith
Mr. Anthony Lenney
Mr. Derek Mortimer
Professor Anthony O'Hear
Mr. Anthony Pellegrini
Mrs. Margaret Pritchard
Mr. Robin Reeve
Mr. Rod Scarth
Mr. Martin Tims
Mr. Martin Turner
Mr. Anthony Wates
Rev. Dr. Kenneth Wilson

Four additional members appointed since 1 April 1992

*Education assests board*
*Chairman:*
Sir Tom McDonald, Increase to £24,030 pa—part-time appointment

*Chief Executive:*
Mr. H. S. Hoare (ex-officio), Increase to £47,424 pa—full-time appointment

*Members:*
(Members receive an honorarium of £153 pd)
Mr. B. C. Arthur
Mr. K. J. Bridge
Ms. K. Buckley
Mr. H. E. Couch
Mr. J. M. Edwards
Miss A. Lees
Mr. P. S. Lewis
Mr. G. Locke
Mr. A. N. Solomons

One additional member apponted since 1 April 1992

*Further education funding council for England*
*Chairman:*
Mr. Robert Gunn, £33,170 pa—part-time appointment

*Chief Executive:*
Dr. William Stubbs, £84,227 pa—full-time appointment

*Members:*
(Members receive an honorarium of £4,000 pa)
Mr. Nicholas Bennett
Mr. Anthony Cann
Dr. John Capey
Mr. Anthony Close
Mrs. Margaret Davey
Mrs. Patricia Haikin
Mrs. Margaret Hobrough
Mr. Christopher Jonas
Councillor Les Lawrence
Mr. Michael Lickiss
Mr. Michael Rowarth
Dr. Anne Wright

*Secretary of State's representative:*
Mr. Roger Dawe, DFE

This body was established on 6 May 1992

*Further Education Unit Board of Management*
*Chairman:*
Mr. Allan Ainsworth

*Members:*
Mr. Martin Cross
Mr. Ken Franklin
Ms Ann Limb
Mr. Roger Morgan[1]
Mr. Michael Rowarth
Mr. Keith Rowland
Ms Jenny Scribbins
Mr. David Short
Mr. Terry Melia
Ms Lynda Purser
Mr. Nigel Thomas
Three additional members appointed since 1 April 1992
[1] Head of FHE2 branch, DFE

*Higher Education Funding Council, England*
*Chairman:*
Mr. Brandon Gough, £33,170 pa—part-time appointment

*Chief Executive:*
Professor Graeme Davies, £82,925 pa—full-time appointment

*Members:*
(Members receive an honorarium of £4,000 pa)
Professor Colin Campbell
Mr. Michael Fallon
Professor Brian Follett
Mr. Robert Gunn
Professor (Ms) Kay-Tee Khaw
Sir Idris Pearce
Sir David Phillips
Professor Sir John Shaw
Sir Robert Scholey
Dr. Robert Telfer
Miss Janet Trotter
Professor David Watson
This body assumed the functions of the PCFC and UFC on 1 April 1993

*National Council for Educational Technology*
*Chairman:*
Mr. Jon Richards

*Members:*
Ms. Sandra Davies
Dr. Michael Garnett
Professor Ruth Gee
Mr. Barnaby Gibbens
Mrs. Jean Irvine
Ms Pat Lowrie
Mr. Owen Lynch
Ms Unaiza Malik
Ms Snehalathia Menon
Mr. Kevin Satchwell
Mr. Roderick Scarth
Mr. Peter Shuker
Mrs. Barbara Vanderstock
Mr. John Young
Four vacancies since 1 April 1992

*National Curriculum Council*
*Chairman:*

Sir Ron Dearing, CB, appointed 19 April 1993 (Remuneration increased to £293 per day)

*Members:*
Mr. John Burn
Mrs. Penny Cooper
Mr. Brian Hutchinson
Mrs. Anne Locke
Mrs. Brenda Lofthouse
Mr. Graham Mackenzie
Dr. John Marks
Mr. John McIntosh
Professor David Regan
Professor Alan Smithers
Dr. Roger Vaughan
Mr. Anthony Wates
Mrs. Jennifer Wisker
One additional member appointed since 1 April 1992

*National Youth Agency Management Committee*
*Chairman:*
Ms Jennifer Wisker

*Members:*
Mr. Nicholas Cross
Ms Althea Efunshile
Mrs. Sarah Joiner
Ms Alison Murray
Mr. Tanner Shields
Mr. Linbert Spencer

*School Examinations and Assessment Council*
*Chairman:*
Sir Ron Dearing, CB, appointed 19 April 1993. Remuneration increased to £293 per day)

*Chief Executive:*
Dr. Hilary Nicolle, full-time appointment—increase to £57,764

*Members:*
Mr. Roy Atkinson
Mr. John Barnes
Mrs. Janet Cohen
Dr. Philip Evans
Mrs. Janet Kowalski
Mr. Arwel George
Dr. John Marks
Mr. Stephen Nepaulsingh
Miss Gillian Peele
Mr. Anthony Pellegrini
Ms Kathleen Tattersal
Mr. Philip Wood

One vacancy since 1 April 1992

*Teaching as a Career Unit Board*
*Chairman:*
Philip Merridale

*Members:*
Mr. J. Dodds
Mr. J. Hendy
Dr. Bernard Kingston
Councillor P. Mullany
Mr. I. Slocombe
Ms C. Whatford
Mr. G. Williams
Professor M. Williams

The following public bodies have been wound up since 1 April 1992:
Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA)
Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC)
Universities Funding Council (UFC)
Open University Visiting Committee (OUVC)
Visiting Committee for Cranfield Institute of Technology (VCCIT)
Visiting Committee for the Royal College of Art (VCRCA)

The following public bodies have assumed their functions since 1 April 1992:
The Higher Education Funding Council, England (HEFCE)
The Further Education Funding Council (England) (FEFC)

### Truancy

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the report of the investigation into levels of truancy in English secondary schools, which was carried out by the University of North London on commission from his Department, will be published.

**Mr. Forth:** Advance copies of the report have been published today. A copy is being placed in the Library.

## WALES

### Rail Rover Tickets

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the loss to Welsh tourism if the Freedom of Wales rail rover ticket were not continued by the rail passenger franchise operators planned for the principality.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** I see no reason why Welsh tourism should suffer any loss. British Rail operates the existing scheme for sound commercial reasons and it will be in the best interests of a franchise to continue similar arrangements.

### Dental Health

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to prohibit the manufacturers of fruit drinks with a high dental caries predisposition to market their products through free promotions in schools.

**Mr. Redwood:** My Department has no powers to do so. The matter is primarily one for individual schools.

### Sheep Scab

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing the monthly reported incidents of sheep scab in Wales in each year since 1987.

**Mr. Redwood:** The number of reported incidents of sheep scab in Wales for each month since 1987 is as follows:

*Sheep Scab confirmed cases in Wales 1987-1992*

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1987 | |
| January | 4 |
| February | 3 |
| June | 2 |
| July | 5 |
| Total | 14 |
| 1988 | |
| November | 5 |
| December | 4 |
| Total | 9 |
| 1989 | |
| January | 3 |

| | Number |
|---|---|
| October | 1 |
| December | 1 |
| Total | 5 |
| 1990 | |
| February | 5 |
| March | 2 |
| December | 2 |
| Total | 9 |
| 1991 | |
| January | 4 |
| February | 1 |
| April | 3 |
| May | 2 |
| July | 1 |
| August | 1 |
| September | 1 |
| December | 2 |
| Total | 15 |
| 1992 | |
| January | 6 |
| February | 2 |
| March | 3 |
| April | 2 |
| Total | 13 |

*Note:* Figures are available only up to May 1992.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### University of Wales

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of the Government's science budget was allocated to each constituent college of the university of Wales for each year since 1988; and what is the projected figure for 1993-94.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The approximate proportion of the science budget allocated to the colleges of the University of Wales is shown in the table below for the financial years 1988-89 to 1992-93. This includes expenditure on research grants, studentships and fellowships. Projected figures for 1993-94 are not available as many grants are made in responsive mode and are therefore dependent on project proposals submitted.

*Percentage of science budget allocated to the University of Wales*

| | *Aberystwyth* | *Bangor* | *Cardiff* | *Swansea* | *St. Davids* | *College of Medicine* | *Science budget support to HEIs* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 0·17 | 0·24 | 0·40 | 0·20 | — | 0·04 | 41·46 |
| 1989-90 | 0·17 | 0·21 | 0·53 | 0·25 | — | 0·05 | 43·39 |
| 1990-91 | 0·16 | 0·25 | 0·46 | 0·25 | — | 0·06 | 44·65 |
| 1991-92 | 0·25 | 0·19 | 0·45 | 0·31 | 0·02 | 0·05 | 44·52 |
| [1]1992-93 | 0·22 | 0·21 | 0·47 | 0·35 | — | 0·05 | 49·40 |

[1] Estimate.

*Note:* The figures exclude the Medical Research Council training awards, the Economic and Social Research Council funding prior to 1991-92, and funds provided to the colleges via research council institutes and interdisciplinary research centres.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Chartered Association of Certified Accountants

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what powers he has to investigate the balloting for elections for the council of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** I have no such powers.

### Auditing

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the cost savings to small businesses as a result of a partial abolition of small company audits and a requirement to produce a compilation report by accountants.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** I refer the hon. Member to the consultative document issued by my Department in April, entitled "Audit and Accounting Requirements for Very Small Companies", a copy of which is in the Library.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for legislation under which auditing firms would be prevented from writing up board minutes of their audit clients and then auditing the same.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** Under the Companies Act 1989, a person who is an officer or employee of a company—or a partner or employee of such a person—is prohibited from being appointed as auditor of the company. Moreover, under the Act the Secretary of State may recognise supervisory bodies for auditors only if the body appears to him to have adequate rules and practices designed to ensure that company audit work is conducted properly and with integrity, and that persons are not appointed as company auditors in circumstances in which they have an interest likely to conflict with the proper conduct of the audit.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for legislation to require the auditors of public limited companies to publish information about their affairs.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** An auditor which is a company or an unregistered company within the meaning of the Companies Act 1985 is already subject to the disclosure requirements of that Act. I have no plans to extend those requirements to unincorporated bodies, save for those partnerships which would be subject to the Partnerships and Unlimited Companies (Accounts) Regulations 1993, a draft of which was laid before the House on 21 June.

### Supervisory Bodies

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to increase the public accountability of the bodies authorised to act as recognised supervisory bodies under the Companies Act 1989.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** I refer the hon. Member to the reports for the year to 30 September 1992 by the five Recognised supervisory bodies, which were prepared and submitted to me under section 37 of the Companies Act 1989, and copies of which are in the Library.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will be reviewing the operation of the recognised supervisory bodies.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** My Department will be reviewing later this year the operation of the recognised supervisory bodies procedures for monitoring compliance by their members with their rules.

### Auditing Practices Board

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations his Department has made to the Auditing Practices Board on the contents of the proposed going concern standard.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** My Department wrote to the Auditing Practices Board on 21 May with its comments on a draft of the proposed statement of auditing standards on going concern.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what steps he has taken to ensure that the employing organisations of the members of the Auditing Practices Board do not exercise influence over its proceedings;

(2) what plans he has to seek views on the membership of the Auditing Practices Board from *(a)* the Commission for Racial Equality and *(b)* the Equal Opportunities Commission.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The constitution and procedures of the Auditing Practices Board are matters for the Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies.

### Accounting Standards Board

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what will be the cost of seconding his Department's head of accounting and auditing division, Mr. M. Butcher, to the Accounting Standards Board.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The secondment is expected to last for about one year. The Department has agreed to meet salary and salary-related costs for up to three months of this period. On the basis and at current salary levels the direct cost to DTI will not exceed £15,000.

### Bank of Credit and Commerce International

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the total sum to date that his Department has collected from the 15 per cent. audit fees in the assets of bankruptcy from BCCI; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** BCCI is subject to compulsory liquidation proceedings and the total sum collected by the Department from the Secretary of State fee (previously known as the audit fee) since 1991 is £751,502. The Department cannot separately identify how much of this was collected at the 15 per cent. rate.

The Secretary of State fee scales were amended on 14 January 1992 which has the effect of reducing the fee chargeable on amounts over £20 million.

The total Secretary of State fee collected from all compulsory liquidations in 1992-93 was £4,870,885. Fees are used to defray the costs of the Insolvency Service.

### Pit Closures

**Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been achieved in implementing the £200 million regeneration package for pit closure areas.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Since October Lord Walker has been working with Government Departments, English Estates, British Coal Enterprise, training and enterprise councils and local bodies to determine how best the package could be used. The framework of regeneration measures announced in October and enhanced in the Government's White Paper "The Prospects for Coal" (Cm 2235) has now been put in place in all areas affected by pit closures.

This is the start of the process of regeneration. In all areas local bodies are working together to ensure that these measures lead to new employment.

Measures announced so far for each area are:

NORTH EAST

*English Estates*

£16 million for the provision of industrial and commercial sites.

*TECs*

An additional £9·887 million budget allocation for TECs in coalfield areas.

*Coalfield Areas Fund*

£250k for regeneration projects in Easington.

*Enterprise Zone*

A proposed Enterprise Zone in the vicinity of Easington.

*Tyne and Wear Development Corporation*

£4 million for the TWDC.

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE

*English Estates*

£24 million for the provision of industrial and commercial sites.

Plans announced:

Barnsley—192,000 sq ft of additional factory/workshop space and 7·5 acres of land for further industrial schemes.

Doncaster—110,000 sq ft of factories and workshops.

Rotherham—30,000 sq ft of factories.

*TECS*

An additional £15·258 million budget allocation for TECS in coalfield areas.

*Coalfield Areas Fund*

Over £275k for regeneration projects.

*Enterprise Zone*

A proposed Enterprise Zone in the vicinity of the Dearne Valley.

*AA Status*

Barnsley, Doncaster to be upgraded to Development Areas in new Assisted Areas map.

EAST MIDLANDS

*English Estates*

£21 million for the provision of industrial and commercial sites.

Plans announced:
The provision of 93,000 sq ft of new factory space.

*TECS*
An additional £16·774 million budget allocation for TECS in coalfield areas.

*Robin Hood Line*
£6·5 million to help extend the Robin Hood Line from Newstead to Mansfield.

*Coalfield Areas Fund*
£1·4 million for regeneration projects in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

*East Midlands Regional Development Organisation*
£250k for the new East Midlands Regional Development Organisation.

*Enterprise Zone*
A proposed Enterprise Zone in the Vicinity of Mansfield.

*AA Status*
Mansfield to become an Assisted Area in new AA map.

*Regional Enterprise Grants*
Regional Enterprise Grants extended to specific wards in coalfield areas.

WEST MIDLANDS

*English Estates*
£7 million for the provision of industrial and commercial sites.
Plans announced:
77,500 sq ft of new factory space and the acquisition of a 26 acre site.

*TECS*
An additional £4·793 million budget allocation for TECS in coalfield areas.

*Coalfield Areas Fund*
£826k for regeneration projects in Stoke.

*Regional Enterprise Grants*
Regional Enterprise Grants extended to specific wards in the Trentham area.

NORTH WEST

*English Estates*
£4 million for the provision of industrial and commercial sites.
Plans announced:
88,000 sq ft of new factory space and acquisition of 10 acres of land.

*TECS*
An additional £2·178 million budget allocation for TECs in coalfield areas announced.

*Coalfield Areas Fund*
£270k for regeneration projects.

BRITISH COAL ENTERPRISE
Through the provision of Job Shops and investment in workspace for small businesses, British Coal Enterprise is providing counselling for all miners made redundant and backing young and growing companies across all affected areas.

## Gas (Exempt Supplies) Act

**Mr. Duncan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to lay an order to bring into force the Gas (Exempt Supplies) Act 1993; and if he will consider streamlining the handling of authorisations for the supply of propane and butane in the interim period.

**Mr. Eggar:** I expect to bring the Act into force by mid-1994. In the meantime when existing authorisations for the supply of propane and butane expire they will be extended by the Director General of Gas Supply. As regards new authorisations, applicants will simply have to demonstrate that they:

(a) had given the appropriate notice under the Pipelines Act 1962;
(b) had systems which had been installed/inspected by a company or individual belonging to the LP Gas Association or another properly qualified engineer;
(c) operated, or planned to operate when supply commenced, either directly or via an agency agreement, an arrangement whereby immediate action to prevent reported gas escapes can be initiated by telephone on a 24 hour basis; and
(d) had secured, or planned to secure when supply commenced, rights of entry to premises supplied in order to deal with gas escapes or other damages arising from the supply of gas to the premises.

I am reviewing the Gas (Authorisation Application) Regulations 1986 and will revise them as necessary to reflect the reduced information requirements in support of applications for LPG supply authorisations.

## Assisted Areas

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *254*, if he will provide a regional breakdown of projects, spending and jobs created for each year.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* On re-examination of our computer records we have discovered that the information given in our earlier reply about the number of projects supported was incorrect. The figure should have been 378 and not 651 as previously stated. The amount of grant paid and the number of jobs, were not affected.

A breakdown of the information given in the earlier reply by region and for each year from 1987-88 is as follows:

| *Region* | *1987-88 to 1989-90* | | | *1990-91 to June 1993* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Number of projects* | *Amount of assistance £ million* | *Number of jobs* | *Number of projects* | *Amount of assistance £ million* | *Number of jobs* |
| East Midlands | 7 | 0·7 | 100 | 20 | 2·7 | 534 |
| North East | 49 | 3·7 | 1,401 | 104 | 50·3 | 5,738 |
| North West | 29 | 2·4 | 673 | 70 | 11·1 | 2,358 |
| South West | 11 | 2·9 | 395 | 9 | 2·3 | 489 |
| West Midlands | 3 | 0·1 | 111 | 27 | 6·9 | 2,636 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 19 | 1·7 | 371 | 32 | 11·0 | 3,463 |

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the criteria submitted by his Department to the European Commission in connection with the submission of the assisted areas map to the European Commission on 15 June; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 23 June 1993]:* In order not to prejudice negotiation with the European Commission, no information on the proposed assisted areas map will be released until it has been agreed with the Commission.

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he had with local authorities in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Northern Ireland and

*(d)* Scottish district and regional council[illegible]ior to the submission of the assisted areas map to the European Commission on 15 June; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 23 June 1993]*: Ministerial colleagues in Scotland, Wales and my own Department and I myself have met a number of delegations from local authorities during the assisted areas map review. As the review is of assisted areas in Great Britain, there have been no discussions with local authorities from Northern Ireland.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Somalia

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in establishing police forces in Somalia.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** During the first months of 1993, UNOSOM and UNITAF provided assistance for the establishment of auxiliary police forces in various parts of Somalia including Mogadishu, Baidoa, Bardera, Belet Huen and Kismayo. These forces, numbering 5,000 officers, were reconstituted as the Somalia Police Force on 4 May 1993. Local police forces also operate in Hargeisa and Bossaso.

UNOSOM II is now preparing a plan for the establishment of police, prison and judicial systems throughout Somalia. The Overseas Development Administration's overseas police adviser will visit Somalia in July to determine how best Her Majesty's Government can support the development of police forces in the north-west.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the Government's and EC's programmes approved within the past year geared to the reconstruction of Somali society.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Our bilateral emergency relief assistance has supported the reopening of schools, provision of basic health, water and sanitation services, supply of seeds and tools for farmers and help for the reintegration of displaced persons. We continue to explore with relief agencies the potential for further support for rehabilitation activities and have offered funds and technical expertise for project identification missions.

EC assistance has supported a de-mining programme and the provision of veterinary services and water supplies. A joint EC/member states team plans to visit Somalia next month to identify potential areas for EC rehabilitation assistance to be funded from the special initiative for Africa, agreed at the 25 May Development Council.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the EC of the adequacy of their response to the Somali crisis since the beginning of 1992.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Her Majesty's Government and the European Commission were among the first to respond to the crisis in Somalia with the provision of food and non-food emergency assistance. Since January 1992 British bilateral humanitarian aid commitments have totalled over £27 million. EC commitments have totalled almost £100 million of which the United Kingdom share is £16·68 million.

The capacity of all aid agencies to operate effectively continues to be constrained by prevailing security conditions. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development led an EC troika of Development Ministers in September 1992 to assess needs and has seconded an ODA official to the office of the United Nations Secretary-General's special representative to Somalia, Admiral Howe, to help plan the process of recovery and to provide advice on how we might assist. A joint EC/member states team plans to visit next month to assess the future EC aid programme.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what dates over the last five years *(a)* the World Health Organisation, *(b)* the Food and Agricultural Organisation and *(c)* UNICEF have been operating in Somalia; and what are their current activities.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Until 1991 WHO, FAO and UNICEF operated continuously in Somalia. From 1991 to date their provision of support for relief operations in Somalia has continued, although at various stages international staff have been withdrawn.

UNICEF activities include the provision of primary health care, food for mothers and children and restoration of water supplies. FAO supports the provision of emergency seeds, veterinary services and the re-equipping of farmers and fishermen. WHO is supporting the establishment of an epidemiological surveillance system, control of communicable diseases and the supply of essential drugs.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the policy of *(a)* UNITAF and *(b)* UNOSOM 2 in respect of disarming the warring factions in Somalia.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Broadly, UNITAF carried out disarmament when it was considered essential to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid. The mandate for UNOSOM II granted by UNSCR 814 emphasised the crucial importance of disarmament and the urgent need to build on the efforts of UNITAF. This process has already begun.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the United Nations about its civil reconstruction activities in Somalia since the UNITAF deployment.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We have had frequent contact with the United Nations over the issue of civil reconstruction, most recently during the visit to New York earlier this month by my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development. We have also participated in the several UN-sponsored conferences that covered the issue, including the meeting in Nairobi on 22 June.

DAMAGED ORIGINAL

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Rail Rover Tickets

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the loss of income to the tourist industry which would result if rail rover tickets were not continued by private rail franchise operators.

**Mr. Sproat:** No such assessment has been made.

### British Rail (Tour Ticketing)

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has held with representatives of the tourist industry about the impact of the loss of British Rail's present inclusive tour ticketing arrangements if these were not continued by private sector rail franchise operators.

**Mr. Sproat:** I am fully aware of the concerns of representatives of the tourism industry. On Monday 21 June I met the Council for Travel and Tourism, and noted its concerns regarding the continuation of tour ticketing arrangements. I am, however, confident that as these tickets are very popular with passengers the private sector will be keen to retain these products.

### Public Bodies

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

**Mr. Sproat:** The Department of National Heritage does not currently hold a central list containing the occupation, current employers and remuneration of public appointees and to assemble this information would involve disproportionate cost. Careful consideration is given to the specific skills and experience required for each appointment and to the personal qualities and background of the appointee.

### Royal Palaces

**Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his reply of 25 May, *Official Report*, columns *482-83*, if he will give a breakdown of *(a)* the categories of expenditure at each of the occupied royal palaces and *(b)* the amount spent on utilities, wages and other costs.

**Mr. Sproat** *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* The figures for property services in 1992-93, broken down by palace where this information is kept separately, are as shown. The breakdown also shows expenditure on running costs (not broken down by palace), utilities and fire precautions.

*Breakdown of Expenditure at each of the occupied Royal Palaces in 1992-93 in £000s*

| | £000 | £000 |
|---|---|---|
| Running costs (not possible to break down this figure)—including salaries and other administration costs such as auditors | 1·109 | |
| Projects costing £150,000 or more | | |
| Buckingham palace | | 1·003 |
| Windsor castle | | 8·586 |
| St. James's palace and Clarence house | | 0·762 |
| Kensington palace | | 0·041 |
| Other | | 0·423 |
| | | 10·815 |
| Projects from £25,000 to £150,000 | | |
| Buckingham palace | | 2·134 |
| Windsor castle | | 0·341 |
| St. James's palace and Clarence house | | 0·466 |
| Kensington palace | | 0·472 |
| Other | | 0·771 |
| | | 4·184 |
| Jobs costing less than £2,500 | | |
| In-house labour (not broken down) | | 0·438 |
| Contract labour | | |
| Buckingham palace | | 0·603 |
| Windsor castle | | 0·188 |
| St. James's palace and Clarence house | | 0·177 |
| Kensington palace | | 0·096 |
| Other | | 0·158 |
| | | 1·660 |
| Other | 0·470 | |
| Recoveries | −0·719 | |
| Total maintenance | 16·410 | |
| Furniture and equipment | | |
| Buckingham palace | | 0·066 |
| Windsor castle | | 0·070 |
| St. James's palace and Clarence house | | 0·121 |
| Kensington palace | | 0·001 |
| Other[1] | | 0·339 |
| Recoveries | | −0·020 |
| | 0·577 | |
| Utilities | | |
| Buckingham palace | | 0·889 |
| Windsor castle | | 0·428 |
| St. James's palace and Clarence house | | 0·180 |
| Kensington palace | | 0·035 |
| In-house water—Windsor | | 0·033 |
| In-house water—other | | 0·023 |
| Other | | 0·198 |
| Recoveries | | −0·131 |
| | 1·655 | |
| Other operational expenditure | | |
| Fire service | | |
| London—wages | | 0·096 |
| London—other | | 0·164 |
| Windsor—wages | | 0·128 |
| Windsor—other | | 0·021 |
| Fire officers inspection | | 0·008 |
| | 0·417 | |
| Functions, royal gardens, custody guard services, etc. | 2·135 | |
| Interest | −0·308 | |
| Windsor castle salvage | 1·164 | |

| | £000 | £000 |
|---|---|---|
| | 23·159 | |

[1] Includes a figure of £23,000 paid from moneys left from an earlier year. Actual grant-in-aid provision for 1992-93 is £23,136.

## HEALTH

### NHS Budget

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the budget for the national health service in London in each year from 1991-92 to 1994-95 as a percentage of the total NHS budget.

**Mr. Sackville:** There are no budgets for most elements of family health services expenditure, which is primarily demanded and funded accordingly. Final cash limits (budgets) for district health authorities are set by regional health authorities and are not available centrally.

### Isobutyl Nitrite

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will investigate the extent of abuse of isobutyl nitrite among school children; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Bowis:** The Department funds the St. George's hospital medical school to produce annual reports on trends in deaths from volatile substance abuse, which includes deaths associated with abuse of alkyl nitrites. Copies of the latest report will be placed in the Library.

### Social Work Training

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the future of social work training.

**Mr. Bowis:** On 21 June my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the appointment of a new chairman of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW), the body responsible for the promotion and regulation of social work training. At the same time, we published the Government response to a recent policy and financial management review of CCETSW, which emphasised that the main task of the central council must be to ensure that social services training of vocational, professional and post-qualifying levels properly equips staff to meet the needs of the 1990s. Copies of the report of the review and the Government's response will be placed in the Library.

### NHS Meetings (Public Admission)

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances an NHS authority or trust can exclude members of the public from its meetings; what procedure has to be followed to provide for such exclusion and for publicising decisions affecting the public made at closed meetings; and if she will make a statement.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The national health service should be as open as possible to patients and others who rely upon its services. The meetings of NHS authorities are governed by the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. The meetings of NHS trusts are governed by the NHS and Community Care Act 1990. All decisions on the level and and manner of providing health services should be made public, and decisions about significant changes are subject to formal consultation procedures.

### Post-operative Care

**Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce charges for post-operative care in the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** None.

### Liverpool Women's Hospital

**Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the reorganisation of the women's hospital in Liverpool.

**Mr. Sackville:** Liverpool health authority approved proposals for the provision of a new women's hospital in 1991, following a positive response to public consultation. Construction of the new women's hospital is well under way and it will be operational in spring 1995. The hon. Member may wish to contact Ms J. Greensmith, chairman of Liverpool Obstetric and Gynaecology Services National Health Service Trust, for more details.

### Matrons

**Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will now urgently reintroduce into all national health service hospitals, the title and traditional job specification of matron in order to improve the quality of nursing supervision.

**Mr. Sackville:** There remains a key professional leadership role for a senior nurse in all national health service hospitals. The exact titles and job specifications of senior nurses are best decided locally. The title "matron" may be used if this is felt to be appropriate by local managers.

Every national health service trust is required to have a senior nurse as an executive director.

### UKCC for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visitors

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations she has received in the last five years from *(a)* nurses and *(b)* patients concerned with decisions made by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visitors professional conduct committee.

**Mr. Sackville** *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* Two from patients' relatives since September 1991. Records prior to that date are not comprehensive.

## SCOTLAND

### Caledonian MacBrayne

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the contributions made from EC funds to the development of termini serving the Caledonian MacBrayne network in each of the past 10 years, stating existing ownership in each case.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 23 June 1993]:* The information is not readily available in the format requested. The total contribution made from EC funds to the development of termini serving the Caledonian MacBrayne network during the past 10 years is given in the following table:

| *Piers/Linkspans* | *Year of award* | *EC allocation* £ | *Total EC grant paid* £ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tobermory pier | 1985 | 110,000 | 110,000 |
| Gourock pier | 1985 | 175,000 | 158,351 |
| Rothesay pier | 1985 | 37,000 | 33,306 |
| Lochaline slipway | 1987 | 43,000 | 43,000 |
| Lochboisdale quay wall | 1989 | 200,000 | 200,000 |
| Oban pier construction | 1985 | 750,000 | 750,000 |
| Wemyss Bay pier | 1988 | 945,000 | 943,548 |
| Tarbert, Harris linkspan | 1984 | 750,000 | 676,772 |
| Colonsay linkspan | 1988 | 805,500 | 802,250 |
| Castlebay linkspan | 1989 | 950,000 | 917,037 |
| Kennacraig linkspan | 1989 | 150,000 | 146,435 |
| Coll and Tiree linkspan | 1991 | 2,331,931 | 2,331,931 |
| Mallaig linkspan | 1993 | 800,000 | — |
| Fionnphort berthing facility | 1993 | 40,000 | — |
| Brodick passenger terminal building | 1993 | 120,000 | — |
| Brodick berthing facility | 1993 | 120,000 | 36,488 |
| Kennacraig berthing facility | 1993 | 120,000 | — |

*Note:* All these facilities are owned by Caledonian MacBrayne.

### Public Appointments

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

**Miss Widdecombe:** In view of the number of appointments made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

### Industrial Tribunals

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for employment how many applications have been made since 1979 to industrial tribunals for interim relief; how many applications were successful; and how many were rejected.

**Miss Widdecombe** *[holding answer 23 June 1993]:* I regret that figures for the years 1979 to 1991 are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The provisional figures for the period 1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993 are as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Registered applications | 94 |
| Successful cases | 2 |
| Rejected cases | 32 |
| Settled withdrawn | 24 |
| Carried forward changed jurisdiction | 36 |

## PRIME MINISTER

### Political Parties (Funding)

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will introduce legislation to require political parties that have received moneys from a source that has been shown to be criminal to return such funds to the appropriate body.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* I have no plans to do so.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Vocational Training Schemes

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps should be taken by individuals wishing to claim unemployment benefit while undertaking a nationally recognised vocational training scheme following the announcement in the Budget statement of 16 March.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Mr. M. Fogden to Mr. Tim Devlin, dated 25 June 1993:*

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about what steps should be taken by individuals wishing to claim unemployment benefit whilse undertaking a nationally recognised vocational training scheme following the announcement in the Budget statement of 16th March. This is something that falls within the responsibilities he has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

For Training for Work (TFW) participants, allowances are paid at the benefit level previously in payment but with an addition of £10 Premium. In cases where there is no entitlement to benefit or benefit has ceased, the £10 Premium only is payable. Information on joining TFW is available from all Employment Service local offices.

For clients on Learning For Work (LfW), the situation will be slightly different with allowances at the benefit level previously in payment but with no Premium being payable. Where there is no entitlement to benefit or benefit has ceased, no allowance will be payable. The programme will be starting on 1 September 1993 in England and Wales and on 16 August 1993 in Scotland. Information on joining LfW will be available from Employment Service local offices.

Unemployment benefit offers support whilst a person is unemployed and seeking work; it is not intended as support for courses of vocational training or study. In order to receive unemployment benefit, people undertaking any type of training must remain available for and be actively seeking work, and be willing to rearrange their study, if necessary to evenings and weekends, to enable them to take up an opportunity of employment. Should this not be possible they would have to abandon the course in favour of employment. They must also continue to take reasonable steps to seek work. Participating in a course of vocational training may be regarded as one reasonable step but they would also be expected to take additional steps.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Mr. Goodlad:** Within the overall objective of obtaining value for money, the policy of both diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the purchase of the items listed is:

(a) to purchase recycled paper wherever cost-effective and where it meets operational requirements;

(b) to replace standard light bulbs with high-efficiency, low-energy alternatives throughout all office accommodation and to ensure that all new and refurbished buildings are provided with such lighting;

(c) to ensure that, as far as possible, all timber purchased is from sustainable sources, particularly in relation to teak and mahogany. No rosewood is used;

(d) no peat or peat-based products are purchased. Advice for missions overseas is that loam-based composts should be used for containered plants;

(e) to provide overseas posts and aid projects with petrol engined vehicles fitted with catalytic converters wherever unleaded fuel is readily available. The small UK fleet is exclusively diesel-engined.

### Royal Family

**Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, columns *82-83*, what was the cost to the Department of each of the overseas visits by members of the royal family other than the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh during the financial year 1992-93.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave on 24 June at col. *239*.

### Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which officials of his Department attended the meeting on THORP, held at 1 Parliament street, London on 15 June.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** None.

### Public Appointments

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

**Mr. Goodlad:** The information requested is as follows:

CHANGES IN SALARY OR ALLOWANCES SINCE PUBLICATION OF PUBLIC BODIES 1992

PUBLIC BODY OR NAME

*Britain-Russia Centre*
Sir Curtis Keeble
Mr. Peter Temple-Morris, MP
Sir Russell Johnston, MP
Rt. hon. John Smith QC, MP

*British Association for Central and Eastern Europe*
Rt. hon. Paul Channon
Professor George Cushing
Mr. Giles Radice, MP
Mr. Alex Carlisle, QC, MP

*British Council*
Sir Martin Jacomb—£9,500
Lord Chorley
Rt. hon. T. Renton, MP
Mr. George Robertson, MP

*Commonwealth Institute*
Mr. R. A. Fyjis-Walker
Mr. D. A. Thompson
Mr. C. Shepherd
Mr. G. Oakes
Hon. David Douglas-Home
Sir Victor Garland
Miss Diana Warwick
Mr. J. S. Maclure
Sir Mark Russell
Mr. Cy Grant
Dr. Ann Robinson
Baroness Flather
Sir Michael Caine

*Great Britain-China Centre*
Mr. Graham Greene
Mr. Gerard Mansell
Sir John Swire
Lady Youde

*Marshall and Commemoration Commission*
Sir D. Tebbit
Sir James Ball
Sir Roger Bannister
Professor Christine Bolt
Sir Arthur Bryan
Professor Lord Desai
Professor H. T. Dickinson
Dr. K. J. R. Edwards
Ms. Sue McGregor

*Westminster Foundation for Democracy*

Sir James Spicer, MP
Mr. George Robertson, MP
Sir Russell Johnston, MP
Mr. Tony Clarke
Mrs. Margaret Ewing, MP
Professor Peter Frank
Mr. Timothy Garton Ash
Lady Howe, JP
Mr. Gavin Laird
Mr. Ralph Land
Mr. Patrick Nicholls, MP
Mr. Michael Pinto-Duschinsky
Mr. Ian Taylor, MP
Ms Carole Tongue, MEP

*Commonwealth Development Corporation*
Sir Peter E. Leslie—£25,730[1]
Sir Michael Caine—£8,856
Mrs. A. E. Wright, JP—£4,821
Professor M. L. O. Faber—£4,821
Mr. M. McWilliam—£4,821
Mr. E. B. Waide—£4,821
Professor I. D. Carruthers—£4,821
Mr. J. B. Zochonis—£4,821

[1] This appointment, which was for one day a week at the time of the publication of Public Bodies 1992, is now for two days a week.

*Commonwealth Scholarship Commission*
Sir Michael Caine
Dr. A. Sloman
Professor R. A. Howie
Professor B. Clayton
Professor J. G. G. Ledingham
Mrs. D. L. Wedderburn
Professor S. Marks
Professor Gillian Beer
Dr. C. Booth
Dr. R. O. Iredale
Dr. P. Parsloe
Professor A. Little
Professor D. Jennings
Mr. R. Francis
Professor A. Diplock

*Crown Agents*[1]
Mr. D. H. Probert
Dr. A. I. Lenton
Mr. P. F. Berry
Mrs. D. Miller JP
Miss K. Mortimer
Mr. A. K. Stewart-Roberts
Mr. F. Cassell CB
Mr. J. D. Andrewes
Mr. F. I. Sumner

[1] When members are appointed to this board they are also appointed to the Crown Agents Holding and Realisation Board.

*Diplomatic Service Appeals Board*
Sir Derek Day
Mrs. Juliet Campbell
Mr. Frank Trew
Sir David Calcutt QC
Sir Mark Russell
Mr. Rodney Bedford
Miss Sally Bull
Mrs. Jacqueline Dyson

*Government Hospitality Fund Advisory Committee for the Purchase of Wine*
Sir Ewen Fergusson
Major John Surtees
Mr. Anthony Hanson
Mr. Mark Savage
Mr. Sebastian Payne

*Wilton Park Academic Council*
Mrs. Liliana Archibald
Mr. Anthony Bruce
Sir Julian Bullard
Mrs. Juliet Campbell
Miss Brenda Dean
Mr. John Drew
Mr. Bruce George MP
Mr. John Hanson
Mr. Nicholas Harvey MP
Mr. Michael Kaser
Mr. John Lyons
Dr. Connie Martin
Dr. Janet Morgan
Mr. Edward Mortimer
Mr. John Scates
Professor Jack Spence
Mr. Peter Temple-Morris MP
Professor Helen Wallace
Mrs. Ruth Watts Davies
Miss Valerie Le Moignan

*ODA Advisory Committee on Economic and Social Research Overseas*
Mr. J. B. Wilmshurst
Mr. A. Williams
Dr. S. Conlin
Dr. R. Thomas
Ms C. Coppard
Mr. A. Hall
Professor the Reverend Roland Moss
Dr. C. O. N. Moser
Professor A. W. Rew
Dr. F. Stewart
Professor J. F. J. Toye
Dr. H. Afshar
Professor P. Blaikie
Professor K. Davey
Ms D. Elson
Dr. J. Heyer
Professor N. Stern

*Indian Family Pension Funds Body of Commissioners*
Mr. D. S. Fish
Major General D. L. T. Horsford
Major R. J. Henderson
Lt Col P. Kemmis-Betty
Major R. Mottram
Mr. R. V. Fenton
Mr. J. M. Phelps
Mr. J. P. C. Coventry
Mr. G. E. D. Walker
Mrs. P. Lamarque
Mrs. H. Ramsay-Brown

*Overseas Service Pensions Scheme Advisory Board*
Mr. J. V. Kerby
Mr. D. S. Fish
Mr. C. D. Stenton
Miss D. R. Phillips
Mr. D. H. Loades

Appointments are made on the basis of the skills and experience that the individual will bring to the post, with due regard to equality of opportunity and, where appropriate, statutory requirements.

Information on the current occupations and employers of all holders of public appointments is not held centrally.

## St. Helena

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what electrical services undertaken by the Public Works and Services Department of St. Helena have been privatised.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** *[holding answer 18 June 1993]:* From 1 June 1993, the provision and maintenance of electrical installations in private properties has been undertaken by the private sector.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present scale of

fees and charges payable for medical attention by citizens of St. Helena; and what were the comparable figures in real terms 10 and 20 years ago.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** *[holding answer 18 June 1993]:* The table gives the fees and charges payable by citizens of St. Helena in respect of medical attention, in-patient and out-patient treatment, etc. for the years 1993, 1983, and 1977. 1973 fees were set in 1967 and were given in old currency.

This information has been provided by the St. Helena Government, who are unable to give comparable figures in real terms over the period.

| *Attention/Treatment* | *1993* £ | *1983* £ | *1977* £ |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Consultation by appointment | 3·00 | 2·00 | 1·00 |
| 2. Home visits | 3·00 | 2·00 | 0·50 |
| 3. Hospital charges | | | |
| (a) General ward[1] | 3·00 | 1·00 | 1·00 |
| (b) Single ward[2,3] (all charges per day) | 7·50 | 5·00 | 3·00 |
| 4. Operation fees inclusive of Assistant and anaesthetists fees | 2.00-100 | 0·75-50 | 0·75-50 |
| 5. Maternity fees[4] | 7·50 | 5·00 | 2·00 |
| 6. Prescriptions (per item) | 0·40 | 0·30 | 0·20 |
| 7. Miscellaneous x-rays (per plate) | 2·00 | 1·00-5·00 | 1·00-5·00 |
| Laboratory investigations | 1·00-7·50 | 0·25-5·00 | 0·25-1·00 |
| 8. Use of ambulance (charged per mile; discretionary charge only—waived in emergency cases | 0·35 | — | — |
| 9. Medical examination | 5·00 | — | — |
| 10. Vaccination | 1·50 | — | — |
| Free treatment for children up to 15 years of age and to all persons in receipt of social services payments and to proven cases of hardship | | same | same |
| Free ante-natal and post-natal care for islanders | | same | same |
| A medical officer may reduce fees at his discretion for treatment of diabetes and any similar chronic illnesses or conditions | | same | same |
| No charge will be made for family planning services | | same | same |
| *Dental charges* | | | |
| 1. Dentures | 10.00 | 2·50-7·50 | — |
| 2. Extractions (each) | 1·00 | free | — |
| 3. Prescriptions | 0·40 | — | — |

*Notes:*
[1] Includes all other fees except operation fees. Maternity is charged under item 5 and not under this item.
[2] Includes all other fees except operation and maternity fees.
[3] When a patient is accommodated in a single ward at the discretion of a medical officer, this fee may be reduced to the level of the general ward fee.
[4] Single ward charge additional (if applicable).

## DEFENCE

### Aldermaston

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all toxic chemicals discharged into the environment or disposed of off-site by the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston.

**Mr. Aitken:** To identify and list individually the wide and varied range of over 1,000 toxic chemicals used by the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston, those which may ultimately be discharged into the environment, or disposed of off-site, would involve disproportionate cost. Nevertheless, in all cases where toxic materials are discharged or disposed of, the statutory requirements and the need for authorisations, consents or licences are observed.

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on decommissioning and radioactive waste management at the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston; how that policy has changed since the unpublished 1990 memorandum by the Comptroller and Auditor General on "Ministry of Defence: Nuclear Research and Support Services", paragraphs 4.17 to 4.28; and what further policy changes he plans to make.

**Mr. Aitken:** My Department's policies on decommissioning, and radioactive waste management at the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston, are in accordance with the International Atomic Energy Authority guidelines, and have not changed since the unpublished 1990 memorandum by the Comptroller and Auditor General on Ministry of Defence nuclear research and support services. However, the programmes of work for decommissioning and radioactive waste management have since been revised, and will continue to be revised on an annual basis.

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *299*, how much of the 1,800 cu m of low-level waste stored at the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston at December 1991 is estimated to be plutonium-contaminated material.

**Mr. Aitken:** Approximately 90 per cent. of low-level radioactive waste is plutonium contaminated.

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) of 19 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *294*, what was the average annual increase in the volume of intermediate-level waste stored at the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston, as at December for 1983 to 1992.

**Mr. Aitken:** The information requested may be calculated from my earlier answer by dividing the difference in intermediate-level waste holdings for the two years by nine.

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the role and powers of the Health and Safety Executive concerning the company Hunting BRAE, while it is managing the Atomic Weapons Establishment.

**Mr. Aitken:** The role and powers of the Health and Safety Executive in respect of the management of the atomic weapons establishment have not changed since my answer of 4 March 1993, *Official Report*, column *227*.

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what account he has taken of the current estimated date of readiness of the Nirex national repository for radioactive waste in his policy on managing radioactive waste management at the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston.

**Mr. Aitken:** The latest available readiness date of the repository is taken into consideration by AWE Aldermaston in formulating its radioactive waste management policy and strategy.

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *303*, how much plutonium-contaminated liquid waste is stored in closed steel tanks located in bitumen-lined pits at the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston; and what is its total activity.

**Mr. Aitken:** The amount of plutonium contaminated liquid waste stored in closed steel tanks at AWE Aldermaston is some 720 cubic metres. Its total activity is 925 Gigabecquerels (alpha), and 2·38 Terabecquerels (beta).

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *299*, what is the expected average annual change in the volume of intermediate-level waste to be stored at the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston, over the next 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Aitken:** The average rate of increase of intermediate level waste arising at the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston, over the next 10 years will be approximately 240 cubic metres per annum.

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all toxic chemicals in use by the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston.

**Mr. Aitken:** As with all major industrial sites AWE Aldermaston uses a wide and varied range of materials, exceeding 1,000 in total, which have toxic properties; it would therefore, be impractical to list them all without incurring disproportionate cost and effort.

### Nuclear Waste Storage

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *569*, which branches of his Department currently make use of the storage and disposal facilities available at Harwell and Dounreay.

**Mr. Aitken:** The atomic weapons establishment and the naval reactor test establishment.

### Waste Management

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *571*, if he will list the research programmes currently in hand; who is conducting each research programme; by what date he expects each research programme to be completed; what is the cost of each research programme: and if he will place copies of the report of each research programme in the Library.

**Mr. Aitken:** Research is being directed towards methods of destroying organic materials such as ion exchange resin which are associated with the decontamination of the reactor plant of nuclear-propelled submarines. This work is being carried out under the contract by AEA Technology at Harwell and Rolls-Royce and Associates at Derby. The atomic weapons establishment is pursuing a number of in-house initiatives towards minimising the volumes of wastes by improved segregation at source and improved monitoring. These are ongoing research programmes with no fixed end date. Details of costs and the reports of the programmes cannot be released for reasons of security and commercial confidentiality.

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what account he has taken of the observations made in the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee's 13 annual report, paragraph 3.14; and if he will formally invite the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee to carry out a review of his Department's standards for radioactive waste management.

**Mr. Aitken:** My Department welcomes the reviews carried out previously by RWMAC and we have been in discussion with RWMAC in relation to a review to be carried out in 1994. My officials are already preparing a letter of invitation.

### Equipment (Repairs)

**Mr. Stephen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the systems to ensure that design and manufacturing faults discovered in military equipment while in service are notified to the manufacturers and that due account is taken of them before further equipment of the same type is supplied to Her Majesty's forces.

**Mr. Aitken:** The three armed services each operate systems for the reporting of defects in equipment and for the rectification of any faults. The continuing efficiency of these systems is currently under review. Where appropriate, action is taken with the supplier to remedy, at his expense, the reliability of equipment that in the light of in-service experience does not meet the contractual requirement. It has been, and continues to be, my Department's policy and practice to take any unsatisfactory performance by a contractor into account when making a decision regarding repeat orders or the placement of new contracts.

**Mr. Stephen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are taken to ensure that sufficient account is taken in the equipment procurement process of the advice

of warrant officers and non-commissioned officers whose duty it will be to repair and maintain the equipment once in service.

**Mr. Aitken:** Representatives of the services' in-service support organisations play key roles both in project and integrated logistic support management, and especially in the specification, review and validation of maintenance proposals.

### Joint Forces Headquarters

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the operating costs of the joint Forces Headquarters for each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Hanley:** A joint force headquarters (JFHQ) is constituted only during a crisis to provide an in-theatre headquarters for major United Kingdom deployments. There is no peacetime requirement for such a headquarters although there is a small number of staff who have been identified to form an initial core of any potential JFHQ and who are tasked in peacetime with planning and exercises. The cost of these staff is not separately identifiable and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

The only occasion a JFHQ was required in the last 10 years was when a JFHQ was created in October 1990, based in Riyadh, for in-theatre planning, preparation and execution of Operation Granby. It was stood down on completion of the operation. The operating costs of the headquarters were not identified separately and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Military Exercises

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list separately the joint military exercises carried out over the last five years by the United Kingdom with non-North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries overseas.

**Mr. Hanley:** The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Over the past three years, however, United Kingdom forces have exercised overseas with forces from: Australia, Bahamas, Bahrain, Belize, Botswana, Brunei, Curacao, Egypt, Grand Cayman, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Malaysia, Martinique, New Zealand, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand and Trinidad. In addition, the Navy carries out a number of short ad hoc exercises with friendly navies on an opportunity basis.

### Science and Technology

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how the science and technology in his Department will be affected by the White Paper on science engineering and technology; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Aitken:** The recent White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" makes clear that my Department is making increased efforts to ensure that the technologies its research generates are more widely available for civil use; to exploit the commercial potential of its research; and to encourage collaboration with the civil sector wherever possible so as to enhance the contribution to the economy as a whole.

### Llanishen AWE

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria were used in the selection of the consortium chosen to run the Llanishen atomic weapons establishment.

**Mr. Aitken:** Tenders for the contract to operate the atomic weapons establishment (which includes the site at Llanishen, Cardiff) were evaluated against a range of stringent criteria for operating the establishment. These included health and safety factors, which were particularly important in judging the competition.

### Lung Diseases (Naval Service)

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has for the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women, suffering from lung diseases contracted during, and as a result of, service in the Royal Navy in the period 1939 to 1945.

**Mr. Hanley:** My Department has no statistical evidence upon which a meaningful estimate of ex-service personnel suffering from general lung conditions contracted during, and as a result of, service in the second world war could be based.

### Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Irish Regiment

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time members there were in the Ulster Defence Regiment in 1988; and how many (i) part-time and (ii) full-time members there are in the Royal Irish Regiment currently serving in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Hanley:** As at 1 June 1988 there were 3,440 part-time and 2,830 full-time members in the Ulster Defence Regiment; as at 1 June 1993, there were 2,671 part-time and 2,894 full-time members of the home service element of the Royal Irish Regiment.

### Trooping of the Colour

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many, by category, of the commissioned, warrant and non-commissioned officers, and other ranks marching on Horseguards parade during Trooping of the Colour were from the *(a)* African, *(b)* Afro-Caribbean and *(c)* Indian or other non-white communities; what proportion in each case they represented of the total number of troops taking part; what steps are being taken to ensure that the recruitment of officers and other ranks to these regiments becomes representative of the ethnic structure of the population generally; and what targets there are to set the regiments concerned towards achieving this.

**Mr. Hanley:** No records are currently held of the ethnic origins of any Army personnel. We are, however, planning to introduce in-service ethnic monitoring which will provide a breakdown of the ethnic origins of serving personnel of all ranks. A number of measures are in place to encourage the recruitment of ethnic minorities into the Army. Targets for recruitment from ethnic minority communities are set for the Army as a whole, not for individual regiments and corps, and for 1993-94 the target is set at 1·5 per cent., as it is for the other two services.

### Public Appointments

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

**Mr. Hanley:** I refer the hon. Member to "Public Bodies" and "Public Appointments: A Handbook for Women's Organisations", both of which are in the Library of the House and which show available details for each Ministry of Defence public body. Appointments are made on the basis of an individual's aptitude and merit.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Labour Statistics

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing for each council area or for each travel-to-work area in Northern Ireland the number of *(a)* males and *(b)* females in employment; and what were the figures five years, 10 years, 15 years and 20 years ago or as much of such information as is available.

**Mr. Atkins:** Information on the total number of employees in employment (excluding agriculture) by travel-to-work area is available from censuses of employment held in 1978, 1981, 1984, 1987 and 1991 and is set out in the table. Information prior to 1978 is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

*NI employees in employment (excluding agriculture) by travel-to-work area*

| *Travel-to-work area* | *Males* | *Females* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1978* | | | |
| Armagh | 5,383 | 5,242 | 10,625 |
| Ballymena | 23,265 | 17,790 | 41,055 |
| Belfast | 158,955 | 118,362 | 277,3176 |
| Coleraine | 12,100 | 9,423 | 21,523 |
| Cookstown | 2,808 | 1,813 | 4,621 |
| Craigavon | 20,244 | 16,632 | 36,876 |
| Downpatrick | 7,651 | 6,979 | 14,630 |
| Dungannon | 4,994 | 3,315 | 8,309 |
| Enniskillen | 7,527 | 5,383 | 12,910 |
| Londonderry | 19,450 | 14,955 | 34,405 |
| Newry | 8,183 | 6,071 | 14,254 |
| Omagh | 6,208 | 4,515 | 10,723 |
| Strabane | 3,330 | 3,063 | 6,393 |
| Total | 280,098 | 213,543 | 493,641 |

| *Trave-to-work area* | *Males* | *Females* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1981* | | | |
| Balleymena | 10,879 | 9,181 | 20,060 |
| Belfast | 167,436 | 133,313 | 300,749 |
| Coleraine | 11,365 | 9,973 | 21,338 |
| Cookstown | 3,049 | 1,959 | 5,008 |
| Craigavon | 23,334 | 22,301 | 45,635 |
| Dungannon | 5,429 | 4,073 | 9,502 |
| Fermanagh | 6,709 | 5,292 | 12,001 |
| Londonderry | 17,234 | 15,560 | 32,794 |
| Magherafelt | 3,335 | 3,783 | 7,118 |
| Newry | 8,713 | 7,749 | 16,462 |
| Omagh | 6,332 | 5,323 | 11,655 |
| Strabane | 3,071 | 3,117 | 6,188 |
| Total | 266,886 | 221,624 | 488,510 |

| *Travel-to-work area* | *Males* | *Females* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1984* | | | |
| Ballymena | 10,732 | 10,162 | 20,894 |
| Belfast | 154,805 | 132,119 | 286,924 |
| Coleraine | 11,962 | 11,658 | 23,620 |
| Cookstown | 3,097 | 2,158 | 5,255 |
| Craigavon | 23,932 | 24,039 | 47,971 |
| Dungannon | 5,666 | 4,320 | 9,986 |
| Fermanagh | 6,685 | 5,575 | 12,260 |
| Londonderry | 16,624 | 15,597 | 32,581 |
| Magherafelt | 3,397 | 3,213 | 6,610 |
| Newry | 8,958 | 7,856 | 16,814 |
| Omagh | 6,367 | 5,456 | 11,823 |
| Strabane | 3,315 | 3,317 | 6,632 |
| Total | 255,540 | 225,830 | 481,370 |

| *Travel-to-work area* | *Males* | *Females* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1987* | | | |
| Ballymena | 9,798 | 9,357 | 19,155 |
| Belfast | 153,171 | 136,875 | 290,046 |
| Coleraine | 11,387 | 11,946 | 23,333 |
| Cookstown | 3,095 | 2,524 | 5,619 |
| Craigavon | 23,430 | 23,688 | 47,118 |
| Dungannon | 5,707 | 5,298 | 11,005 |
| Fermanagh | 6,288 | 6,129 | 12,417 |
| Londonderry | 16,556 | 17,488 | 34,044 |
| Magherafelt | 4,121 | 4,445 | 8,566 |
| Newry | 9,123 | 9,274 | 18,397 |
| Omagh | 6,263 | 5,827 | 12,090 |
| Strabane | 3,360 | 3,512 | 6,872 |
| Total | 252,299 | 236,363 | 488,662 |

| *Travel-to-work area* | *Males* | *Females* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1991* | | | |
| Ballymena | 10,239 | 11,023 | 21,262 |
| Belfast | 156,301 | 150,166 | 306,467 |
| Coleraine | 12,318 | 13,344 | 25,662 |
| Cookstown | 3,331 | 2,960 | 6,291 |
| Craigavon | 24,629 | 25,701 | 50,330 |
| Dungannon | 6,323 | 5,916 | 12,239 |
| Fermanagh | 6,728 | 6,995 | 13,723 |
| Londonderry | 18,045 | 19,178 | 37,223 |
| Magherafelt | 4,830 | 5,434 | 10,264 |
| Newry | 9,967 | 10,360 | 20,327 |
| Omagh | 6,331 | 6,509 | 12,840 |
| Strabane | 3,620 | 3,884 | 7,504 |
| Total | 262,662 | 261,470 | 524,132 |

1. Figures relate to employees in employment and exclude agriculture. Figures for 1978 also exclude forestry and fishing (1,823) which cannot readily be allocated to travel-to-work area.
2. Travel-to-work areas were changed for 1981 in the light of more up to date information on travel-to-work patterns obtained from the 1981 census of population.
3. *Source:* Northern Ireland Census of Employment.

### Housing Executive Grants

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive replacement grant scheme in each year since it was introduced; how many applications were received and how many were approved in each year since the scheme was introduced; and how many grants have been paid in respect of those approvals in each year.

**Mr. Atkins:** This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but the chief executive has advised me that, because it would have limited value in the initial stages of the grant application process, an analysis by grant type is not maintained. However, he confirmed that 24 formal applications were approved in respect of replacement grant in the year 1992-93, the first year, following the introduction of the scheme in mid-1991, in which such applications were eligible. Between 1 April and 22 June 1993 a further five applications were approved. While to date no grants have been paid because none of the proposals have been processed to a payment stage, the estimated cost of this commitment amounts to some £373,000.

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive improvement grant scheme in each of the last five years; how many applications for the scheme were received; and how many were approved in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Atkins:** This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but the chief executive had advised me that, because it would have limited value in the initial stages of the grant application process, an analysis by grant type is not maintained. However, he confirmed that the number of formal applications for improvement grants approved and the relevant costs in each of the years in question was:

| | *Approved* | *Cost £ million* |
|---|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 3,260 | 27·3 |
| 1989-90 | 2,801 | 22·6 |
| 1990-91 | 2,864 | 21·3 |
| 1991-92 | 2,762 | 22·3 |
| 1992-93 | 5,569 | 21·3 |

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive repair grant scheme in each of the last five years; how many applications for the scheme were received; and how many were approved in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Atkins:** This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Executive but the chief executive has advised me that, because it would have limited value in the initial stages of the grant application process, an analysis by grant type is not maintained. However, he confirmed that the number of formal applications for repair grants approved and the relevant costs in each of the years in question was:

| | *Approved* | *Cost £ million* |
|---|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 6,975 | 12·2 |
| 1989-90 | 6,492 | 10·7 |
| 1990-91 | 5,039 | 9·4 |
| 1991-92 | 3,637 | 7·2 |
| 1992-93 | 4,410 | 8·3 |

### Limavady Bypass

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the construction work on the Limavady bypass to begin.

**Mr. Atkins:** The construction of the first stage of Limavady bypass is expected to start in 1997-98, subject to the availability of finance.

### Traffic, Limavady

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the volume of traffic now using Linenhall street, Limavady over each 24-hour period in each day of the week; what are the maximum and minimum hourly rates; what is his estimate of the hourly maximum capacity of the street; and what forecast he has made of when this figure will be reached.

**Mr. Atkins:** The information is not available in the form requested. In the last survey undertaken, the maximum hourly rate of traffic using Linenhall street, Limavady, was found to be approximately 950 vehicles. The estimated hourly capacity of this street is 1,500 vehicles, a figure which may be reached in the period 1998 to 2004, depending on the continuing rate of traffic growth.

### Community Psychiatric Nurses

**Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many community psychiatric nurses are employed by each health and social services board; what are the minimum qualifications for community psychiatric nurses employed by health and social services board; and what relevant qualifications are required for social workers approved for the purposes of article 5 of the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986.

**Mr. Ancram:** The number of community psychiatric nurses employed by each health and social services board at 31 December 1992 was as follows:

| | *Number* | *Whole-time equivalents* |
|---|---|---|
| Eastern | 107 | 104·03 |
| Northern | 20 | 20·00 |
| Southern | 39 | 39·00 |
| Western | 28 | 28·00 |

The minimum qualifications for community psychiatric nurses employed by health and social services boards are registered mental nurse (RMN) with community psychiatric nursing (CPN) diploma or certificate.

The relevant qualifications required for social workers approved for the purposes of article 5 of the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986 are the certificate of qualification in social work (CQSW), the certificate in social services (CSS) or the diploma in social work (DSW). In addition to be approved under the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986 a

social worker undergoes a training course approved by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work and, if successful, is assessed as competent to practice. The appropriate health and social services board then issues a letter stating that the person is qualified to operate under the order.

### Community Regeneration

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the criteria for aid under the CRISP—community regeneration initiative special projects—programme with a list of the towns and villages and other locations where CRISP schemes have been *(a)* approved and *(b)* completed; and how much public money has been committed to each such scheme, with an indication of the nature of the scheme.

**Mr. Atkins:** The criteria for aid under the International Fund for Ireland's community regeneration and improvement special programme (CRISP) programme which is jointly funded by DOE(NI) and IFI are as follows:

1. A CRISP application must be for a town or village with a population less than approximately 10,000 in an area which has been designated as disadvantaged by the International Fund for Ireland.
2. The CRISP application should be from a soundly-based local group which is broadly representative of the local community and should have the capacity to become registered as a company limited by guarantee.
3. A CRISP application generally comprises three elements—a core economic project, environmental improvement and urban development programme. The core economic project is generally funded on the basis of a grant of 80 per cent. and a 20 per cent. loan repayable with interest over 10 years. A project must demonstrate its viability on this basis and be related to local economic needs. The extent of environmental improvements is generally related to the scope within the centre of the settlement for improving publicly owned areas which are run down. The amount of urban development grant approved reflects a judgment about the extent to which the private sector will claim grants for improving its property.
4. Another consideration in deciding on a CRISP application is whether it is part of a wider regeneration strategy and the level of commitment of other agencies to other regeneration measures in that strategy.

A list of the towns where CRISP schemes have been approved with details of the financial commitment to each scheme and the nature of the scheme is given in the tables. As yet, none of the schemes has been completed, although a number of individual core projects are complete.

*Approved community regeneration and improvement special programme (CRISP) projects*

| *Location* | *Project* | *Total committed £ million* | *Total DOE £* | *Total IFI £* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coalisland | 1. Weaving factory—Workspace units and industrial museum<br>2. Fireclay works—Industrial and commercial area<br>3. Cornmill—Heritage centre, library. UDP and EI | 2·700 | 1,000,000 | 1,700,000 |
| Castlederg | Castle amenity scheme. EI and UDP | 1·180 | 466,750 | 716,750 |
| Carrickmore | Milestone centre—Workspace, office facilities, library and conference facilities. EI and UDP | 2·030 | 860,000 | 1,170,000 |
| Belleek | 1. Gateway Centre—visitor and community business centre<br>2. Ceramics and craft institute. EI and UDP | 1·776 | 635,500 | 1,140,500 |
| Keady | Refurbishment of old mill—Retail units, heritage centre, office accommodation. ET and UDP | 1·500 | 500,000 | 1,000,000 |
| Dromore | Creation of five small workspace units. EI and UDP | 0·668 | 223,000 | 445,000 |
| Belcoo | EI and UDP | 0·314 | 127,000 | 187,000 |
| Newtownhamilton | EI and UDP | 0·600 | 125,000 | 475,000 |
| Pettigo/Tullyhommon | EI and UDP | 0·190 | 50,000 | 140,900 |
| Draperstown | Plantation centre—Tourism and heritage. EI and UDP | 1·100 | 345,500 | 747,500 |
| Garrison | Gillaroo centre—Heritage centre, shops and restaurant. EI, UDP and project worker | 1·051 | 479,605 | 571,605 |
| Downpatrick | 1. Ballymote community project—Retail and service centre<br>2. Refurbishment at Irish street—Office/retail units | 1·500 | 750,000 | 750,000 |
| Derrygonnelly | Refurbish derelict creamery to provide workshops and offices. EI, UDP and project worker | 0·880 | 389,000 | 491,000 |
| Portaferry | Workspace units at Brewery yard, hostel accommodation at Bar Holm. Landing and mooring facilities. EI and UDP | 2·060 | 552,425 | 1,510,425 |
| Cullyhanna | Heritage centre, workspace, retail units, tourist accommodation | 0·575 | 237,500 | 337,500 |
| Hilltown | Refurbishment of Downshire Arms to provide accommodation and restaurant. EI and UDP | 1·000 | 446,500 | 551,500 |
| Plumbridge | Refurbishment of derelict building to provide workspace, retail units. EI and UDP | 0·345 | 132,500 | 212,500 |

| Location | Project | Total committed £ million | Total DOE £ | Total IFI £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Stewartstown | Workspace, office and shop units. EI and UDP | 0·860 | 294,000 | 565,000 |
| Cushendall | Retail units, offices, workshops. EI and UDP | 0·560 | 150,500 | 406,500 |
| Drumquin | Renovation of derelict mill to provide workspace and commercial units. EI and UDP | 0·326 | 131,000 | 195,000 |
| Castlewellan | Residential centre with retail units and language school. EI, UDP and project worker | 1·000 | 362,750 | 637,250 |
| Crossmaglen | Development of two derelict sites to provide retail units, office accommodation. EI, UDP and project worker | 1·000 | 333,000 | 667,000 |
| Strabane | Town centre development on site of former canal basin | 2·000 | 1,000,000 | 1,000,000 |
| Newtownstewart | Self-catering units, museum. EI and UDP | 0·737 | 303,350 | 433,350 |
| Irvinestown | Business enterprise centre. EI and UDP | 0·817 | 355,000 | 462,000 |

### Potatoes

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the unsold tonnage of last year's crop of potatoes in Northern Ireland; and what estimates he has been given of this figure by the Ulster Farmers Union.

**Mr. Ancram:** The Government estimated surplus production from the 1992 potato crop to be between 40,000 tonnes and 60,000 tonnes. The Ulster Farmers Union estimated the surplus at approximately 55,000 tonnes.

### Fishing

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland arising from the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1992 *(a)* how many fishermen have now been allocated their number of fishing days, *(b)* how many fishermen have challenged the number of fishing days allocated to them and *(c)* how many fishermen have lodged appeals against the number of fishing days allocated to them.

**Mr. Ancram:** Provisional days at sea allocations have been issued to 253 fishermen in Northern Ireland. As at 21 June 1993, 55 of these fishermen have applied for adjustment of their provisional allocation. No appeals have been lodged as the appeal stage of the days at sea arrangements does not commence until formal days at sea allocations are issued to fishermen later in the year.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Invalidity Benefit

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what proportion of people in receipt of invalidity benefit are over pension age, giving figures separately for men and women; and how many of each sex would be entitled to a full basic pension.

**Mr. Scott:** The available information is in the table. Information about the number of invalidity benefit recipients over pension age who would be entitled to a full basic rate of retirement pension is not available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

*Numbers receiving invalidity benefit on 30 March 1991*

| | Men | per cent. | Women | per cent. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| All recipients | 976,000 | 100 | 330,000 | 100 |
| Recipients over pension age | 201,000 | 21 | 37,000 | 11 |

*Notes:* Based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants, rounded to the nearest thousand; the latest date for which information is available is 30 March 1991.

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in receipt of invalidity benefit receive dependency additions for *(a)* a male adult dependant, *(b)* a female adult dependant, *(c)* one child, *(d)* two children, *(e)* three children, *(f)* four children and *(g)* five or more children.

**Mr. Scott:** The information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the table.

*Invalidity benefit recipients as at 30 March 1991 with dependency increases for:*

| | Number |
|---|---|
| An adult dependant | 418,000 |
| One child dependant | 50,000 |
| Two child dependants | 30,000 |
| Three child dependants | 13,000 |
| Four child dependants | 3,000 |
| Five or more child dependants | 3,000 |

*Notes:* Based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants, rounded to the nearest thousand; the latest date for which information is available is 30 March 1991.

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the distribution of invalidity benefit recipients by *(a)* age, *(b)* sex and *(c)* marital status.

**Mr. Scott:** The available information is in the table. Information about the marital status of male invalidity benefit recipients is not available.

*Invalidity Benefit recipients as at 30 March 1991*

| Age | Men | Married Women | Other Women |
|---|---|---|---|
| Under 20 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 20-24 | 6,000 | 3,000 | 4,000 |
| 25-29 | 18,000 | 14,000 | 7,000 |
| 30-34 | 27,000 | 14,000 | 9,000 |

| Age | Men | Married Women | Other Women |
|---|---|---|---|
| 35-39 | 33,000 | 19,000 | 7,000 |
| 40-44 | 57,000 | 26,000 | 9,000 |
| 45-49 | 69,000 | 27,000 | 12,000 |
| 50-54 | 115,000 | 44,000 | 17,000 |
| 55-59 | 176,000 | 56,000 | 23,000 |
| 60-64 | 273,000 | 22,000 | 15,000 |
| 65 and over | 201,000 | (see note iii) | (see note iii) |

*Notes:*

i. Based on 1 per cent. sample of claimants, rounded to the nearest thousand; the latest date for which information is available is 30 March 1991.

ii. [1]equals a sample of less than 500.

iii. Women over age 65 are not entitled to invalidity benefit.

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures for the relative frequency of medical examinations by disability for those people who have applied for or been granted disability living allowance.

**Mr. Scott:** I am informed by Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement of his Department's policy in determining which applicants for disability living allowance are to undergo medical examinations.

**Mr. Scott:** Disability living allowance claimants may be medically examined, where either the disabled person requests an examination or the adjudication officer responsible for determining entitlement considers that this is the best method of obtaining the information necessary to make a decision. In addition, a representative sample of applicants are examined as part of the evaluation of the claims and adjudication systems.

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what circumstances it is the policy of his Department to rely on a single medical examination rather than a report by the general practitioner for the continuation of the disability living allowance.

**Mr. Scott:** Entitlement to disability living allowance is determined by independent adjudication officers. It is for the adjudication officer in each individual case to decide what is the best source of the information that he needs to enable him to make a decision on the claim.

### Quarry House

**Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to move staff from Quarry house to London in each of the next five years; and in what grades.

**Mr. Hague:** We have no such plans.

### Public Appointments

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

**Mr. Burt:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible for a large number of public appointments. The information requested for each of these could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, some information is available from the Cabinet Office publications, "Public Bodies" and "Public Appointments: A Handbook for Womens Organisations", copies of which are in the Library.

When making appointments account is taken of the relevant background and experience of the individuals concerned.

Changes in posts, salaries and allowances since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992" are detailed in the following table:

*Appointments and Remuneration*

| | Chair | | | Deputy | | | Members | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sex | Appointment | Remuneration | Sex | Appointment | Remuneration | Sex | Appointment | Remuneration |
| Occupational Pensions Board | 1 male | 1 September 1992<br>1 April 1993 | £35,580<br>£36,645 | 1 male | 1 April 1992<br>1 April 1993 | £11,775<br>£12,130 | 7 male,<br>2 female | 1 April 1992 | £138 per session |
| Disability Living Allowance Board[1] | | | | | | | Medical:<br>5 male,<br>2 female | | £217·40 per day |
| | | | | | | | Lay:<br>2 male,<br>8 female | | £110·00 per day |
| Industrial Injuries Advisory Committee | 1 male | 1 April 1993 | £125 per day | | | | 10 male,<br>5 female | | £100 per day |
| Social Security Advisory Committee | 1 male | 1 August 1992 | £178 per day | | | | 9 male,<br>4 female | | £114 per day |
| Independent Tribunal Service | 1 male, President<br>1 male, National<br>5 male.<br>1 female, Regional<br>15 male.<br>9 female, Full-time | | £70,374<br>£70,374<br>£60,105 | | | | | | |

| | Chair | | | Deputy | | | Members | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sex | Appointment | Remuneration | Sex | Appointment | Remuneration | Sex | Appointment | Remuneration |
| Disability Appeal Tribunals | 479 male, 122 female | | £119·50 per session | | | | 2,269 male, 1,252 female | | |
| Social Security Appeals Tribunals | 88 male, 8 female | | £119·50 per session | | | | 464 male, 9 female | | £108·70 per session |
| Vaccine Damage Tribunals | 325 male, 79 female | | £119·50 per session | | | | 908 male, 677 female | | Medical [2]£88·40 Non-medical [2]£55·00 |
| Child Support Appeal Tribunal | 79 male, 71 female | | £119·50 per session | | | | 408 male, 398 female | | |
| Central Adjudication Services | 1 male | | £48,471 | | | | | | |

[1] Formerly Attendance Allowance Board.
[2] Per session.

## Invalidity Benefit

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners were claiming invalidity benefit for each year since the benefit's inception; and what percentage these figures are of the total number of claimants in those years.

**Mr. Scott:** The available information is in the table.

| *Date* | *Invalidity benefit claimants over pension age* | *Percentage of total invalidity benefit claimants* |
|---|---|---|
| 3 June 1972 | 14,000 | 3·4 |
| 2 June 1973 | 17,000 | 3·9 |
| 1 June 1974 | 20,000 | 4·5 |
| 31 May 1975 | 24,000 | 5·3 |
| 6 June 1976 | 21,000 | 4·4 |
| 4 June 1977 | 28,000 | 5·5 |
| 3 June 1978 | 36,000 | 6·4 |
| 2 June 1979 | 43,000 | 7·0 |
| 31 May 1980 | 52,000 | 8·5 |
| 30 May 1981 | 52,000 | 8·2 |
| 29 May 1982 | 57,000 | 8·3 |
| 2 April 1983 | 62,000 | 8·4 |
| 31 March 1984 | 68,000 | 8·5 |
| 30 March 1985 | 84,000 | 9·9 |
| 5 April 1986 | 101,000 | 11·2 |
| 4 April 1987 | 127,000 | 13·1 |
| 2 April 1988 | 150,000 | 14·3 |
| 1 April 1989 | 174,000 | 15·5 |
| 31 March 1990 | 206,000 | 17·0 |
| 30 March 1991 | 238,000 | 18·2 |

*Notes:*
1. Figures for 1972 to 1976 based on a 2 per cent. sample of claimants; 1977 to 1978 on a 2·5 per cent. sample; 1979 to 1991 on a 1 per cent. sample.
2. All figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

## Liable Relatives

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many liable relatives were paying maintenance contributions to claimants on supplementary benefit and income support for each year since 1972; and what percentage these figures are of the number of claimants with children for whom liable relative payments could be made in those years.

**Mr. Burt:** The information is not available in the form requested for years prior to 1991, when the statistics collected related to the number of cases where a maintenance liability was established rather than those where payment was actually made.

The information for 1991 and 1992 is in the table. The figures represent the number of cases receiving payments. It is possible that some cases may receive payments from more than one liable relative.

| | *1991* | *1992* |
|---|---|---|
| Number of total LR cases with dependent children | 680,000 | 948,000 |
| Number of cases where maintenance was paid | 194,000 | 207,000 |
| Percentage of cases where payment was made | 28·5 | 21·9 |

The higher number of total cases in 1992 is likely to be due mainly to new procedures which enabled more reliable identification of cases in which there might be a liability to maintain. The figure of 680,000 for 1991 may therefore be an underestimate of the real number.
*Source:* Annual Statistical Inquiry.

## National Insurance

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, columns *209-10*, how many cases of national insurance contributions evasion have been uncovered, resulting in action short of legal prosecution; and how much revenue has been recovered in each year since 1984-85.

**Mr. Hague:** The administration of national insurance is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Contributions Agency. She will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Miss A. Chant to Mr. Alan Milburn, dated 23 June 1993:*

As Chief Executive of the Contributions Agency I am responsible for answering questions about relevant operational matters. I have been asked to reply to your question about the number of cases of National Insurance Contributions evasion which have resulted in action short of legal prosecution and the amount of revenue recovered.

The Agency considers investigation of all cases of apparent non-compliance with National Insurance law. However, it does not attempt to differentiate between cases which involve genuine mistakes made by employers and those which involve suspected evasion of liability as it is often difficult to draw a clear dividing line between these two extremes of non-compliance. The Agency's main objective is to collect arrears and ensure current and future compliance. It does, of course, keep a particularly close eye on any employers it thinks may be involved in deliberate evasion.

In his reply to your earlier questions my Deputy, Mr. Bertram, supplied details of the number of cases that had been authorised for prosecution but pointed out that we had no specific details about evasion. He also explained that the

Agency uncovers cases of many types of non-compliance in a variety of ways, including survey visits made to employers by inspectors, examination and processing of employers' End of Year Returns and enquiries made by individual contributors. Throughout the whole range of our activities the Agency has not encountered any evidence that evasion of National Insurance liability by employers is a significant problem. But it always investigates thoroughly any instances of suspected or alleged evasion.

Figures for the numbers of cases of evasion which result in action short of prosecution are not kept. Indeed they would be virtually impossible to categorise with any degree of robustness. But an effective monitoring and control system ensures that appropriate action is taken in all cases where non-compliance is uncovered whatever the cause.

I regret that I am unable to give you the precise information that you requested but I hope that my reply will prove helpful. If you have any further queries on the matter I would be only too pleased to discuss them with you.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market testing programme; and how they were selected.

**Mr. Hague:** *[pursuant to his reply, 7 June 1993, c. 143-44]:* The information given contained a typographical error. The correct information is that the expected cost of the market testing programme for 1993-94 is broadly estimated at £13·5 million.

### Income Support

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants of income support in each Benefit Agency Office having claimants in Derbyshire, have arrangements for *(a)* direct payment of housing costs, *(b)* attachment of community charge, *(c)* direct re-payments to the social fund, *(d)* direct payments to the electricity companies and *(e)* direct payments to British Gas; and what are the total counts for (a) to (e) for customers who are residents of Derbyshire.

**Mr. Burt** *[pursuant to his answer 10 May 1993, c. 342-43]:* Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, has written further to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mrs. Margaret Beckett dated 21 June 1993:*

I am writing to you further to my letter of 7 May 1993 in response to your earlier Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking about persons in each Benefits Agency office in Derbyshire who had arrangements for direct payments to be made from their income support.

At that time I said that I would write to you at a later date giving figures for the number of persons in each Benefits Agency office in Derbyshire who had their mortgage payments paid direct to their mortgage lender.

I am pleased to say that these figures are now available and are as detailed below as at 31 May 1993.

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Derby (London Road) | 1,431 |
| Derby (Becket Street) | 3,269 |
| Ilkeston | 1,818 |
| Buxton | 189 |
| Chesterfield | 1,279 |

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Legal Action (Ministers)

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Attorney-General what is his usual practice in allowing individuals to take legal action against Ministers or Government Departments; and how many times he has done so since 1979.

**The Attorney-General:** As a general rule, I do not have any role to play in decisions by individuals to take legal action against Ministers or Government Departments.

### Public Appointments

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

**The Attorney-General:** I do not make any appointments to public bodies.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Duty-free Sales

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total value of duty-free sales on *(a)* surface and *(b)* air routes between Britain and the continent in *(i)* the first quarter of 1993 and *(ii)* the first quarter of 1992; and how much additional revenue would have been received by the Exchequer if these sales had been made through retail outlets in the United Kingdom.

**Sir John Cope:** Information on duty-free sales is available only from infrequent surveys which cannot be used to provide reliable estimates of sales in particular quarters.

### National Lottery

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the written guidance he has issued to the chief officers of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Arts Council and the Sports Council concerning the distribution of proceeds from the national lottery.

**Mr. Nelson:** No such guidance has been issued. It would be for the Secretary of State for National Heritage to decide whether any guidance would be appropriate or necessary.

### Tax Relief (Shore Option Schemes)

**Ms Harman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer in each of the years 1991-92 and 1992-93 of tax relief on *(a)* approved discretionary share option schemes and *(b)* approved all-employee savings-ralated share option schemes.

**Mr. Dorrell** The latest estimates are as follows:

| | £ million | |
|---|---|---|
| | *1991-92* | *1992-93* |
| Approved discretionary share option schemes | 45 | 45 |
| Approved savings-related share option schemes | 55 | 75 |

### Corporation Tax

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *258*, what was the total turnover and the total profits of the largest 25 United Kingdom firms of which corporation tax was due in each year from 1987; and if he will provide the turnover and corporation tax figures in both *(a)* current prices and *(b)* 1987 prices.

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* Latest readily available figures covering five years for turnover, profit before tax, and corporation tax liability of the 25 largest profitable United Kingdom companies and company groups, based on turnover in their latest accounts, are as follows:

| | *Turnover* £ billion | *Profit before tax*[1] £ billion | *Corporation tax liability*[2] £ billion |
|---|---|---|---|
| *At current prices* | | | |
| 1987 | [3] | [3] | 3·1 |
| 1988 | 190 | 19 | 3·0 |
| 1989 | 230 | 23 | 3·5 |
| 1990 | 270 | 25 | 3·5 |
| 1991 | 275 | 20 | 3·3 |
| 1992 | 275 | 21 | [4] |
| *At constant 1987 prices* | | | |
| 1987 | [3] | [3] | 3·1 |
| 1988 | 180 | 18 | 2·8 |
| 1989 | 200 | 21 | 3·1 |
| 1990 | 220 | 20 | 2·9 |
| 1991 | 210 | 15 | 2·5 |
| 1992 | 200 | 16 | [4] |

[1] World-wide activity reported in published accounts.
[2] After relief for foreign tax.
[3] Not readily available.
[4] Not yet available.

### Tax Evasion

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many criminal and civil cases relating to tax evasion have been pursued in each of the last five years; and what revenue has been recovered.

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* The information requested is as follows:

| | *1988-89* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* | *1992-93* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Criminal cases | 12 | 14 | 14 | 11 | 14 |
| Civil cases | 64,926 | 70,548 | 74,974 | 74,414 | 68,563 |
| Revenue recovered (£ million) | 706 | 933 | 1,091 | 1,324 | 1,361 |

Numbers of cases are for successful Inland Revenue investigations only.

## AGRICULTURAL, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Equine Viral Arteritis

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 15 June, *Official Report*, column *482*, what steps she is taking to stop the spread of equine viral arteritis by casual contact including aerial transmission; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Soames:** Equine viral arteritis is not a notifiable disease in Great Britain and statutory disease control measures and movement restrictions do not apply. The United Kingdom equine industry operates a voluntary code of practice for the prevention and control of EVA which includes guidance on the appropriate measures to prevent the introduction and spread of the disease. It is considered to be an effective means for stud owners to protect their animal health status and its use is commended to all sectors of the equine industry. Those organising shows and equine sporting events have been additionally advised to take normal disease prevention measures and not to allow horses which exhibit signs of infectious disease, especially respiratory infections, to enter the showground or event.

We fully support the measures taken by the United Kingdom equine industry, including the application of voluntary movement restrictions to affected premises.

The VPC considered the application for an inactivated EVA vaccine at its meeting yesterday. It advised that subject to the satisfactory resolution of outstanding quality points, an animal test certificate could be granted, allowing use of the product under veterinary supervision and subject to the normal conditions associated with such certificates. Officials at the Veterinary Medicines Directorate are discussing these points urgently with the company concerned, together with arrangements for making the product available as speedily as possible.

### Tuberculosis

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received regarding the need for carcasses of dead badgers to be checked for tuberculosis; and what is her assessment of the dangers to cattle of unchecked tuberculosis in the badger population.

**Mr. Soames:** I have received no representations regarding the need for carcasses of dead badgers to be checked for tuberculosis. Badgers infected with tuberculosis do not pose a significant threat to the national cattle herd. In the south-west of England, where the majority of cattle breakdowns occur, some 0·5 per cent. of

herds had a new confirmed breakdown in 1992. Almost all of these were considered by the Department's veterinary staff to be due to badger infection.

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many incidents of tuberculosis in cattle have been reported in each quarter since 1 January 1990.

**Mr. Soames:** The number of new cattle herd breakdowns due to tuberculosis, confirmed in each of the quarters in question was:

| | *1st Quarter* | *2nd Quarter* | *3rd Quarter* | *4th Quarter* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1990* | | | | |
| New confirmed breakdowns | 37 | 31 | 49 | 26 |
| *1991* | | | | |
| New confirmed breakdowns | 17 | 28 | 42 | 38 |
| *1992* | | | | |
| New confirmed breakdowns | 26 | 34 | 52 | 43 |
| *1993* | | | | |
| New confirmed breakdowns | 58 | — | — | — |

### Crassula Lelmsii

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she is taking to counter the spread of Crassula Lelmsii, the Australian swamp stone-crop weed.

**Mr. Yeo** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* I have been asked to reply. Research about the effect of this species is at present being carried out by English Nature and the Institute of Freshwater Ecology. They have also produced a public information leaflet giving guidance on the identification and control of the plant.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Rivers

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress the National Rivers Authority is making *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the north west in regulating the use of rivers and controlling pollution.

**Mr. Yeo:** The NRA's 1990 river quality survey reported around 90 per cent. of waterways as of "good" or "fair" quality. The next survey, expected in 1995, should reflect the benefits from the NRA's tighter pollution controls and increased enforcement activity throughout England and Wales, the reduction in numbers of major water pollution incidents, and the accelerated investment by the water industry on sewerage and sewage treatment.

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of pollution entering the North sea comes from rivers; and what proportion comes from British rivers.

**Mr. Yeo:** Since different countries use different methods of estimating inputs of contaminants, the available statistics do not permit reliable international comparisons. The available date is set out in the periodical "Monitoring and Assessement" reports of the Oslo and Paris Commissions.

### Affordable Accommodation

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further plans he has to increase the supply of affordable accommodation for rent and sale.

**Sir George Young:** We are pursuing a number of policies, both through the provision of new accommodation and measures to maximise the use of existing property, to ensure that a decent home is within reach of every family. Nearly £50 million additional resources were made available last year in the housing market package to enable housing associations to purchase over 18,000 empty and repossessed properties to use for families in housing need; and some £50 million in grants which enabled 3,300 housing association and local authority tenants to buy new homes, releasing their current homes for reletting to those in housing need. These special measures, announced in the Autumn Statement, brought my Department's total spending on housing to £8·5 billion.

Over the three years from 1992-93, the Housing Corporation estimates that housing associations will be able to provide 170,000 new social homes for rent and shared ownership. In addition, measures taken to encourage the private rented sector, such as our flats over shops and housing associations as managing agents initiatives,and to make better use of the existing public sector stock, will increase the supply of homes for rent still further.

### Compulsory Competitive Tendering

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will extend the range of local services put out to compulsory competitive tendering.

**Mr. Baldry:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that the then Under-Secretary of State for Local Government gave to the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) on 24 May 1993 at column *366*.

### Burning Plastic

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reports he has had on the effect of burning plastic on the spread of dioxins and similar compounds into the air; and if he will make a statement on the main sources of dioxins in the atmosphere.

**Mr. Yeo:** I have not received any such report. However, it is accepted that the burning of some plastics, in common with the burning of many other materials, can lead to the formation of dioxins. For incinerators, I am advised that the operating conditions of the incineration process are paramount in controlling the quantities formed. This is why incinerators are subject to stringent controls under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

For the main sources of dioxins in the atmosphere, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 24 February 1992 at column *406*.

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to promote the burning of plastics.

**Mr. Yeo:** None.

### Water Resources

**Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how, and to what extent, the National Rivers Authority has jurisdiction over the management of water resources controlled by the British Waterways Board; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Water Resources Act 1991 exempts all navigation authorities, including British Waterways Board (BWB), from the requirement to apply to NRA for abstraction licences in connection with their own operations but obliges BWB to apply to NRA for licences in respect of abstractions from BWB waters by others.

### "Health Effects of Sea Bathing"

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to publish the results of the study, "Health Effects of Sea Bathing", EH9021.

**Mr. Yeo:** The report referred to is the interim report on the health effects of sea bathing covering the period April 1991 to March 1992. Copies were placed in the Library in September 1992. I intend to publish a report on the whole four-year research project later this year.

### Sewage-based Fertilisers

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to encourage water authorities to sell sewage-based fertilisers.

**Mr. Yeo:** About half the sewage sludge produced by water companies is already used as a fertiliser. The potential market for sludge-based products has been assessed in research undertaken for the Department by the Water Research Centre. The final report will be made available to the water industry shortly.

### Packaging (Recycling)

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to require firms to recycle their packaging.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Government take the view that companies involved in placing packaging on the market should take a share of the responsibility for dealing with it after it has served its original purpose. We have therefore been conducting intensive discussions with a range of industries on how they might contribute to improved recycling rates. We are still considering how best to achieve this.

### Fly Tipping

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is proposing to tackle the problem of fly tipping.

**Mr. Yeo:** Measures to reduce fly tipping are included in the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Under provisions which came into force on 1 April 1992, there is a duty of care on all holders of waste (except private households) to prevent the illegal disposal of their waste. Under the duty, waste may only be handed to an authorised person and transfers of waste must be documented. Carriers of waste must be registered with their waste disposal authority and authorities have powers to seize identified vehicles used in fly tipping. The Environmental Protection Act also includes a provision placing responsibility on the person controlling a vehicle for fly-tipping offences using that vehicle. This latter measure is to be implemented this year; the Government have no plans for further measures at present.

### House Condition Survey

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to publish the results of the house condition survey.

**Sir George Young:** The first results were published on Monday 21 June in "English House Condition Survey 1991: A Preliminary Report on Unfit Dwellings".

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Mr. Yeo:** My Department's policy is set out in our Policy Statement on Green Housekeeping, published in March 1993. Specifically, our policy is: to extend the amount of recycled paper bought from the present 40 per cent. to the current practicable limit of 70-75 per cent. as soon as possible; to reduce energy consumption by 15 per cent. over the five years to 1995-96 by, among other things, installing energy efficient lighting wherever it is practicable to do so; to encourage sustainable forestry practices by purchasing office furnishings which, as far as possible, do not contain hardwoods from virgin areas; to minimise the use of slow renewables such as peat by using soil improvers derived from the processing or reuse of organic wastes such as coir, manure, leaf mould and bark chippings; to fit all official vehicles with catalytic converters by May 1994.

### Publicity

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* paid and *(b)* unpaid publicity projects hav been organised by his Department's information directorate since April 1992; what evaluation has been made of the effectiveness of the publicity projects; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Baldry:** From April 1992 to the present, my Department's information directorate has carried out 717 paid publicity projects. For the most part, unpaid publicity activities are undertaken to support paid publicity activities. During the same period, 1,016 press notices were issued on matters of public interest.

Information is always gathered on the takeup of all publicity materials by the public—particularly of publications—as part of the overall communications strategy for every publicity project. Research is carried out regularly to monitor the effectiveness of paid publicity initiatives, particularly in the case of large, long-term projects.

### Standard Spending Assessments

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he will take in setting the aggregate for standard spending assessments for 1994-95 of the savings in energy costs open to local authorities taking advantage of increased competition in the supply of fuels.

**Mr. Baldry:** In setting the total of standard spending for 1994-95 Ministers will consider a wide range of factors. These will include the pressures on local authority services arising from increases in pay and prices, demographic changes and the scope for securing savings and improved value for money.

### Tower Hamlets (Appeal)

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to reconsider the decision to withdraw the application for a petition to appeal in the case of R. *v.* Secretary of State for the Environment ex parte Tower Hamlets; and if he will state the reasons for his decision.

**Mr. Baldry:** We have no plans to reconsider our decision. The time limit for seeking leave to appeal to the House of Lords has now passed.

### North Hull Housing Action Trust

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement about the timetable for formulating the exit strategy for the tenants whose home improvements have been completed by the North Hull housing action trust;

(2) when tenants in South close within the North Hull housing action trust, who have indicated their wish to return to Hull city council, will have the opportunity to exercise this right; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when the exit strategy for First avenue tenants will be ready; and if the tenants will be allowed to exercise their right to return to Hull city council in October;

(4) what plans he has to use the Hull exit strategy as a model for all other housing action trusts.

**Sir George Young:** It is for the North Hull housing action trust to formulate its own exit strategy, and agree it with Ministers as part of the corporate planning process. The strategy needs to be consistent with the statutory objectives of housing action trusts as set out in Section 63 of the Housing Act 1988, and also with the guidelines issued by my Department to all housing action trusts on the disposal of tenanted properties. These require, among other things, that tenants should be consulted about a range of alternative landlords and ownership options before they are required to make final decisions about their future tenure. This is entirely consistent with the declaration of intention between Ministers, the leader of Hull city council and the chairman of the North Hull housing action trust in December 1991. As the North Hull housing action trust was the first housing action trust to be established, its exit strategy will inform those for subsequent housing action trusts. But each housing action trust will need to prepare and agree an exit strategy which fully reflects local circumstances.

I have agreed the proposal put to me by the North housing action trust that those tenants in South close who had indicated a clear preference to return to Hull city council before my Department's guidelines were issued should be enabled to do so as soon as the necessary procedures are completed. As for the tenants in First avenue, discussions are currently taking place between the North Hull housing action trust and my Department about the range of options that will be put to tenants before they are required to choose their future landlord. It is too early to say whether the formal consultation process will be completed in time for any tenants to change their landlords by October. But all tenants who wish to do so will be able to return to Hull city council, as agreed between Ministers, the city council and the chairman of the HAT in December 1991. The Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Bill, currently before Parliament, will strengthen this commitment by providing a statutory right for all HAT tenants to return to the council in the area in which their house is situated if they elect to do so.

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now fix a firm date to meet a delegation from Hull city council and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North to discuss the affairs of the North Hull housing action trust.

**Sir George Young:** I have already told the leader of Hull city council that it is my intention to visit the North Hull housing action trust in the near future, at which time I would expect to meet representatives of the council. But in the meantime I should be happy to meet a delegation from the city council led by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara).

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the relationship between the North Hull housing action trust and his Department's regional office at Leeds.

**Sir George Young:** I am satisfied that my Department's regional office is able to give the North Hull housing action trust the advice, guidance and support it needs to fulfil its statutory objectives and secure value for money.

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy, in his consultations with Hull city council for the replacement of the chairman of the North Hull housing action trust, that the appointee is independent and not directly connected with any political party.

**Sir George Young:** In looking for a successor to Mr. Liggins as chairman of the North Hull housing action trust, I shall be seeking to appoint someone who can secure the objectives of the housing action trust and gain the

confidence of the residents and of Hull city council. I would not wish to rule out someone who had held local government or ministerial experience provided they were prepared to accept that their relevant political activities would be in strict accordance with the code of conduct issued to all prospective board members.

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision will be made for the division of responsibility for legal costs when the houses currently owned by the North Hull housing action trust are returned to the ownership of Hull city council.

**Sir George Young:** It is not necessarily the case that houses currently owned by the North Hull housing action trust will return to the ownership of Hull city council. It will be for individual tenants to decide on their future landlord. However, as I have agreed that those houses which return to the council after having been improved by the housing action trust should do so at nil cost to the council, I think it would be reasonable for the city council to meet all the legal costs.

## Jewel Tower

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the purpose of the works and repositioning of the storm gutters on the footpath adjacent to the Jewel tower next to the Houses of Parliament; and what further work is to be done so that rain water does not collect across the pavement.

**Mr. Baldry** *[holding answer 21 June 1993]:* The provision and the subsequent maintenance of storm water drainage is a matter for the local authority. I suggest that this matter should be addressed to the city of Westminster.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Monday 28 June 1993*

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Legal Aid

**Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy to impose upon the Legal Aid Board a duty to automatically provide all applicants with a complete breakdown of their assessment of resources determining legal aid eligibility.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The Legal Aid Board or the legal aid assessment office will always provide this information on request. It would not be a sensible use of resources to require more than that.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Police Stations (Attacks)

**Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many mortar and bomb attacks have been launched against police stations in Northern Ireland in each of the last four years.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The information requested is as follows:

| *Year* | *Bomb Attacks* | *Rocket/mortar Attacks* |
|---|---|---|
| 1989 | 22 | 6 |
| 1990 | 23 | 12 |
| 1991 | 41 | 13 |
| 1992 | 17 | 6 |

**Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many portakabin-type structures are still in use at police stations in Northern Ireland; and what assessment has been made of their vulnerability to mortar and bomb attacks relative to other kinds of structure.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** There are a number of portakabin-type structures, or sectional buildings, within the police estate. They are used mainly for storage facilities. For security reasons, I do not consider that it would be appropriate to specify the precise number still in use.

All the buildings are nevertheless assessed as to their comparative vulnerability to mortar and bomb attack with particular consideration being given to their location and use.

### RUC Drug Squad

**Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans there are to deploy greater manpower resources to the Royal Ulster Constabulary's drugs squad; if other officers are seconded to augment the squad; and how many seconded officers have served six months or longer periods during each of the last four years.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The deployment of police officers is an operational matter for the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and I understand that the strength of the drugs squad is regularly reviewed by him. There is an ongoing programme of six-month secondments to the drugs squad; figures on secondments are not kept on a yearly basis but it is estimated that 90 officers have been involved over the last four years.

### Police Advisory Board

**Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how often the Police Advisory Board, as constituted under the Police Act (Northern Ireland) 1970, is supposed to meet; how often it has met in each of the last four years; and if it is planned to meet in the current year.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** There is no statutory requirement for the Police Advisory Board to meet. The most recent meeting of the board was held in January 1988. It is intended to hold a further meeting of the board later this year.

### Muggings, Coleraine

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many muggings have been reported to the police in Coleraine *(a)* during 1992 and *(b)* in 1993 to date.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** Thirteen robberies were reported to the police in the Coleraine sub-division in 1992, the circumstances of which approximate to what is generally understood by "muggings". In 1993, to 22 June, three such robberies have been reported.

### Water Disconnections

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by year for the last five years, and by water authority the number of *(a)* domestic and *(b)* industrial water disconnections made.

**Mr. Atkins:** The Water Executive, which is part of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, is the only water authority in Northern Ireland.

The water supplied to a property which is used solely for domestic purposes is not metered and is not subject to disconnection for non-payment of an account.

Information on industrial premises is not held separately and the figures for commercial, industrial and agricultural premises are as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1988 | 408 |
| 1989 | 292 |
| 1990 | 258 |
| 1991 | 385 |
| 1992 | 211 |

### Public Bodies

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in

each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

**Sir Patrick Mayhew** *[holding answer 25 June 1993]:* Information on the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions on public bodies to which I make appointments, and details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992" could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

In making public appointments, the prime considerations are the individual's ability or potential to contribute to the work of a particular body to which he or she is appointed and the need for each public body to have the range of experience and skills necessary to carry out its functions.

### Opsahl Report

**Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the report, "A Citizen's Inquiry: the Opsahl report on Northern Ireland"; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The commission provided me with a copy of its report when it was published. It provides a valuable record of the commission's work, which clearly did much to stimulate the submission of views from a wide range of individuals and organisations. In addition the commission itself made a number of recommendations. A number of these are clearly controversial and have provoked dissenting comment. Its value, in my view, lies principally in enlivening and developing informed public debate and in offering an important source of ideas, both from the commission itself and from the many submissions made to it.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Hong Kong

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals have applied for British citizenship under the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990; and how many have been awarded British citizenship so far.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** As at 19 June 1993, 66,734 applications had been received from principal applicants. No record is kept of the number of dependants shown on the applications. A total of 30,762 principal beneficiaries had been registered as British citizens by that date together with 51,127 dependants.

### Cardiff Prison

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the age of the remand prisoner who attempted suicide at Cardiff prison on 22 June.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general for the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Alun Michael, dated 27 June 1993:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the age of the prisoner who attempted suicide at Cardiff prison on 22 June.

The prisoner was aged 18 and was discovered hanging from the window bars at about 1 am by the prisoner sharing his cell. He summoned staff who, finding no sign of life, resuscitated him while awaiting an ambulance. The prisoner was taken to hospital and, I am pleased to say, is recovering. He will return to custody as soon as he is fit.

This young man was seen by a doctor on reception at Cardiff as part of the standard screening for potential suicides. He was considered not to be at risk and gave no indication that he would attempt to take his own life. Staff at Cardiff prison are to be commended for their prompt and professional action in saving this young man's life. The prisoner who summoned help has had counselling and I understand that both his father and solicitor have praised staff at the prison for their care and humanity.

### Crime Clear-up Rates

**Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 4 March, *Official Report*, column *279*, what proportion of the clear-up rate for each police force in 1992 was accounted for by offences taken into consideration.

**Mr. Maclean:** The information requested is contained in the table.

*Notifiable offences cleared up by the police in 1992*
*Proportion of offences cleared up by being taken into consideration*

| *Police force area* | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| Avon and Somerset | 10 |
| Bedfordshire | 16 |
| Cambridgeshire | 20 |
| Cheshire | 10 |
| Cleveland | 34 |
| Cumbria | 19 |
| Derbyshire | 14 |
| Devon and Cornwall | 12 |
| Dorset | 16 |
| Durham | 11 |
| Essex | 18 |
| Gloucestershire | 14 |
| Greater Manchester | 20 |
| Hampshire | 14 |
| Hertfordshire | 20 |
| Humberside | 15 |
| Kent | 18 |
| Lancashire | 18 |
| Leicestershire | 22 |
| Lincolnshire | 15 |
| City of London | 12 |
| Merseyside | 16 |
| Metropolitan police district | 9 |
| Norfolk | 16 |
| Northamptonshire | 15 |
| Northumbria | 18 |
| North Yorkshire | 24 |
| Nottinghamshire | 26 |
| South Yorkshire | 5 |
| Staffordshire | 11 |
| Suffolk | 14 |
| Surrey | 17 |
| Sussex | 17 |
| Thames Valley | 18 |
| Warwickshire | 11 |
| West Mercia | 14 |
| West Midlands | 12 |
| West Yorkshire | 15 |
| Wiltshire | 13 |
| Dyfed-Powys | 10 |
| Gwent | 8 |

| Police force area | Per cent. |
|---|---|
| North Wales | 15 |
| South Wales | 6 |
| Total | 16 |

### European Election Boundaries

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reason arrangements for the redrawing of the European parliamentary boundaries were not initiated shortly after the decision on extra seats at the Edinburgh summit.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** We thought it right to give careful consideration to the distribution of the extra seats to the various parts of the United Kingdom before bringing our proposals before Parliament.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice he sought from the boundary commissions on their ability to redraw the European Parliament constituency boundaries in time for the 1994 elections; and what correspondence was exchanged.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** We have no doubts about the ability of the boundary commissioners to carry out this work, if they had both the time and the necessary statutory powers. Consequently, no correspondence has been exchanged.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the review of boundaries for European parliamentary constituencies in Wales to be completed; and what consultations he proposes to hold on the membership of the committee to conduct the review.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** We expect the European Parliamentary Constituencies Committee for Wales to complete its review as soon as possible after the European Parliamentary Elections Bill receives Royal Assent. It is our intention that the Opposition parties in the House of Commons will be consulted about the membership.

### Group 4

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) of 10 June, *Official Report*, column 297, when he expects the examination of the contract with Group 4 in respect of court escort services to be concluded.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. John Spellar, dated 24 June 1993.*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question pursuant to the Answer of 10 June to the honourable Member for Lewisham, Deptford [Official Report, column 297] about the examination of the contract with Group 4 for court escort services.

The demands on the criminal justice system and the resources available to it are continually changing. To meet these changes courts open, close, or change their use, and prison establishments change their catchment areas or functions. All such changes affect the resource requirements of the court escort service. It was to examine such changes that the work referred to in my letter to Mrs. Ruddock was undertaken. That work is still continuing (no contract changes have yet been made) and some aspects of it are likely to be concluded before others. At the same time, further changes in the prison population in the contract area are occurring and the effects of these too are being considered.

The contract with Group 4 recognises that costs will vary with such changes in the requirement and mechanisms exist to adjust the contract accordingly. This will be a continuing process throughout the life of the contract.

### Police, North Yorkshire

**Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been *(a)* the establishment and *(b)* the number of police in post in North Yorkshire on 1 April in each year since 1979.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Information on police strength is collected at the end of each month. The figures set out in the table give the information requested as at 30 April in each year.

*North Yorkshire Constabulary*

| Year as at 30 April | Establishment | Strength |
|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 1,328 | 1,337 |
| [1]1980 | 1,368 | 1,355 |
| 1981 | 1,368 | 1,352 |
| 1982 | 1,368 | 1,361 |
| 1983 | 1,368 | 1,362 |
| 1984 | 1,368 | 1,358 |
| 1985 | 1,368 | 1,348 |
| 1986 | 1,368 | 1,365 |
| 1987 | 1,368 | 1,362 |
| 1988 | 1,368 | 1,370 |
| 1989 | 1,383 | 1,363 |
| 1990 | 1,408 | 1,380 |
| 1991 | 1,408 | 1,380 |
| 1992 | 1,418 | 1,389 |
| 1993 | 1,418 | 1,380 |

[1] The North Yorkshire Police Authority did not ask for an increase in establishment between 1980-81 and 1987-88.

### Obscene Publications Act 1959

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many publications have been confiscated in each of the last three years under the Obscene Publications Act 1959.

**Mr. Maclean:** Figures for seizures and forfeitures under section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 are not collected centrally. However, from inquiries which have been made of the two largest forces in England and Wales —the Metropolitan police and Greater Manchester—both of which have dedicated obscene publications squads, I understand that a total of 264,504 items and 234,386 items were seized by them in 1991 and 1992 respectively. A total of 74,690 items have been seized by the same police forces so far this year.

### Betting Shops

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many betting shops are open for evening racing; and how many betting shops that were previously open for evening racing have now closed.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The Government do not collect this information.

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect the evening opening of betting shops has had on attendances at greyhound racing stadiums.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I understand that the greyhound racing industry is concerned that there has been a recent downturn in admissions, but that no figures are available yet.

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

**Mr. Howard** *[holding answer 25 June 1993]:* The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Departmental Buildings

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the buildings currently owned or rented by his Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

**Mr. Howard:** *[holding answer 3 June 1993]:* The information is not recorded centrally and is not available in the form requested. The number of buildings owned or rented by the Home Office—on the prisons and non-prisons estates—is set out in the tables, together with details, where available, of the estimated value of the estate and the rents or leases payable.

| *Prison Service Estate* | *Number of Buildings* | *Estimated Value* |
|---|---|---|
| Prison Establishments | 129 | £3-4 billion |
| Prison Quarters | 2,296 | £110-140 million |
| Other Buildings | 15 | £0·75-1·25 million |
| Total | 2,440 | £3-4 billion |

The majority of the prison quarters and other buildings are freehold. A total of 127 prison establishments are owned by the Department and two are leased. The rents payable for prison service property and farmland in 1993-94 will be in the region of 1 million pounds. The accommodation and maintenance charges for the headquarters buildings, including prison service training schools and supply and transport branch, will total approximately £17 million and minor repairs and maintenance to prison establishments will cost about £18 million in 1993-94.

| *Non-prisons estate* | *Number of buildings* | *Rent or leases payable per annum (£ million)* |
|---|---|---|
| Owned buildings | 16 | — |
| Rented buildings | 97 | 33·4 |
| Leased buildings | 34 | 11 |
| Total | 147 | 44·4 |

Of the buildings on the non-prisons estate which are not owned by this Department 88 are on the common user estate and are thus owned or rented by the property holdings directorate of the Department of the Environment to whom we pay rent to cover the costs of our occupations in the buildings.

Information on the value of the buildings on the non-prisons estate is not readily available and a full valuation could be carried out only at disproportionate cost. The estimated cost of maintenance in 1993-94 is £17 million.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Diplomatic Service

**Mr. George Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries where restrictions exist on personal travel by members of the diplomatic service.

**Mr. Goodlad:** It has been long-standing practice to give advice to all staff on the problems they may face in travelling to certain countries, and to require them to give notice of such visits, particularly if they have access to classified information. On security grounds we do not publish the list of countries concerned, but it is kept regularly under review.

**Mr. George Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries where marriage to, or cohabitation with, nationals is prohibited for employees of Her Majesty's diplomatic service; and when that list was last revised by reduction or addition.

**Mr. Goodlad:** Diplomatic service staff are not specifically prohibited from marrying, or cohabiting with non-British citizens. However, depending on circumstances, such relationships might affect an officer's postability or security clearance.

### Haiti

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to assist efforts to restore democratic Government to Haiti; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Along with our European Community partners, we have consistently reaffirmed our commitment to the restoration of democratic government in Haiti. We support the efforts of the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the United Nations to bring about a political settlement. We are taking steps to implement UN Security Council resolution 841, which was adopted by the UN on 16 June 1993 to impose sanctions on Haiti.

### Conventional Arms Register

**Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date the Government submitted to the United Nation's Secretary General a return from the United Kingdom to the UN Register of Conventional Arms Transfer in New York; and if he will place a copy of the return in the Library.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg** *[pursuant to his reply, 5 May 1993]:* The copy of the United Kingdom's return placed in the Library of the House on 29 April inadvertently contained some errors on page 5. A corrected version has now been placed in the Library.

### Cyprus

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has *(a)* to visit northern Cyprus and *(b)* to meet representatives from northern Cyprus during the Commonwealth conference in Cyprus in October; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** There are no such plans; the programme for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' visit to the commonwealth heads of Government meeting, has not yet been finalised.

### Somalia

**Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations the United States Administration held with Her Majesty's Government or its representatives at the United Nations concerning its military actions in Somalia in June; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd** *[holding answer 25 June 1993]:* United Nations military actions in Somalia in June have been carried out in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution No. 837, to which we have given our full support.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Sheltered Employment

**Mr. Coe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to improve the present programme of sheltered employment.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, is publishing today a consultative paper on the arrangements for funding sheltered employment. The main proposals involve:

introducing a more flexible system of block grants to providers which will allow a better response to client needs;

improving performance and use of resource through having formal contracts with clear targets;

better targeting of sheltered employment on need;

arrangements to encourage more people with severe disabilities to move from sheltered workshops or factories to placements with employers and, where possible to full open employment.

The document has been sent to the main interests concerned and comments requested by 13 September. Decisions will be reached as soon as possible after that.

I believe that the proposals will address criticisms of the excessive complexity and inflexibility of current funding arrangements and will enable more people to be helped in better ways.

Copies of the document are available in the Vote Office.

### Oral Disorders

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for employment if he will publish for each of the last 10 years the number of working days lost through oral disorders.

**Miss Widdecombe:** This information is not available.

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The Employment Department, in common with other Government Departments, has produced an environmental strategy which sets out our policy on environmental and energy issues.

It contains commitments to purchase and use recycled paper wherever this is practical; to reduce energy consumption by, among other means, the installation of more efficient equipment including low-energy light bulbs; to purchase goods and services which avoid dependence on the production and use of non-renewable resources such as tropical hardwoods; and to fit all Departmental vehicles with catalytic converters where possible.

Although we have no specific policy on the use of peat, the general commitment against the use of non-renewable resources would cover it.

### Abattoirs

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been employed in abattoirs in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales in each year since 1985.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The available information on regional employment in abattoirs is from the periodic censuses of employment and is given in the table:

*Estimated number of employees in employment in Abattoirs[1] September of each year*

| | *England* | *Scotland* | *Wales* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1984 | 8,100 | 1,500 | 200 |
| 1987 | 9,400 | 1,400 | 400 |
| 1989 | 9,000 | 1,200 | 300 |
| 1991 | 8,300 | 1,500 | 600 |

[1] Activity heading 4121 of the Standard Industrial Classificatiion 1980.

### Review Bodies (Staff)

**Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff are involved in servicing the review bodies on doctors and dentists' remuneration, and on nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine; how many NHS staff are covered by those review bodies; and what is the annual cost of running these bodies.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration and the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions

Allied to Medicine are expected to be serviced directly by up to eight staff in 1993-94, shared equally between the two bodies and assisted by other clerical and secretarial staff of the Office of Manpower Economics.

As at 30 September 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, there were some 112,000 doctors and dentists and the full-time equivalent of some 527,000 nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine in the NHS. This includes staff employed by national health service trusts, which are free to determine the pay of their staff locally.

The annual cost of running the two review bodies, in respect of the salary costs of the eight staff and the travel and subsistence costs for members, who are otherwise unpaid, and staff is expected to be £265,000 in 1993-94.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the oral answer from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) of 14 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *15-16*, on the sale of the Professional and Executive Register, if he will now list the organisations which bid for the register; and whether the company which bought the register submitted the highest bid.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** My right hon. Friend, the previous Secretary of State wrote to the hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) on 15 February 1993 setting out the Government's position.

### Port Accidents

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fatal accidents there have been in United Kingdom ports since July 1989.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) on 27 May 1993, *Official Report*, columns *655-56*.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Low-energy Light Bulbs

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister what steps have been taken to install low-energy light bulbs at 10 Downing street and Chequers.

**The Prime Minister:** Following an energy audit of 10-12 Downing street high-efficiency, low-energy lamps have been installed where appropriate. Low energy luminaires and krypton tubes have also been installed.

The Chequers estate is the responsibility of the Chequers trust.

### Slovenia

**Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Prime Minister what discussions the Copenhagen EC conference held on closer links between the European Community and Slovenia; and with what result.

**The Prime Minister:** There was no discussion of this subject at the European Council in Copenhagen.

### Cabinet Sub-Committee Decisions

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions decisions of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on London have been made known to Parliament and the public.

**The Prime Minister:** I do not propose to give details of topics considered by individual ministerial committees, the timing of their meetings or their discussions.

### Cyprus

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will seek to ensure that the question of the present division of Cyprus is included on the agenda of the Commonwealth conference to take place in Cyprus later this year; and if he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** The inter-communal dispute in Cyprus is the subject of intensive negotiations under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General. This process has our full support. It is important not to start new initiatives that may confuse or cut across the UN effort.

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has *(a)* to visit northern Cyprus and *(b)* to meet representatives from northern Cyprus during the Commonwealth conference in Cyprus in October; and if he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** There are no such plans; the programme for my visit to the commonwealth heads of Government meeting has not yet been finalised.

### RECHAR

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Prime Minister which department provides the cover for capital costs for three RECHAR schemes in east Durham.

**The Prime Minister:** Departmental responsibility will depend on the nature of the projects concerned.

### Doctors' and Dentists' Pay

**Ms Lynne:** To ask the Prime Minister if the Doctors and Dentists Review Body will be invited to make recommendations for pay appropriate to 1 April 1994.

**The Prime Minister:** Yes.

**Ms Lynne:** To ask the Prime Minister what steps he will take to enable the Doctors and Dentists Review Body to propose measures to eliminate differentials between the earnings of doctors and dentists and comparable professions.

**The Prime Minister:** The Government do not consider it appropriate to determine pay rates for doctors and dentists by comparison with the earnings of other professional groups. Each case for remuneration should be considered on its merit, taking account of the terms and conditions of service enjoyed, the labour market in which the profession operates and what is affordable.

### Nuclear Waste

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will include in his discussions with the Japanese Government in September the issue of the storage in Britain of nuclear waste resulting from the reprocessing of Japanese nuclear fuel at Sellafield.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 25 June 1993]:* This matter is already dealt with in the contracts between British Nuclear Fuels plc and its Japanese customers and in the existing inter-governmental letters between the United Kingdom and Japan. Since 1976, BNFL's contracts for the reprocessing of overseas spent fuel have contained options for the return of wastes. The Government intend that these options will be exercised and wastes returned.

## HEALTH

### GP Fund Holders

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many fund holders have had their recognition reviewed by region in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 to date.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Regional health authorities are responsible for ensuring that all fundholders continue to meet the requirements of the scheme.

### Isobutyl Nitrite

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths were attributable to isobutyl nitrite in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Sackville:** In England and Wales during the period 1988 to 1992 there were no deaths where isobutyl nitrite was attributable, on death registrations, to be the cause.

Information from St. George's medical school, which monitors all deaths in the United Kingdom associated with abuse of volatile substances, however, shows that during the period 1988 to 1991—the latest year for which information is available—there are known to have been five deaths in England and Wales that were associated with alkyl nitrites[1].

[1] All the nitrite compounds involved are of commercial quality, not pure, and may contain several isomers. For this reason, the St. George's report "Trends in Deaths Associated with Abuse of Volatile Substances 1971–1991: Report No. 6", copies of which are available in the Library, refer to them generically as alkyl nitrites.

### Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultation she has had with ME Action and other myalgic encephalomyelitis associations about future areas of research.

**Mr. Sackville:** Officials from the Department met representatives of the main myalgic encephalomyelitis organisations last year. As a result, a task force is now preparing a report to assist consideration of a structured approach to myalgic encephalomyelitis research.

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent on research into myalgic encephalomyelitis in each of the past three years.

**Mr. Sackville:** This information is not available centrally. A number of research projects into aspects of the physical origins and treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis are proceeding within the national health service, some of them funded by voluntary organisations and one by the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

### London Amublance Service

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 9 March, *Official Report*, column *498-99*, on emergency calls to the London ambulance service, if she will now make it her policy to require detailed records to be kept of incidents where response times of emergency ambulances in London exceed 25 minutes and for information concerning the number and nature of such incidents and the reasons for them to be placed in the Library each month.

**Mr. Sackville:** No. The London ambulance service is answerable to South West Thames regional health authority. The policy on requiring detailed records of response times is a matter for it.

### Quarry House

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to move staff from Quarry house to London in each of the next five years; and in what grades.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department has only recently completed the relocation of the national health service management executive to Leeds. There are no plans to move work back to London.

### Dentists

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many salaried dentists are employed by each family health services authority in England.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** A total of 17 English family health services authorities currently employ 77 salaried dentists. Details are shown in the table.

*Number of salaried dentists employed by FHSAs at 18 June 1993*

| *FHSA* | *Number of salaried dentists* |
|---|---|
| Derbyshire | 1 |
| Cambridgeshire | 2 |
| Kensington, Westminster and Chelsea | 9 |
| Essex | 3 |
| City and East London | 8 |
| Kent | 4 |
| Greenwich and Bexley | 6 |
| Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham | 30 |
| West Sussex | 1 |
| Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth | 1 |
| Wiltshire | 2 |
| Buckinghamshire | 2 |
| Cornwall and Isles of Scilly | 3 |
| Gloucestershire | 1 |
| Liverpool | 2 |
| Lancashire | 1 |
| Salford | 1 |
| Total—England | 77 |

### Psychiatric Services

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her policy towards the long-term development on psychiatric services and care.

**Mr. Bowis:** Our policy for the long-term development of mental health services is set out in the report to

Parliament "Development of Services for People with Learning Disabilities (Mental Handicap) or Mental Illness in England" No. 342 printed on 16 December 1992 and the "Mental Illness Key Area Handbook" published in January this year. Both documents are available in the Library.

### Community Care

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about community care for the mentally and physically handicapped in the north-west; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Bowis:** We have received a number of representations. The Government are monitoring the implementation and practice of the community care reforms which were implemented on 1 April this year. This monitoring is being undertaken by the social services inspectorate and regional health authorities.

### Eye Consultants

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has regarding the number of referrals by opticians to eye consultants in each year since 1990.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Ophthalmic opticians do not, except in an emergency, refer patients directly to consultant ophthalmologists, but do so through general practitioners. In 1990-91 there were 599,520 referral attendances at consultant ophthalmologists' out-patient clinics in England, of which 478,141 were written referral requests from GPs. In 1991-92—the last date for which figures are available—there were 663,192 referral attendances, of which 529,243 were written referrals from GPs. We do not collect information about the proportion of referrals initiated by ophthalmic opticians.

### Dental Treatment

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many courses of dental treatment in each category under the national health service were performed by dentists for the periods from October to December 1991 and October to December 1992; and what was the percentage increase or decrease in the number of treatments provided;

(2) how many courses of dental treatment in each category under the national health service were performed by dentists for the periods from January to March 1992 and January to March 1993; and what was the percentage increase or decrease of treatments provided.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information is shown in the table.

*General dental service—England*
*Number of courses of dental treatment*

| | *Adults* | *Children* |
|---|---|---|
| October 1991 to December 1991 | 6,169,678 | 721,014 |
| October 1992 to December 1992 | 6,216,373 | 673,528 |
| Percentage Change | 0·76 | −6·59 |
| January 1992 to March 1992 | 6,440,445 | 712,001 |
| January 1993 to March 1993 | 6,452,325 | 702,232 |
| Percentage Change | 0·18 | −1·37 |

*Notes:*
1. Under the new dental contract introduced on 1 October 1990, most child treatment is undertaken under capitation where no separate course of treatment is identified. The figures for adults and children are not therefore comparable.
2. The reduction in the number of child courses of treatment is due to the inclusion in the figures of "entry payments". These are paid to a dentist on accepting for capitation a child whose teeth require active clinical intervention. The number of such payments is now declining sharply.

### Emergency Hospital Admissions

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of emergency admissions to hospitals in each health authority in England in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

**Mr. Sackville:** The number of non-elective admissions in the general and acute specialties provided by national health service hospitals in each regional health authority are shown in the table. Information for individual districts is not available centrally.

| *Region* | *Finished Consultant Episodes 1991-92* | *1992-93* |
|---|---|---|
| Northern | 255,904 | 268,256 |
| Yorkshire | 291,537 | 303,883 |
| Trent | 333,311 | 348,327 |
| East Anglian | 147,956 | 158,802 |
| North West Thames | 212,324 | 233,643 |
| North East Thames | 290,206 | 297,552 |
| South East Thames | 253,023 | 261,727 |
| South West Thames | 189,820 | 202,488 |
| Wessex | 199,196 | 214,481 |
| Oxford | 155,603 | 158,034 |
| South Western | 238,582 | 242,902 |
| West Midlands | 382,176 | 394,452 |
| Mersey | 210,107 | 217,524 |
| North Western | 337,271 | 343,605 |
| Special Health Authorities | 23,609 | 23,651 |
| England | 3,520,625 | 3,669,327 |

*Source:* Quarterly Monitoring of Provider Activity.

### NHS Trusts

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names and occupations of the chairs and non-executive directors of each NHS trust in the Wessex region.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The list of chairmen and non-executive directors of national health service trusts in Wessex region, together with their occupations, where known, is shown in the table.

*Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. J. J. Thring | Solicitor/Bank director |
| *Non-Executive directors:* | |
| Mr. A. F. Fosler | Chartered surveyor |
| Mr. P. C. Allfrey | Chartered accountant |
| Mr. E. H. Lace | Company director |
| Mrs. C. A. Baynton Coward | Social Worker |
| Mrs. R. Baugh | Physiotherapist |

*West Dorset Community Health NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. R. Willis | Farmer |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Mr. G. Adam | Retired company executive |
| Mrs. A. J. Dupont | Investment adviser |
| Mr. G. Millard | Healthcare management consultant |
| Ms A. Neuberger | Training director |

*West Dorset General Hospitals NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Capt. M. Fulford-Dobson | Retired naval officer |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Lady E. Barne | Businesswoman |
| Mrs. V. Pitt-Rivers | Housewife |
| Mr. J. C. Bones | Stockbroker |
| Mr. D. Revill | Surveyor |

*West Dorset Mental Health NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mrs. E. Topliss | Retired University lecturer |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Mrs. J. C. Day | Secretary, Association of Councils |
| Mr. C. Kirk | Retired local government officer |
| Mr. I. De Vere Moss | Solicitor |
| Mrs. A. M. Elwin | Antique dealer |
| Ms C. J. Legge | Chartered accountant |

*Bath and West Community NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. G. Chown | Former managing director |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Mr. N. Brown | Chartered accountant |
| Mr. C. Streat | Former company executive |
| Mrs. G. Corney | Former teacher/social worker |
| Mrs. A. D. Orme | Former nurse |
| Mr. A. D. Aldrich | Former youth and community worker |

*Bath Mental Health Care NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mrs. D. Howlett | — |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Mrs. F. McNulty | Solicitor |
| Mr. D. Taylor | Chartered accountant |
| Mr. W. Shakespeare | Former company executive |
| Mrs. M. Hicks | Retired social worker |
| Mr. G. J. Hutton | Clinical psychologist |

*Dorset Health Care NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Dr. O. Ockelford | Retired psychiatrist |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Mr. P. Hickman | Former sales executive |
| Miss J. Wickenden | Financial manager |
| Mr. E. Wood | Solicitor |
| Mrs. E. Cook | Retired nurse |
| Mr. H. G. Prest | Retired paper merchant |

*The Poole Hospital NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. R. Symons | Managing director |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Mr. W. H. Matthews | Former bank executive |
| Mr. N. McCorkell | Chartered accountant |
| Mrs. P. Martin | Former nurse |
| Mrs. D. Hackforth | Biochemist |
| Mr. W. Hindle | Retired consultant physician |

*Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. S. Jackson | Company manager |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Mrs. S. Collins | Solicitor |
| Miss J. Manning | Education liaison officer |
| Mr. M. S. Samuel | Insurance company senior executive |
| Group Capt. J. Rees | Former company senior manager |
| Mrs. M. Dayeh | Estate agent |

*Royal United Hospital, Bath, NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. B. Collins | Businessman |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Mr. R. Mawditt | University registrar |
| Mr. J. Seed | Deputy company chairman |
| Ms S. Reiter | Managing director |
| Mr. D. J. Gay | Solicitor |
| Ms H. Williams | Marketing services manager |

*Wiltshire Health Care NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Miss W. Watson | Former nursing college principal |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Mrs. P. Robinson | Chartered accountant |
| Lady R. Hawley | Housewife |
| Mr. A. Warren | Former naval engineer |
| Mr. V. Prior | Former senior company executive |
| Mr. O. Strickland | Solicitor |

*Andover District Community Health Care NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. B. Brown | Retired company chief executive |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Prof. B. L. Davies | Management consultant |
| Mrs. B. North | Director of strategic planning |
| Mrs. M. Fagan | Voluntary worker |
| Mr. D. L. Maynard | Former company general manager |

*Dorset Ambulance Service NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. R. Burke | Group managing director |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Mr. H. Malone | Chartered accountant/finance director |
| Mrs. C. A. Shaw | Company chief executive |
| Mrs. T. Slocock | Company director |
| Mr. K. Lomas | Retired solicitor |

*Hampshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. K. Thornber | Management consultant |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Mr. C. D. Fisher | Director, social services |
| Mr. B. G. Harris | Insurance consultant |
| Mrs. H. T. Allery | Retired company manager |
| Mrs. S. E. Telfer | Community care groups adviser |

*Isle of Wight Community Health Care NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. P. Kingston | Chartered surveyor |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Mr. C. F. Rolf | Solicitor |
| Mr. S. H. Greenen | Retired architect |
| Mrs. P. Lee | Head teacher |
| Mrs. K. R. Daniell | Former nursing officer |

*North Hampshire, Loddon Community NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mrs. A. Bennigsen | Director, marketing company |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Dr. J. S. Lyon | Psychiatrist |
| Mrs. A. Borghgraef | Relationship councillor |
| Mrs. J. M. Nicholas | Community centre manager |
| Mrs. C. J. Tomkinson | Housewife |
| Mr. T. Sullivan | Company managing director |

*Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. V. Jenner | Company managing director |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Mr. W. Evershed | Company secretary |
| Mr. W. Gardner | Bank manager |
| Mrs. J. Merritt | Head teacher |
| Mr. E. C. Cottle | Retired naval commander |
| Ms K. Glendinning | Voluntary worker |

*St. Mary's Hospital, Isle of Wight NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Major General B. Livesey | Retired army officer |
| *Non-executive directors:* | |
| Mr. E. S. Giles | Solicitor |
| Mr. B. F. Langslow | Management consultant |
| Mr. J. H. Simpson | Retired accountant |
| Mrs. G. Cavaciuti | Administrator |
| Dr. D. W. Hide | Retired doctor |

*Southampton Community Health Services NHS Trust*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. D. Noddings | Retired company director |

*Non-Executive directors:*

| | |
|---|---|
| Mr. S. K. Sharma | Chartered accountant |
| Mr. J. R. Montgomery | University lecturer |
| Mr. A. E. Smith | Civil servant |
| Mrs. P. Cassy | Director, voluntary agency |
| Mrs. J. Buchanan | Clinical data manager |

*Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust*

*Chairman:*

| | |
|---|---|
| Mrs. E. Brodrick | Accountancy manager |

*Non-executive directors:*

| | |
|---|---|
| Mrs. A. Davis | Financial adviser |
| Mr. D. A. D'Arcy Hughes | Solicitor |
| Professor C. F. George | Professor of pharmacology |
| Mr. L. F. Allery | Former company executive |
| Sir David Price | Industrial consultant |

*Wiltshire Ambulance Services NHS Trust*

*Chairman:*

| | |
|---|---|
| Mr. G. Edward | Retired company director |

*Non-executive directors:*

| | |
|---|---|
| Mr. R. Riseley-Prichard | Retired RAF medical officer |
| Group Captain E. Sandison | RAF director of nursing |
| Dr. J. Moxon | Retired GP |
| Mrs. G. E. Wookey | Businesswoman |

### NHS Treatment Abroad

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is collected centrally on the number of national health service personnel who go abroad to treat national health service patients.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** No such information is available centrally because there is no general facility for national health service personnel to provide services under the NHS outside the United Kingdom.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

### Aid and Trade Provision

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library the findings of the Government's review of aid and trade provision.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The findings of the Government's review of the aid and trade provision were reflected in the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) on 17 June at column *679-80*.

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence the review on aid and trade provision received to substantiate the need and opportunities to improve effectiveness and value for money; and what steps are being taken to achieve such improvements.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** In the course of the aid and trade provision review, evidence was considered from a wide variety of sources. Important sources on the scheme's effectiveness were evaluation studies of past aid and trade provision projects including the "ATP Evaluation Synthesis Study", a copy of which is already in the Library of the House, and discussions with companies which had implemented contracts funded by ATP.

In future, the Overseas Development Administration's appraisal, approval and monitoring procedures for ATP projects will be brought in line with those for other bilateral aid projects. In addition, the Department of Trade and Industry is introducing more systematic appraisal of the likely commercial and industrial benefits to the United Kingdom economy, consistent with other schemes which pursue United Kingdom economic objectives.

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Croydon, South, (Mr. Ottaway), on 17 June, *Official Report*, column *679*, what date the new low-income criteria in respect of aid and trade provision will operate from;

(2) further to his answer to the hon. Member for Croydon, South, (Mr. Ottaway), on 17 June, *Official Report*, column *679*, what exceptions there will be to the new regime for aid and trade provision during the transitional period; and when this period will end.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The new criteria became effective on the date of my answer—17 June 1993. Exceptions have been agreed only for projects on which companies have expended considerable time and effort, where expectation built up that ATP would be available if such projects satisfied the previously existing criteria. The projects in question are the Kuala Lumpur airport project in Malaysia, a water supply project in Thailand, and a few small technical co-operation projects.

### Human Rights

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) which developing countries have a human rights record which adversely affects their eligibility for development aid under his Department's policy;

(2) if he will list the developing countries which he treats as having good human rights records when they are considered for development aid assistance.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The human rights record of a recipient country is one of several factors we consider when deciding overseas aid allocations. Amongst other factors we take into account the needs of the country concerned and how effectively our aid will be used. Where a country's human rights record is poor, we have a number of ways of urging improvement. We take every opportunity, often with our EC and other partners, to make our views clear to Governments which are abusing human rights.

We are ready to help countries which show an intention to move to better standards of government with well targeted development assistance. In cases of persistent human rights abuse we are also prepared to restrict or withdraw development aid. Recent examples include Burma, Malawi and Sudan. Announcements are made when this is done.

## EDUCATION

### Additional Educational Needs

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what representations he has received from local authorities on the disparity in standard spending assessments generated by the additional educational needs factor as it is currently applied; and what plans he has to

change the present arrangements for AEN methodology arrangements and the common funding formula for grant-maintained schools;

(2) what assessment he has made of the extent to which application of a common funding formula for grant-maintained schools based upon the current educational standard spending assessment methodology would generate unacceptable differences in per capita funding in schools serving very similar districts; and what plans he has to improve the present arrangements in regard to the additional educational needs factor to ensure equitable allocations to schools of comparable site.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** My right hon. Friend has received various local authority representations about the additional educational needs—AEN—allowance within standard spending assessments. These will be taken into account in the review of the AEN allowance which is currently taking place as part of a wider-ranging review of standard spending assessments for 1994-95.

We are also consulting widely on the common funding formula for grant-maintained schools. This will be based on the education element of standard spending assessments, as calculated in future. It will be introduced gradually with due regard to schools' needs for stability in funding and for additional resources to reflect additional responsibilities, as well as to the relative levels of additional educational needs among pupils attending particular schools.

## Local Management of Schools

**Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the letter sent to Cumbria county council by his Department's LMS unit dated 7 May bearing reference S/P/6/131/587; and to which recipients similar letters were sent.

**Mr. Forth:** The text of the Department's letter to Cumbria county council was as follows:

"I am writing to acknowledge receipt of the information sent under cover of the Authority's letter dated 30 Mareh 1993, Part 4 having been received earlier.

Whilst I have not yet had the opportunity of looking in any detail at the information provided, I thought you might nevertheless appreciate knowing that it had arrived within the Department.

I really must apologise for the very long time it has taken me to write to you."

The information in question was the LEA's LMS budget statement made under section 42 of the Education Reform Act 1988. The Department uses these statements for two main purposes. First, to monitor performance against the key delegation and pupil-led funding requirements under the national LMS framework. The second paragraph in the late acknowledgement letter from the LMS unit to Cumbria was intended to indicate that this particular analysis had not yet started.

The second use to which section 42 statements are put is to help the Department's schools 4 branch calculate annual maintenance grant—AMG—for grant-maintained schools in each LEA area. This process begins as soon as the statements are received. In the case of Cumbria a letter was sent on 19 April indicating that the budget statement had been examined and appeared to form a satisfactory basis for the calculation of AMG for the GM schools in the authority's area. Those schools are now being consulted on their budgets for the current financial year.

## Grant-maintained Schools (Budgets)

**Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column 123, which of the grant-maintained schools with proposed final annual maintenance grant budgets listed received their final AMG budgets by fax on the morning of 23 June.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** None.

**Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column 123, if he will list, by local education authority area, and for each grant-maintained school, the proposed final AMG and the final AMG where this has been determined.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The information is given in the table.

*Grant-maintained annual maintainance grant 1993-94*

| *School* | *Proposed final annual maintainance grant* | *Final annual maintainance grant* |
|---|---|---|
| *Avon* | | |
| Beechen Cliff School | 1,952,184 | — |
| Oldfield School | 1,628,128 | — |
| *Barnet* | | |
| Hendon School | 2,409,076 | 2,440,651 |
| Queen Elizabeth's GM School for Boys | 2,685,434 | — |
| Mill Hill County School | 2,881,500 | 2,936,939 |
| *Bedfordshire* | | |
| Queensbury School | 2,219,524 | — |
| Thomas Whitehead CE School | 326,490 | — |
| Manshead CE Upper School | 1,819,281 | — |
| Sharnbrook Upper School | 3,082,414 | — |
| Ashcroft High School | 1,699,750 | — |
| Crawley Green GM Infant | 443,864 | — |
| Icknield High School | 2,696,196 | — |
| Lea Manor High School | 2,597,388 | — |
| Lincroft Middle School | 675,363 | — |
| Wootton Upper School | 2,386,232 | — |
| *Berkshire* | | |
| Southlands School | 1,388,715 | — |
| Reading School | 1,625,933 | — |
| St. Bartholomew's School | 3,432,434 | — |
| Desborough Comprehensive School | 2,374,578 | — |
| Denefield School | 2,100,230 | — |
| Langley Grammar School, Slough | 1,526,243 | — |
| Herschel Grammar School | 1,328,282 | — |
| The Downs School | 1,319,024 | — |
| Cippenham Middle School | 671,467 | — |
| Priory Combined School | 818,634 | — |
| Upton Grammar School | 1,399,355 | — |
| Holy Family Combined School | 461,129 | — |
| Whitelocke Infant and Nursery School | 268,260 | — |
| *Bexley* | | |
| Barnehurst Infants School | 270,593 | — |
| Barnehurst Junior School | 385,918 | — |
| St. Columba's RC Boys School | 1,728,391 | — |
| St. Mary and St. Joseph's School | 1,604,686 | — |
| *Birmingham* | | |
| Baverstock GM School | 2,444,257 | — |
| Small Heath School | 2,468,506 | — |
| Handsworth Grammar School for Boys | 1,759,199 | — |
| Great Barr School | 4,260,290 | — |
| Hall Green School | 1,555,385 | — |
| King Edward VI Aston School | 1,381,228 | — |
| King Edward VI Camp Hill Boys School | 1,480,522 | — |
| King Edward VI Camp Hill Girls School | 1,420,988 | — |

| School | Proposed final annual maintainance grant | Final annual maintainance grant |
|---|---|---|
| King Edward VI Five Ways School | 1,492,205 | — |
| King Edward VI Handsworth School | 1,850,229 | — |
| *Bolton* | | |
| St. James' CE School Bolton | 1,617,428 | 1,794,487 |
| Crompton Fold Primary School | 639,332 | 668,643 |
| Canon Slade School | 3,184,651 | 3,344,288 |
| George Tomlinson School | 1,502,743 | 1,340,663 |
| *Bradford* | | |
| Bingley Grammar School | 2,107,250 | — |
| Hanson GM School | 2,642,398 | — |
| Laisterdyke GM Middle School | 678,103 | — |
| Oakbank School | 2,463,211 | — |
| Thornton School | 2,014,073 | — |
| *Brent* | | |
| Claremont High School | 2,883,678 | — |
| Copland Community School | 2,930,432 | — |
| Convent of Jesus and Mary | 2,205,616 | — |
| Kingsbury High School | 4,931,819 | — |
| Queens Park Community School | 2,178,054 | — |
| *Bromley* | | |
| Bullers Wood School for Girls | 2,498,965 | 2,498,965 |
| Coopers School, Chislehurst | 2,879,623 | 2,879,623 |
| Langley Park Boys School | 2,756,105 | 2,756,105 |
| Hayes School, Bromley | 2,906,576 | 2,906,576 |
| Ravens Wood School, Bromley | 2,229,200 | 2,229,200 |
| Kelsey Park School | 2,057,976 | 2,057,976 |
| Beaverwood School for Girls | 2,300,643 | 2,300,643 |
| Crofton Junior School | 1,048,129 | 1,048,129 |
| Newstead Wood School | 1,855,892 | 1,855,892 |
| Charles Darwin School | 2,411,849 | 2,411,849 |
| Holy Innocents Primary School | 382,014 | 353,295 |
| St. Olave's & St. Saviour's School | 1,619,235 | 1,565,104 |
| St. John Rigby School | 2,117,319 | 2,204,323 |
| *Buckinghamshire* | | |
| Bridgewater Hall School | 3,204,466 | — |
| Brindley Hall School | 2,431,157 | — |
| Beaconsfield High School | 1,721,529 | — |
| Brookmead County Combined Middle School | 339,118 | — |
| The Chalfonts School | 2,152,263 | — |
| Overstone Combined School | 443,334 | — |
| Beechview Middle School | 392,261 | — |
| Hamilton Combined School | 1,010,910 | — |
| Lord Grey School | 2,367,618 | — |
| The Radcliffe School | 3,660,581 | — |
| Wycombe Royal Grammar School | 2,644,713 | — |
| *Calderdale* | | |
| Crossley Heath School | 1,501,989 | — |
| North Halifax High School | 1,674,604 | — |
| Salterlee Primary School | 131,837 | — |
| Holy Trinity CE Senior School | 1,591,393 | — |
| Rastrick High School | 1,937,528 | — |
| *Cambridgeshire* | | |
| St. Helen's Primary School Bluntisham | 401,047 | 428,396 |
| Bassingbourne Village College | 902,676 | — |
| Gamlingay Village College | 415,101 | — |
| The Queen's School, Wisbech | 3,067,674 | — |
| Park Lane Primary School | 390,793 | 401,207 |
| Sawtry Village College | 1,354,921 | — |
| Wheatfields Junior School | 505,856 | 498,875 |
| Crosshall Infant School | 445,731 | 472,486 |
| Crosshall Junior School | 518,051 | 537,874 |
| The King's School, Peterborough | 1,834,790 | — |
| Jack Hunt School | 3,071,177 | — |
| Ailwyn Community School | 1,462,188 | — |
| Deacon's School | 1,900,822 | — |
| Longsands Community College | 2,834,472 | — |
| Orton Wistow Primary School | 372,322 | 384,970 |
| Sawston Village College | 2,339,941 | — |
| Stanground College | 2,779,761 | — |
| Village College, Comberton | 1,543,918 | — |
| *Cheshire* | | |
| Bankfield High School | 1,279,547 | — |
| Kettleshulme CE Primary School | 89,659 | — |
| Fallibroome High School | 1,879,222 | — |
| Henbury County High School | 1,774,896 | — |
| *Croydon* | | |
| Riddlesdown High School | 2,474,018 | — |
| Edenham School | 2,549,918 | — |
| *Cumbria* | | |
| Kirkbie Kendal School | 2,212,594 | — |
| Queen Elizabeth Grammar School | 1,233,850 | — |
| Hayton CE Primary School | 132,259 | — |
| St. Aidan's School | 1,456,320 | — |
| Trinity School | 3,787,687 | — |
| Scotby CE Primary School | 268,313 | — |
| The Queen Katharine School, Kendal | 2,618,932 | — |
| Appleby Grammar School | 1,089,603 | — |
| Dallam School | 1,457,983 | — |
| Harraby School | 1,221,534 | — |
| Kirkby Stephen Grammar School | 806,540 | — |
| *Derbyshire* | | |
| Netherthorpe School | 1,745,449 | — |
| Ecclesbourne School | 2,794,799 | — |
| Borrow Wood Junior School | 312,012 | — |
| Belmont Primary School | 457,194 | — |
| Chellaston School | 1,942,677 | — |
| The Merrill Community School | 2,296,888 | — |
| Belper Grant-Maintained School | 2,218,033 | — |
| Heanor Gate School | 1,977,148 | — |
| John Port School | 3,466,400 | — |
| Murray Park Community School | 2,020,900 | — |
| Noel Baker School | 2,772,186 | — |
| Repton Primary School | 286,568 | — |
| *Devon* | | |
| Colyton Grammar School | 1,236,902 | — |
| Torquay Boys Grammar School | 1,960,630 | — |
| St. Boniface's College | 1,548,905 | — |
| Teign School | 1,749,091 | — |
| *Dorset* | | |
| Bournemouth Grammar School | 2,099,218 | — |
| Woodroffe School | 1,768,493 | — |
| Budmouth School | 1,957,125 | — |
| Avonbourne School | 1,896,285 | — |
| Parkstone Grammar School, Poole | 1,582,203 | — |
| Bournemouth Girls School | 1,899,453 | — |
| Highcliffe Comprehensive School | 1,505,584 | — |
| Poole Technical High School | 2,362,279 | — |
| St. Walburga's RC Primary School | 519,550 | — |
| *Dudley* | | |
| Old Swinford Hospital | 1,353,932 | 1,334,269 |
| Ellowes Hall School | 1,682,743 | 1,748,389 |
| Kingswinford GM School | 1,496,201 | 1,530,593 |
| *Ealing* | | |
| Brentside High School | 2,527,864 | — |
| Drayton Manor High School | 2,800,599 | — |
| Ellen Wilkinson High School | 2,297,226 | — |
| Greenford High School | 2,280,914 | — |
| Northolt High School | 2,238,588 | — |
| Wood End First School | 515,262 | — |
| Wood End Middle School | 481,652 | — |

| School | Proposed final annual maintainance grant | Final annual maintainance grant |
|---|---|---|
| *Essex* | | |
| Chalvedon School | 3,094,319 | — |
| Westcliffe High School for Boys | 1,983,393 | — |
| King John School, Benfleet | 2,543,937 | — |
| Beauchamps School, Wickford | 1,500,910 | — |
| Bromfords School, Wickford | 1,728,843 | — |
| Elmwood Primary School | 640,727 | — |
| Newlands Spring Primary School | 441,625 | — |
| Saffron Walden High School | 2,893,757 | — |
| The Philip Morant School | 2,306,316 | — |
| The Plume School | 3,729,556 | — |
| West Hatch High School | 2,119,945 | — |
| The Boswells School | 2,789,752 | — |
| Chelmsford County High School | 1,551,437 | — |
| The Eastwood School | 1,746,223 | — |
| Furtherwick Park School | 1,877,288 | — |
| Katherine's Primary School | 385,503 | — |
| King Edward VI G School, Chelmsford | 1,668,285 | — |
| King Harold School | 1,654,751 | — |
| North Crescent Primary School | 331,361 | — |
| Rickstones School | 1,401,333 | — |
| Thurstable School | 1,759,796 | — |
| Torells Comprehensive School | 1,361,449 | — |
| Northlands Junior School | 422,835 | — |
| Great Totham County Primary School | 519,880 | — |
| The Appleton School | 2,352,865 | — |
| The Deanes School | 1,378,823 | — |
| The Hedley Walter School | 2,039,499 | — |
| Castle View School | 1,677,326 | — |
| Cornelius Vermuyden School | 1,626,928 | — |
| Westcliff High School for Girls | 2,110,870 | — |
| The Fitzwimarc School | 2,358,709 | — |
| Westborough Primary School | 797,187 | — |
| King Edmund School | 2,338,014 | — |
| Belfairs Community College | 2,600,610 | — |
| Chelmer Valley High School | 1,850,564 | — |
| Davenant Foundation School | 2,191,067 | — |
| Gable Hall GM Comprehensive | 2,082,047 | — |
| Jotmans Hall Primary School | 391,615 | — |
| Newport Free Grammar School | 1,373,664 | — |
| Northwick Park County Infant School | 331,619 | — |
| Northwick Park County Junior School | 447,237 | — |
| Rainsford School | 1,908,746 | — |
| Rolphe CE VA Primary School | 236,270 | — |
| Southend Girls High School | 1,843,623 | — |
| St. Andrew's CE Primary School | 213,082 | — |
| St. Clere's School | 1,795,939 | — |
| St. Martin's School | 2,261,601 | — |
| Tendring High School | 2,737,470 | — |
| The Grays School | 1,802,033 | — |
| The Greensward School | 1,703,645 | — |
| Thorpe Bay School | 1,514,686 | — |
| William De Ferrers School | 2,893,884 | — |
| William Edwards School | 1,722,225 | — |
| *Gloucestershire* | | |
| Ribston Hall High School | 952,515 | — |
| Marling School | 1,589,093 | — |
| Pate's Grammar School | 1,979,013 | — |
| Stroud High School | 1,506,846 | — |
| Robinswood Primary School | 504,800 | — |
| Tewkesbury School | 2,191,122 | — |
| The Crypt School | 921,601 | — |
| Balcarras School | 1,385,422 | — |
| Chosen Hill School | 2,269,284 | — |
| Katharine Lady Berkeley School | 2,106,532 | — |
| Churchdown School | 2,146,453 | — |
| The Cotswold School | 1,172,924 | — |
| Newent Community School | 2,308,178 | — |
| Rednock School | 2,238,057 | — |
| Saintbridge School | 1,665,487 | — |
| Chipping Camden School | 1,647,517 | — |
| St. Gregory RC Primary School | 524,541 | — |
| Blue Coat CE Grant-Maintained School | 330,774 | — |
| Picklenash County Junior School | 332,954 | — |
| Wyedean School | 1,262,851 | — |
| *Hammersmith* | | |
| London Oratory School | 4,254,240 | — |
| *Hampshire* | | |
| Hardley Secondary School | 1,651,981 | 1,802,699 |
| Burgate School | 1,288,576 | 1,363,405 |
| Arnewood School | 2,421,755 | 2,514,246 |
| Ringwood Comprehensive School | 1,666,419 | 1,759,723 |
| Crofton School, Fareham | 2,142,854 | 2,160,203 |
| The City of Portsmouth Boys' School | 1,864,855 | 1,955,989 |
| The Priory Primary School | 166,754 | 190,383 |
| Testwood School | 1,850,730 | 1,913,697 |
| Abbotswood Middle School | 844,731 | 826,691 |
| Front Lawn Middle School | 431,852 | 447,565 |
| All Hallows RC School | 2,258,710 | 2,424,544 |
| Bay House Grant-Maintained School | 3,276,655 | 3,203,364 |
| Blackfield Middle School | 586,385 | 578,966 |
| Bohunt Community School | 2,167,405 | 2,296,747 |
| Calmore GM Middle School | 535,464 | 614,455 |
| St. Joseph's RC Primary School | 554,535 | 685,197 |
| *Havering* | | |
| Abbs Cross School | 1,726,574 | — |
| Coopers Company & Coborn | 2,706,265 | — |
| Frances Bardsley School | 2,648,292 | — |
| *Hereford & Worcester* | | |
| St. Augustine's RC High School | 1,604,896 | 1,640,491 |
| St. Bede's School | 872,397 | 886,339 |
| *Hertfordshire* | | |
| Rickmansworth School | 2,349,929 | — |
| Watford Boys Grammar School | 2,521,834 | — |
| Francis Bacon School | 1,179,739 | — |
| Watford Girl's Grammar School | 2,482,995 | — |
| Parmiters School | 2,333,813 | — |
| St. Mary's RC Primary School | 304,749 | — |
| Christ Church CE JMI School, Chorley | 319,139 | — |
| Parkside First School | 363,115 | — |
| Hertingfordbury School | 244,250 | — |
| Bishop Stortford's School | 2,310,664 | — |
| Ashlyns Grant-Maintained School | 1,492,243 | — |
| Bushey Hall School | 2,571,885 | — |
| Bushey Meads GM School | 2,143,420 | — |
| Dame Alice Owens School | 2,577,663 | — |
| Mount Grace School | 1,214,475 | — |
| Queens School | 2,738,038 | — |
| *Hillingdon* | | |
| Bishopshalt School | 2,403,584 | — |
| Haydon School | 2,707,686 | — |
| Queensmead School | 2,229,343 | — |
| Vyners School | 2,161,804 | — |
| Uxbridge High School | 1,714,649 | — |
| Northwood School | 2,278,887 | — |
| Hayes Manor School | 1,747,694 | — |
| Mellow Lane School | 2,372,797 | — |

| School | Proposed final annual maintainance grant | Final annual maintainance grant |
|---|---|---|
| Oak Farm Infant School | 503,191 | — |
| Oak Farm Junior School | 578,099 | — |
| The Douay Marthyrs School | 2,359,500 | — |
| Abbotsfield School | 1,789,388 | — |
| Grange Park Infant School | 435,117 | — |
| Grange Park Junior School | 474,170 | — |
| Swakeleys School | 1,856,814 | — |
| *Hounslow* | | |
| Gumley House Convent School | 2,251,140 | 2,220,884 |
| Gunnersbury Catholic School | 2,208,717 | 2,219,875 |
| *Humberside* | | |
| Wold Newton Primary School | 151,221 | 151,221 |
| *Kensington* | | |
| Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School | 2,212,931 | — |
| *Kent* | | |
| The GS for Girls Wilmington | 1,101,219 | 1,150,731 |
| The Cornwallis School | 1,826,773 | 2,024,564 |
| The Maplesden Noakes School | 1,555,626 | — |
| Wilmington Grammar School for Boys | 830,956 | 974,986 |
| St. George's CE School, Gravesend | 2,330,199 | — |
| Homewood School | 2,792,083 | — |
| Thamesview School | 2,280,985 | — |
| Dartford Grammar School | 1,811,268 | 1,929,403 |
| Southlands Comprehensive School | 2,462,598 | — |
| Dartford Grammar School for Girls | 1,707,230 | 1,835,365 |
| Aylesford School | 2,085,430 | — |
| Wrotham School | 1,024,272 | 1,103,099 |
| Simon Langton Boys' Grammar School | 1,416,773 | 1,417,655 |
| Snodland CE Primary School | 535,424 | — |
| Oldborough Manor High | 1,537,167 | — |
| Senacre High School | 2,067,367 | 2,118,277 |
| Cranbrook School | 1,699,728 | 1,760,629 |
| Angley School | 1,770,291 | 1,776,358 |
| Fulston Manor School | 1,731,977 | — |
| Oakwood Park Grammar School | 1,077,926 | 1,005,749 |
| Rainham Mark Grammar School | 2,292,762 | — |
| Robert Napier School, Gillingham | 1,754,076 | — |
| The Minster School | 2,938,993 | 3,010,954 |
| The Skinner's School | 1,501,127 | — |
| The Canterbury School | 1,802,353 | — |
| Borough Green Primary School | 424,435 | 450,287 |
| Chatham Grammar School | 1,207,990 | — |
| Sir Roger Manwood's School | 1,505,123 | — |
| The Archbishop School | 1,382,493 | — |
| The Malling School | 1,293,312 | — |
| Sandown Court School | 1,881,011 | — |
| Meopham School | 986,030 | 935,095 |
| Holy Trinity | 349,381 | — |
| The Bradbourne School | 998,561 | — |
| Hugh Christie School | 1,995,981 | 2,059,658 |
| St. Simon Stock School | 1,906,283 | — |
| Mascalls School | 2,868,192 | 2,848,129 |
| Roseacre Junior School | 454,503 | — |
| St. Gregory's Catholic Comprehensive School | 1,888,110 | 2,030,483 |
| St. John Fisher, Chatham | 2,422,432 | — |
| Sutton-at-Hone, CE Primary School | 443,276 | 455,039 |
| The Charles Dickens School | 1,657,401 | 1,727,919 |
| The Folkestone School for Girls | 1,759,327 | — |
| The Wildernesse School | 1,456,554 | — |
| Westlands High School | 2,883,852 | — |
| *Kingston* | | |
| Tiffin School | 2,369,820 | 2,258,964 |
| Holy Cross Convent School | 1,512,082 | 1,605,165 |
| Richard Challoner School | 1,569,710 | 1,534,475 |
| *Kirklees* | | |
| Heckmondwike Grammar School | 1,561,430 | 1,658,905 |
| Castle Hall GM School | 957,073 | 1,035,467 |
| *Lambeth* | | |
| La Retraite School | 1,833,557 | — |
| St. Bernadette Junior School | 458,829 | — |
| Archbishop Tenison's School | 1,497,461 | — |
| Bishop Thomas Grant School | 2,520,496 | — |
| Dunraven GM School | 3,157,842 | — |
| *Lancashire* | | |
| Bacup and Rawenstall Grammar School | 1,860,719 | 2,008,763 |
| Lancaster Royal Grammar School | 2,003,296 | 2,056,092 |
| Lancaster Girls Grammar School | 1,634,088 | 1,651,403 |
| Clitheroe Royal Grammar School | 2,267,523 | 2,398,360 |
| Newton Blue Coat CE School | 394,244 | 399,323 |
| Baines School | 1,562,692 | 1,615,217 |
| Archbishop Temple School | 1,232,110 | 1,306,839 |
| *Leicestershire* | | |
| Long Field High School | 861,669 | — |
| Abington High School | 1,254,560 | — |
| Bushloe High School | 1,468,582 | — |
| South Wigston High School | 1,469,802 | — |
| Uppingham Community College | 1,388,617 | — |
| *Lewisham* | | |
| Turnham Primary School | 985,962 | — |
| *Lincolnshire* | | |
| Queen Elizabeth's GM Grammar School | 893,067 | — |
| Skegness Grammar School | 1,505,727 | — |
| The Kings School Grantham | 1,916,942 | — |
| Carre's Grammar School | 1,091,103 | — |
| St. George's School | 2,232,973 | — |
| King Edward VI Grammar School | 1,440,508 | — |
| Caistor School | 1,045,148 | — |
| Bourne Primary School | 689,316 | — |
| Gartree School | 886,647 | — |
| Magdalen CE/Meth Primary School | 348,144 | — |
| Yarborough High School[1] | 2,415,986 | — |
| Lincoln Christ's Hospital School | 2,726,583 | — |
| Castle Hills School, Gainsborough | 1,146,804 | — |
| North Kesteven School | 2,648,988 | — |
| North Rauceby Primary School | 132,038 | — |
| Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Horn | 1,341,978 | — |
| Robert Pattinson School | 2,444,092 | — |
| William Alvey CE Junior School | 680,349 | — |
| Ancaster High School | 1,267,502 | — |
| William Farr CE School | 1,735,540 | — |
| Ermine School | 430,157 | — |
| Gleed Girls School | 1,208,925 | — |
| Monks' Dyke High School | 1,504,824 | — |
| Lacey Gardens Junior School | 592,816 | — |
| Malcolm Sargent County Primary School | 738,364 | — |
| *Liverpool* | | |
| St. Francis Xavier's College | 2,650,426 | 2,650,426 |
| *Newham* | | |
| Stratford School | 1,699,153 | 1,681,318 |
| *Norfolk* | | |
| Wymondham College | 2,341,738 | — |
| Gresham County Primary | 175,466 | — |
| Heacham Middle School | 390,702 | — |
| Redgate Middle School, Hunstanton | 309,338 | — |
| Loddon Middle School | 386,143 | — |
| Costessey High School, Norwich | 1,563,502 | — |

| School | Proposed final annual maintainance grant | Final annual maintainance grant |
|---|---|---|
| Cromer High School | 1,285,699 | — |
| Dereham Church VA First School | 234,966 | — |
| Downham Market High School | 3,162,712 | — |
| Marshland High School | 1,445,781 | — |
| Norwich Road School | 532,262 | — |
| Robert Kett Middle School | 652,471 | — |
| West Flegg Middle School | 678,538 | — |
| Acle High School | 1,175,358 | — |
| Sheringham High School | 1,273,388 | — |
| South Wooton School | 200,679 | — |
| Cliff Park High School | 1,537,831 | — |
| Flegg High School | 1,204,462 | — |
| Great Yarmouth High School | 1,616,159 | — |
| Lynn Grove VC High School | 1,629,674 | — |
| St. Clements High School | 1,196,550 | — |
| *Northamptonshire* | | |
| Southfield School for Girls | 1,457,522 | — |
| Kingsley Park Middle School | 638,972 | — |
| Kingswood School | 2,159,652 | — |
| Moulton Primary School | 569,645 | — |
| King John School | 489,239 | — |
| Northampton School for Boys | 1,963,181 | — |
| Lodge Park School | 1,876,194 | — |
| Manor School | 1,524,610 | — |
| Montagu School | 1,860,992 | — |
| Weavers School | 2,558,015 | — |
| Windmill Primary School | 617,400 | — |
| Wrenn School | 2,252,542 | — |
| Sir Christopher Hatton | 1,714,784 | — |
| Danesholme Junior School | 515,961 | — |
| Woodnewton Way Junior School | 548,394 | — |
| *Nottinghamshire* | | |
| Ravensdale Middle School | 663,989 | — |
| Greenwood Dale School | 1,363,758 | — |
| George Spencer School | 2,047,408 | — |
| *Oxfordshire* | | |
| Shenington CE Primary School | 125,756 | 125,756 |
| *Rochdale* | | |
| Crossgates Primary School | 336,367 | — |
| Smithy Bridge Primary School | 550,873 | — |
| St. James CE Primary | 333,743 | — |
| Wardle High School | 2,142,932 | — |
| *Sandwell* | | |
| Manor High School | 1,848,555 | 1,789,513 |
| *Sheffield* | | |
| Clifford First School | 144,612 | 120,602 |
| *Shropshire* | | |
| Adams' Grammar School | 1,164,848 | — |
| Corbet GM School | 1,242,066 | — |
| *Solihull* | | |
| Hatchford Primary School | 861,670 | — |
| *Somerset* | | |
| Sexey's School | 1,300,720 | 1,300,720 |
| Bruton Primary School | 347,348 | 347,348 |
| *Southwark* | | |
| London Nautical School | 1,495,297 | — |
| St. Francesca Cabrini RC Primary | 845,723 | — |
| *Staffordshire* | | |
| St. Thomas More School | 1,916,166 | — |
| Cannock Chase High School | 2,087,964 | — |
| *Surrey* | | |
| Guildford County Secondary School | 1,828,343 | 1,935,201 |
| Collingwood School, Camberley | 3,452,755 | 3,642,975 |
| St. John the Baptist School, Woking | 1,586,183 | 1,646,877 |
| Glyn School | 1,978,289 | 2,106,650 |
| Gordon's School | 787,666 | 756,557 |
| Beacon School | 1,757,428 | 1,894,525 |
| Epsom & Ewell High School | 1,979,606 | 2,009,386 |
| Hawkedale First School | 182,746 | 161,194 |
| Heathside Secondary School | 1,225,671 | 1,465,192 |
| Manor First School, Byfleet | 259,389 | 240,411 |
| Roseberry School, Epsom | 1,894,516 | 2,039,296 |
| Stoneleigh First School | 308,014 | 333,102 |
| de Stafford School | 1,193,336 | 1,238,774 |
| Send CE First School | 243,980 | 232,999 |
| Thamesmead School | 1,100,720 | 1,295,916 |
| St. Paul's School | 1,480,782 | 1,625,955 |
| *Sutton* | | |
| Wilsons School | 1,741,804 | — |
| Nonsuch High School for Girls | 2,049,840 | — |
| John Fisher School | 1,714,027 | — |
| Cheam High School | 2,204,728 | — |
| Sutton Grammar School for Boys | 1,461,957 | — |
| St. Philomena's School | 1,907,056 | — |
| Wallington High School for Boys | 1,454,128 | — |
| Wallington High School for Girls | 1,703,895 | — |
| *Tameside* | | |
| Audenshaw High School | 1,637,607 | 1,637,607 |
| West Hill School | 1,508,812 | 1,508,812 |
| *Tower Hamlets* | | |
| Raines Foundation School | 2,535,384 | 2,752,152 |
| *Trafford* | | |
| Ashton on Mersey School | 1,867,657 | — |
| New Wellington High School | 1,883,460 | — |
| Sale Moor School | 1,291,642 | — |
| *Walsall* | | |
| The Streetly School | 2,385,678 | — |
| St. Thomas More RC School | 2,719,395 | — |
| Shire Oak Community School | 1,459,790 | — |
| *Waltham Forest* | | |
| Highams Park School | 2,526,942 | — |
| *Wandsworth* | | |
| Graveney School | 4,595,017 | — |
| Burntwood School | 3,593,918 | — |
| Elliott School | 3,569,454 | — |
| Salesian College | 1,513,423 | — |
| Ethelburga Primary School | 443,315 | — |
| Hillbrook Primary School | 764,600 | — |
| John Paul II RC School | 1,524,504 | — |
| Southfields School | 3,571,491 | — |
| *Warwickshire* | | |
| Newbold Grange High School (alias Avon) | 730,195 | 727,515 |
| Ash Green School (Exhall) | 1,111,820 | 1,103,673 |
| Hartshill School | 1,350,262 | 1,350,262 |
| Queen Elizabeth School Atherstone | 1,554,124 | 1,552,689 |
| Myton School | 2,235,952 | 2,226,965 |
| Alcester Grammar School | 1,262,526 | 1,262,526 |
| Rugby High School for Girls | 1,230,469 | 1,226,666 |
| *Wirral* | | |
| Calday Grange Grammar School | 2,300,326 | — |
| *Wiltshire* | | |
| St. Augustine's School | 1,215,926 | — |
| Aloeric School | 516,885 | — |
| Highbury School | 1,158,555 | — |

| School | Proposed final annual maintainance grant | Final annual maintainance grant |
|---|---|---|
| Lavington School | 1,107,939 | — |
| *Wolverhampton* | | |
| Moseley Park | 2,601,795 | 2,926,515 |
| Wolverhampton GS | 1,412,918 | 1,450,571 |

*Note:*
Only schools operating as GM on 1 April 1993 listed.

## WALES

### Training

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to ensure that Wales meets the training targets set by the Confederation of British Industry; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Sir D. Knox) on 17 May 1993 at column *8* by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Wales.

### West Glamorgan Health Authority

**Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if it remains his policy to announce his conclusion on the west Glamorgan health authority east unit review before the summer recess.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Yes.

### European Regional Development Fund

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1979-80 prices Wales has received in each year under the European regional development fund.

**Mr. Redwood:** Since 1979, the amounts allocated from the European regional development fund are given in the following tables:

| | Cash Prices £ millions | 1979-80 Prices £ millions |
|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 37·1 | 37·1 |
| 1980 | 21·5 | 18·2 |
| 1981 | 25·8 | 19·9 |
| 1982 | 46·7 | 33·6 |
| 1983 | 48·9 | 33·6 |
| 1984 | 63·0 | 41·2 |
| 1985 | 54·9 | 34·1 |
| 1986 | 49·7 | 29·9 |
| 1987 | 57·8 | 32·9 |
| 1988 | 63·3 | 33·6 |
| 1989 | 38·8 | 19·3 |
| 1990 | 27·4 | 12·6 |
| 1991 | 89·0 | 38·5 |
| 1992 | 54·9 | 22·9 |
| 1993 | 61·9 | 25·2 |

### EC Meetings

**Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, together with respective dates, the EC meetings held in Brussels which were attended by senior officials from the Welsh Office in the last 12 months.

**Mr. Redwood:** In addition to a wide range of ad hoc meetings with European Commission officials on specific policy issues, senior officials from the Welsh Office were present at meetings of the Agriculture Council held in Brussels in July, September, November and December 1992 and in January, February, March and May 1993. They also attended meetings of the Agriculture Council held in Luxembourg in October 1992 and April and June 1993, as well as the informal regional policy council held in June 1992 in Lisbon.

Officials have also been regular attendees at the meetings of the Objective 1/2 advisory committee, the structural actions working group, which is taking forward the work on the reform of the EC structural funds, and have attended, where necessary, meetings of the trans-European road network motorway working group, the DRIVE programme working groups, the STAR Advisory Committee on Rural Structures and Agricultural Development, and the VALUE II Management Committee.

They were present at the conference on the LEADER programme for rural areas held in October 1992, the conference on inter-regional co-operation held in December 1992, the seminar on article 10 initiatives held in April 1993 and the conference on objective 5b regions held in June 1993.

They accompanied the then Secretary of State to Brussels in December 1992 when he addressed the EC Economic and Social Committee's regional policy section, and again in April 1993 when he visited Brussels for meetings with key commissioners. They also accompanied the permanent secretary to Brussels in September 1992 when he met the director general of DG XVI as well as the head of the human resources task force and officials with responsibility for rural development policies.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Printing and Publishing

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met representatives of the printing and publishing industries.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade lunched with the newspaper conference on 9 November 1992. Ministers and officials in the Department frequently meet representatives of the printing and publishing industries.

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the contribution of the publishing industry to the United Kingdom economy.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Printing and publishing make an important contribution to the United Kingdom economy, accounting for 1·8 per cent. of gross domestic product (GDP) and 8·1 per cent. of manufacturing industry's share of GDP. Figures for the publishing industry alone are not available.

### Auditing Practices Board

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for legislation under which the recognised supervisory bodies in the Auditing Practices Board can be sued by individual shareholders for promulgating passive auditing standards.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** I do not accept the premise on which the hon. Member's question is based.

### THORP

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information has been received by his Department from British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. regarding problems with the installation of wiring at the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

**Mr. Eggar:** This is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc. Any safety implications are for the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate.

### Nuclear Safety Research

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what contribution is being made by the Atomic Energy Authority to the European Community's nuclear safety research project, the PHEBUS programme, at the Cadarache nuclear research centre in France; and how this involvement will assist in evaluating potential safety problems with the Sizewell B nuclear plant.

**Mr. Eggar:** The PHEBUS programme comprises a series of experiments being carried out by the Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique—CEA—the French nuclear safety R and D organisation. The programme is part funded by the European Community with additional funding from other countries. The Atomic Energy Authority is participating as part of the nuclear safety R and D programme sponsored by the Health and Safety Executive. The PHEBUS programme is not expected to produce results which can be used in the production of the safety case for Sizewell B.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the contribution made to nuclear safety by research conducted at the Falcon facility at Winfrith by the Atomic Energy Authority.

**Mr. Eggar:** The FALCON experimental facility at the Atomic Energy Authority's Winfrith site has been used to produce data to validate computer codes employed in the modelling of some aspects of the behaviour of a nuclear reactor in the unlikely event of a nuclear accident causing severe damage to the fuel.

### Atomic Energy Authority Police

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what dates the police committee of the Atomic Energy Authority met representatives of the Atomic Energy Police Federation, and the representative organisations of other ranks, to discuss matters of common interest over the past years.

**Mr. Eggar:** There are no meetings between the Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary—AEAC—Police Committee, which is a management advisory body, and representatives of the AEAC Federation. However, management—chief constable, deputy chief constable and a representative from the AEA's corporate personnel service—meets Federation representatives to discuss matters affecting the force at the AEAC joint consultative committee, which meets twice a year—most recently on 12 May 1993. There are also numerous other formal and ad hoc opportunities for Federation representatives to discuss matters affecting their members with the chief constable, other senior AEA managers and senior AEAC officers.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will detail the numbers, by rank and location, of the Atomic Energy Authority police since 1979.

**Mr. Eggar:** The current strength of the Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary (AEC) is 505 compared with 516 in 1979. More detailed information on the strength, structure and location of the AEAC is published in the AEAC chief constable's annual report and the "Constabulary Almanac Official Register 1993". Copies of the 1991 annual report are in the Library of the House and I am arranging for copies of the 1992 annual report to be placed there when it is published in July. The precise operational deployment of constabulary at British Nuclear Fuels plc and Atomic Energy Authority sites is restricted information.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what dates Ministers in his Department or the Department of Energy held a formal meeting with the Atomic Energy Police Federation during the past five years.

**Mr. Eggar:** There have been no meetings between Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary Federation representatives and DTI or Department of Energy Ministers during the past five years.

### Internal Market

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what additional help is being given to businesses to help them take advantage of the internal market.

**Mr. Needham:** The "Business in Europe" initiative was launched on 25 January 1993 to encourage United Kingdom companies to take advantage of the single market. Consultations were held with businesses and multiplier organisations to identify the most common problems faced by exporters. "Business in Europe" aims to provide a service which supplies only relevant information. It focuses on practical advice for exporters, information on the rules and opportunities in the single market and help in fighting barriers to trade. Access to the service is by a single 24-hour, seven-day-week, hotline number 0272 444 888, giving access to all of the DTI's overseas trade services. A range of promotional literature is available through the hotline, examples of which are available in the House of Commons Library. In addition, 20 export promoters, seconded from senior posts in industry, will be working in western Europe.

### Manufactured Imports

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of imports in manufactured goods from European Community countries *(a)* in 1987 and *(b)* in 1992.

**Mr. Needham:** In 1987, the value of United Kingdom imports of manufactured goods from the European Community was £39·8 billion. In 1992 it was £53·3 billion.

### Japan

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current trade deficit with Japan; and how much of the deficit is accounted for by manufactured goods.

**Mr. Needham:** In 1992, the United Kingdom had a crude deficit in visible trade with Japan of £5·22 billion. The deficit in manufactured goods was £5·45 billion.

### US-Germany Telecommunications Treaty

**Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking or proposing to take to make representations to the German Government in respect of the US-Germany telecommunications treaty; if he will challenge the legality of the same in the European Court; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 25 June 1993]:* Like all other member states, Germany is bound by European Community law. The European Commission has indicated that it is considering the legality of the action of the German Government in refusing to apply either article 29 of the Utilities Directive or the recent Council regulation implementing retaliatory sanctions against the United States in the field of Government procurement.

### Nuclear Waste

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the Government's policy on whether return of waste agreements between British Nuclear Fuels plc and overseas customers should entail substitution of equivalent amounts of radiocativity.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 23 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 7 June 1993, *Official Report*, column *161*.

### Coal Imports

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the recent trend in coal imports and on the prospects for the remainder of 1993.

**Mr. Eggar:** The level of coal imports has been declining since the middle of last year. Imports figures for 1993 are still subject to revision, but are estimated to be about 10 per cent. down on the comparable period of 1992.

### Oil and Gas

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *475*, what arrangements have been made to obtain authorisation for access to information in oil and gas archives by the successful bidder.

**Mr. Eggar:** My Department has already received the necessary written authorisations.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Departmental Speeches

**Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library copies of the speeches given by Mr. Leonard Beighton of the Board of the Inland Revenue and Mrs. Valerie Strachan of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to the Financial Times conference on international tax on 14 and 15 June.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Copies of the speeches given by Mr. Beighton and Mrs. Strachan are being placed in the Library.

### Corporation Tax

**Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much corporation tax was repaid in each year since 1986-87.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The information requested is as follows:

*Corporation Tax Repayments*

| *Year* | *Amount (£ million)* |
|---|---|
| 1986-87 | 619 |
| 1987-88 | 627 |
| 1988-89 | 733 |
| 1989-90 | 1,217 |
| 1990-91 | 1,762 |
| 1991-92 | 2,609 |
| 1992-93 | 3,226 |

### Civil Service Unions

**Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent meetings he has held with civil service trade unions to discuss industrial relations.

**Mr. Dorrell:** I, and other Treasury Ministers, meet civil service trade unions to discuss a variety of issues, where appropriate. I last met representatives from the civil service trade unions in January to discuss pay.

### Income Tax

**Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the revenue change in a full year at 1993-94 income levels and assuming existing levels of personal allowances of replacing the present rates of income tax with a structure in which *(a)* the first £2,500 incurred tax at 20 per cent., *(b)* £2,500 to £30,000 at 25 per cent., *(c)* £30,000 to £40,000 at 30 per cent., *(d)* £40,000 to £50,000 at 35 per cent., *(e)* £50,000 to £60,000 at 40 per cent., *(f)* £60,000 to £75,000 at 45 per cent., *(g)* £75,000 to £100,000 at 50 per cent. and *(h)* over £100,000 at 60 per cent.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The estimated revenue cost in a full year at 1993-94 income levels from imposition of the specified regime is £420 million. This does not allow for any behavioural effect that might result from such changes to the tax system and does not include capital gains tax.

### Contingencies Fund

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the occasions since 1979 in which use of the contingencies fund has been allowed in connection with expenditure over £200,000 on the establishment of a new statutory body before the relevant legislation has received Royal Assent.

**Mr. Portillo:** It appears from readily available information that there has been one advance from the contingencies fund since 1979 of more than £200,000 in connection with the establishment of a new statutory body before the relevant legislation has received Royal Assent: this was to the Department for Education in March 1993 in respect of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA). The use of the fund was fully consistent with the criteria concerning expenditure on new services set out in "Government Accounting".

### Corporation Tax

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *258*, what was the total turnover, profits and corporation tax liability of the largest 100 United Kingdom companies in each year since 1987 measured in *(a)* current prices and *(b)* 1987 prices.

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* Latest readily available figures covering five years for turnover, profit before tax, and corporation tax liability of the 100 largest United Kingdom companies and company groups, based on turnover in their latest accounts, are as follows:

*At current prices*

£ billion

| | Turnover | Profit before tax[1] | Corporation tax liability[2] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1987 | [3]— | [3]— | 5·2 |
| 1988 | 360 | 34 | 5·2 |
| 1989 | 420 | 41 | 6·2 |
| 1990 | 490 | 36 | 5·8 |
| 1991 | 500 | 32 | 5·4 |
| 1992 | 510 | 30 | [4]— |

*At constant 1987 prices*

£ billion

| | Turnover | Profit before tax[1] | Corporation tax liability[2] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1987 | [3]— | [3]— | 5·2 |
| 1988 | 340 | 33 | 4·9 |
| 1989 | 370 | 37 | 5·5 |
| 1990 | 390 | 29 | 4·7 |
| 1991 | 380 | 25 | 4·1 |
| 1992 | 370 | 22 | [4]— |

[1] Worldwide activity reported in published accounts.
[2] After relief for foreign tax.
[3] Not readily available.
[4] Not yet available.

### Tax Exemptions (Overseas Governments)

**Ms Harman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an estimate of the gain to the Exchequer in each of the years 1991-92 and 1992-93 of tax exemption granted by overseas Governments to the income, profits and gains of the United Kingdom Government and United Kingdom Government bodies arising within the jurisdiction of those overseas Governments.

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 25 June 1993]:* The United Kingdom Government are exempted from tax in all of the jurisdictions in which it invests. The amount of this exemption is of the order of some £300 million per annum.

**Ms Harman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an estimate of the cost to the Exchequer in each of the years 1991-92 and 1992-93 of granting tax exemption to the income, profits and gains of Governments, foreign states and integral bodies of foreign Governments arising in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 25 June 1993]:* Figures are not available of the total amount of tax which is not brought into charge because of sovereign immunity from taxation. However, income tax on investment income repaid on sovereign immunity grounds amounted to approximately £164 million in 1991-92 and £116 million in 1992-93. In addition relief was allowed at source of up to £5 million each year.

### Exchange Gains and Losses

**Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the direct effect on revenue in the years 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 of the introduction of the clauses in chapter II part II of the Finance (No. 2) Bill had they come into effect from 6 April.

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 25 June 1993]:* The Exchequer effects would be highly uncertain and would depend on movements in exchange rates and the location and volume of borrowing.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Government Documents

41. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the work of HMSO and the system of making Government documents available to the general public.

**Mr. David Davis:** In its role of Government publisher, HMSO maintains a distribution network comprising its own retail bookshops in six major cities, some 40 appointed agents throughout the United Kingdom, and a mail order service from its publications centre in London.

### Citizens Charter

42. **Mr. Hargreaves:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to visit Birmingham to discuss citizens charter issues.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I shall be visiting Birmingham on 5 July to take part in the second citizens charter forum. The first forum, one of a series of eight to be held thoroughout the country to discuss local implementation of the charter, was held in Manchester on 21 June and was attended by 230 managers of local public service organisations.

44. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what principal conclusions he has

drawn from experience of the citizens charter programme to date; and how the lessons are being applied for future charters.

**Mr. David Davis:** Implementing charter principles is bringing about real improvements in public services. The principles will continue to be applied to all public services in the future.

## Market Testing

43. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many Departments have introduced market testing of their activities; and what assessment his office has made of the annual savings from this policy.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** In November 1992, I announced that market-testing programmes of 36 departments, covering all the main Departments and most small ones. These programmes, for the period up to September 1993, amount to £1·5 billion, employing 44,000 staff.

I shall report on the results of these programmes after the end of the period; but returns from departments indicate that in previous years savings from market testing have typically been around 25 per cent. of the original cost, even when the activity has remained in-house.

## Public Appointments

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries of allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

**Mr. David Davis** *[holding answer 25 June 1993]:* The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster makes appointments to the following non-departmental public bodies:

The Civil Service Appeal Board; Agricultural and Food Research Council; Economic and Social Research Council; Medical Research Council; Natural Environment Research Council; Science and Engineering Research Council; and the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

The members of the Civil Service Appeal Board are as follows:

Mr. P. Adams, OBE; Mr. A. Bennett, MBE; Mr. M. S. Buckley; Mrs. C. Coltman; Mr. K. Crowley; Miss P. Downs (Chairman); Mr. F. W. Edmunds, BEM; Miss B. Findlay; Mr. M. T. Foulkes; Mr. W. M. Francis, BEM; Mr. J. H. Gracey, CB; Mr. T. W. Hall; Mr. G. Harpin; Mr. R. M. Hastie-Smith, CB; Mr. P. D. Jones (Deputy Chairman); Miss J. Kelley, CB; Mr. R. W. King, BEM; Mr. N. F. Ledsome, CB; Mrs. S. P. Maunsell; Mr. N. E. A. Moore; Mr. R. W. Morgan, MBE; Mrs. M. Morrison, BEM; Mr. J. Nicholson; Mr. P. Palmer; Mr. J. Pennington; Mr. J. Renton, MBE; Mr. K. Richards; Mr. M. Ridout; Mr. J. Roberts, CB; Ms S. Scott-Anderson; Mrs. A. B. Sloman; Mr. A. Smith; Mr. A. Stem; Mr. J. W. Stevens, CB, (Deputy Chairman); Mr. N. Tout, BEM.

The members of the Research Councils are as follows:

*Agricultural and Food Research Council:*
Professor T. L. Blundell (Secretary and Deputy Chairman); Dr. P. J. Bunyan; Mr. C. R. Cann; Professor E. C. D. Cocking; Professor J. R. Coggins; Sir Sam Edwards; Professor W. P. T. James, CBE; Mr. D. F. R. George, OBE; Sir M. Alastair Grant (Chairman); Mr. E. Gill; Professor R. M. Hicks, OBE; Professor G. Horn; Mr. R. Knapman; Professor J. R. Krebs; Professor C. J. Leaver; Dr. T. Little; Mr. K. J. MacKenzie; Professor T. A. Mansfield; Mr. J. L. C. Provan; Mr. G. T. Pryce; Dr. D. W. F. Shannon; Professor W. V. Shaw.

*Economic and Social Research Council:*
Ms J. Abramsky; Dr. D. Anderson; Professor M. Anderson; Professor J. M. Ashworth; Professor J. Beaumount; Professor V. Bruce; Dr. W. Daniel; Mrs. E. J. Filkin; Mr. J. Fox; Mr. N. Glass; Miss C. Hancock; Dr. J. Harbison; Professor D. Hargreaves; Professor A. Hay; Professor H. J. Newby (Chairman); Professor D. Kavanagh; Professor S. J. Nickell; Mr. G. T. Pepper; Mrs. M. Tuck, CBE.

*Medical Research Council:*
Professor I. V. Allen; Professor D. T. Baird; Mr. R. Bauman; Sir Colin Berry; Professor A. M. Breckenridge; Mr. K. C. Calman; Sir Michael Carlisle; Dr. J. T. Carter; Dr. P. Doyle; Professor C. R. W. Edwards; Professor J. G. Evans; Dr. R. E. Kendall; Sir Aaron Klug; Miss E. Nicholson, MP; Professor J. R. Pattison; Professor M. Peckham; Sir David Plastow (Chairman); Sir Dai Rees (Deputy Chairman and Secretary); Professor Sir Michael Rutter; Professor Sir David Weatherall.

*Natural Environment Research Council:*
Professor J. R. L Allen; Dr. P. J. Bunyan; Professor W. Chaloner; Lord Chorley; Professor C. D. Curtis; Dr. D. J. Fisk; Dr. I. Graham-Bryce; Professor M. P. Hassell; Professor B. J. Hoskins; Professor J. Knill (Chairman); Professor P. S. Liss; Dr. R. Jan Pentreath; Professor D. A. Ritchie; Mr. D. G. M. Roberts; Dr. G. W. Robinson; Dr. O Rogne; Professor J. I. Sprent; Professor S. A. Thorpe; Professor D. S. Wood.

*Science and Engineering Research Council:*
Professor Philip Burke; Mr. D. Davis; Professor S. Donnachie; Sir Gerard Fairtlough CBE; Dr. K. Gray CBE; Professor R. Hester; Dr. G. Higginson; Dr. S. Iverson; Dr. A. Ledwith; Professor S. Mason; Sir R. Oxburgh KBE; Sir Mark Richmond (Chairman); Dr. G. W. Robinson; Professor J. Stuart; Professor J. Thomas; Professor D. Wallace; Professor Arnold Wolfendale; Professor R. E. Smallman CBE; Mr. J. Spiers.

*Advisory Board for the Research Councils:*
Professor Sir Eric Ash CBE; Professor T. L. Blundell; Professor D. A. Currie; Dr. A. Ganguly; Professor R. L. Gardner; Professor M. Hart; Professor J. L. Knill; Professor H. J. Newby; Sir David Phillips; Sir Dai Rees; Sir Mark Richmond; Professor I. A. Shanks.

It is not our practice to provide details about occupations and current employers. Such information is a personal matter for individual members. However, when making appointments, my right hon. Friend follows the standard guidance that a part-time member of a public board should not hold any outside appointments which would be incompatible with devoting due time and attention to public duties. Risk of conflict between a member's private interests and the requirements of the public service are required to be minimised and seen to be so.

Members of the Civil Service Appeal Board are appointed on the basis of their past experience of civil service personnel matters. The daily fee changed on 1 April 1993 to £221 for the chairman and £113 for others.

Members of the research councils are appointed on the basis of their expertise and experience in the field to which the research council relates. The current position regarding the remuneration of members of the research councils is as follows:

*Agricultural and food research council*
Chairman: £12,270
Deputy: £67,482
Members: £4,600

*Economic and social research council*
Chairman: £62,504
Members: £4,600

*Medical research council*
Chairman: £6,140
Deputy: £98,328
Members: £4,600

*Natural environment research council*
Chairman: £64,787
Members: £4,600

*Science and engineering research council*
Chairman: £82,925
Members: £4,600-£6,140

*Advisory board for the research councils*
Chairman: £69,470
Members: £4,600

## DEFENCE

### Gulf War (Illness)

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what complaints his Department has received from service men who participated in Operation Granby in the Gulf in 1991 in regard to illness arising from exposure to *(a)* toxic chemicals from oil well fires and oil slicks and *(b)* uranium inhaled or ingested from uranium tipped shells fired in battle.

**Mr. Hanley:** No complaints of this nature have been reported by unit medical officers. Additionally, the armed forces medical services are not aware of any incidence of illness among service personnel, which could be attributed to either oil-well fires and oil slicks, or the inhalation or ingestion of depleted uranium from uranium tipped shells fired in battle.

### Deregulation

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution his Department is making towards the Government's deregulation initiative; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Aitken:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 18 May 1993 at column *148*.

### Countryside Stewardship Scheme

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many hectares are currently under agreement with the countryside stewardship scheme; how many hectares involve additional payments for public access in *(a)* England and *(b)* each county; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** None of my Department's land is currently entered in the countryside stewardship scheme.

### Land Training

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he is making into the needs of land for training by the armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** Work is in hand to assess the Army's training needs which will enable us to establish whether there is sufficient training land to meet their requirements. We do, of course, keep the size of the defence estate under continual review to ensure that it is no larger than is essential for military purposes.

### Nimrod (RAF St. Mawgan)

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to change the role of RAF St. Mawgan in acting as the operating base for Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** There are no such plans.

### Joint Maritime Communications Centre

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the *(a)* construction costs and *(b)* operation costs of the Joint Maritime Communications Centre at St. Mawgan for (i) 1991-92, (ii) 1992-93, (iii) 1993-94, (iv) 1994-95 and (v) 1995-96; what proportion of these costs are paid for the United States and United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** The construction costs for the Joint Maritime Communications Centre at St Mawgan are:

| *Years* | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| 1991-92 | 4·1 |
| 1992-93 | 22·0 |
| 1993-94 | 35·7 |
| 1994-95 | 14·0 |
| 1995-96 | 1·9 |

Total operational costs have not yet been fully defined. The division of overall costs is the subject of a confidential arrangement between the two Governments.

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the construction of the Joint Maritime Communications Centre to be completed; when he expects it to be operational; what changes have been made to its functions; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** Construction of the Joint Maritime Communications Centre is scheduled for completion on 30 September 1994. Equipment installation will follow and the system is expected to be operational during April 1995. There have been no changes to its function.

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations he has had with local authorities and other statutory bodies concerned about the development of the Joint Maritime Communications Centre at RAF St. Mawgan; what arrangements have been made to conduct an environmental impact assessment of the development; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** A notice of proposed development (NOPD) relating to the development of the Joint Maritime Communications Centre at RAF St. Mawgan was submitted to the local planning authority, borough of Restormel, on 8 February 1991. The NOPD was supported by an independent environmental impact assessment commissioned by my Department. Following a period of consultation with other statutory bodies and interested parties, the proposal was considered by the borough of Restormel on 26 March 1991 when no objections were raised.

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the arrangements with the United States Government concerning the use and staffing of the Joint Maritime Communications Centre based at RAF St. Mawgan.

**Mr. Hanley:** My predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) explained in an answer to the then Member for Cornwall, North (Sir Gerry Neale) on 25 July 1990—*Official Report*, columns *301-2*—that RAF Mawgan is a main operating base for Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft and that in addition my Department was planning to develop a joint maritime communications centre (JMCC) in co-operation with the United States. The unit will provide an important link between United Kingdom and United States maritime forces and headquarters.

As my right hon. Friend further explained the JMCC comprises a buried, hardened communications building approximately 70 m square within the existing perimeter of RAF St. Mawgan. It will be integrated with the existing RAF fixed communications system and will include two additional satellite ground terminals each approximately 3 m in diameter, also sited within the station boundary. It has been agreed with the United States that the United Kingdom will finance and construct the JMCC building and that the United States will provide the operational equipment. Once fully operational some 400 personnel will be associated with the JMCC including both operational and support staff. Approximately half of the operational staff will be provided by the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force and the remainder will be from the United States Navy.

Since my right hon. Friend's answer, planning permission has been obtained and work on the construction commenced in 1991. It is expected that the JMCC will become operational in 1995.

### Sites of Special Scientific Interest

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many sites of special scientific interest are located on land owned or leased by his Ministry in each region of England, Scotland and Wales; if he will give the hectarage in each case; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** The total number of sites of special scientific interest—SSSIs—on land owned or leased by the Ministry of Defence is 224, broken down as 171 in England, 37 in Scotland and 16 in Wales. This includes SSSIs owned by Territorial Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserve Associations. Some of the larger SSSIs are owned by more than one organisation. Furthermore, the status and boundaries of SSSIs are constantly changing, as is the size of the defence estate. For these reasons the hectarage of the SSSIs on land owned or leased by my Department could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Lumsden Road Estate, Portsmouth

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *651*, what was the percentage difference in value between the successful bid submitted by European Developments and the bid submitted by Swaythling and Portsmouth housing associations.

**Mr. Hanley:** This information is commercial-in-confidence.

### Swan Hunter (Type 23)

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his time scale for the decisions as to whether Swan Hunter Shipbuilders will be allowed to complete the contract on the type 23 frigates.

**Mr. Aitken:** This depends on the outcome of negotiations with the receiver, but I hope a decision will be possible shortly.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Foodstuffs in Store

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the type and quantity of foodstuffs stored by the European Economic Community in each of the member states as of 1 June.

**Mr. Jack:** A table showing current levels of all produce held in intervention within the European Community is deposited in the Library of the House at monthly intervals, most recently on 7 June. Figures for individual member states are not available.

### Intervention Stocks

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what quantity of intervention stocks by commodity is held in England; and what the figures were *(a)* 12 months ago, *(b)* 24 months ago, *(c)* 36 months ago and *(d)* 48 months ago;

(2) what quantity of intervention stocks, by commodity, is held in Northern Ireland; and what the figures were *(a)* 12 months ago, *(b)* 24 months ago *(c)* 36 months ago and *(d)* 48 months ago;

(3) what quantity of intervention stocks, by commodity, is held in Scotland; and what the figures were *(a)* 12 months ago, *(b)* 24 months ago, *(c)* 36 months ago and *(d)* 48 months ago;

(4) what quantity of intervention stocks, by commodity, is held in Wales; and what the figures were *(a)* 12 months ago, *(b)* 24 months ago, *(c)* 36 months ago and *(d)* 48 months ago.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** Responsibility for this matter is delegated to the Intervention Board Executive Agency and I have asked the chief executive to reply to the hon. Gentleman direct.

*Letter from Guy Stapleton to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 June 1993:*

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your written Parliamentary Question (1836) tabled for answer on 25 June 1993:—

"To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what quantity of intervention stocks by commodity is held in England; and what the figures were *(a)* 12 months ago, *(b)* 24 months ago, *(c)* 36 months ago and *(d)* 48 months ago".

I have been asked to answer the questions which you tabled in respect of stocks held in Scotland (1854), Wales (1855) and Northern Ireland (1853) over the same time periods.

The information is set out in the attached table. Current stocks are shown at 31 March 1993 and in earlier years, for all commodities except beef, at 30 June. Earlier year figures for beef are at 31 December, the only date which they are

available, because at the other times of the year they are collated only by intervention regions, Great Britain and Northern Ireland. You should be aware that intervention stocks are not always stored in the area in which they are produced.

I am sending a copy of this letter, together with a copy of the table to the House of Commons Library and the Public Information Office.

*Intervention Stocks in the United Kingdom*

*tonnes*

| *Country and* [1] *Year* | *Commodity* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Wheat* | *Barley* | *Rye* | *Butter* | *Skimmed Milk Powder* | *Beef* |
| *England* | | | | | | |
| 1993 | 66,707 | 896,150 | 517 | 7,246 | 480 | 91,345 |
| 1992 | 12,367 | 409,476 | 324 | 12,755 | 1,920 | 93,956 |
| 1991 | 12,562 | 346,034 | 131 | 25,922 | 5,850 | 83,463 |
| 1990 | 34,337 | 271,021 | — | 12,639 | 40 | 32,026 |
| 1989 | 209,287 | 297,707 | — | 7,698 | — | 1,081 |
| *Scotland* | | | | | | |
| 1993 | 43,281 | 448,581 | — | — | — | 11,286 |
| 1992 | — | 351,379 | — | — | — | 10,518 |
| 1991 | — | 329,046 | — | — | — | 9,017 |
| 1990 | — | 301,741 | — | — | — | 4,991 |
| 1989 | — | 318,033 | — | 10 | — | 292 |
| *Wales* | | | | | | |
| 1993 | — | — | — | 574 | — | 1,976 |
| 1992 | — | — | — | 859 | — | 1,934 |
| 1991 | — | — | — | 2,499 | — | 123 |
| 1990 | — | — | — | 1,628 | — | 145 |
| 1989 | — | — | — | 2,355 | — | 23 |
| *Northern Ireland* | | | | | | |
| 1993 | — | — | — | 3,208 | 865 | 60,535 |
| 1992 | — | — | — | 2,893 | 865 | 61,117 |
| 1991 | — | — | — | 8,716 | 3,745 | 51,767 |
| 1990 | — | — | — | 4,514 | 1,080 | 40,646 |
| 1989 | — | — | — | 2,153 | — | 7,334 |

[1] End May 1993 and end June for other years except for beef which is end December.

## Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Mr. Jack:** It is the Department's general policy to give preference to the use of renewable natural resources, subject only to value for money and practical considerations. Non-renewable natural resources are used with care and economy when the use of natural renewable resources is not possible.

With regard to the specific items listed, the Ministry:

(a) currently purchases recycled paper and paper products, provided they are fit for the purpose;
(b) has already converted many of its sites to low energy or reflector-lights as part of an ongoing energy efficiency programme;
(c) aims to purchase and use hardwoods which are from renewable sources only;
(d) uses peat alternatives wherever possible, the sole exception being for experimental purposes where peat is a comparative treatment;
(e) has a policy of purchasing cars fitted with catalytic converters.

## Somerset Levels

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the current and future organisation and responsibility for flood prevention on the Somerset Levels.

**Mr. Jack:** Under the Water Resources Act 1991, the National Rivers Authority exercises a general supervision over all matters relating to flood defence in England and Wales and is empowered to carry out works on designated main rivers. It discharges its flood defence functions through regional and, in some areas, local flood defence committees. In the case of the Somerset Levels, the relevant committees are the Wessex Regional Flood Defence Committee and the Somerset Local Flood Defence Committee.

Under the Land Drainage Act 1991 internal drainage boards are empowered to carry out flood defence works in designated districts of special drainage need, while local authorities are empowered to carry out works outside these districts on watercourses which are not designated main rivers. There are 20 internal drainage districts in Somerset.

The Government have announced that the NRA's functions, including flood defence, are to form part of the proposed environment agency. The Government have no plans for other changes to flood defence responsibilities at the present itme. Under current legislation it is open to the NRA to make proposals to Ministers affecting the structure of regional and local flood defence committees and internal drainage districts but at present there are no such NRA proposals affecting the Somerset Levels.

## Organophosphorous Sheep Dip

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 1 April to the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) *Official*

*Report*, column *330*, what further papers and evidence on organophosphorous sheep dips have been received and considered by her Department and its advisory bodies; and what conclusions have been drawn.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** A number of representations on the question of organophosphorus sheep dips have been received. These include a report from Friends of the Earth, which is being sent to members of the independent Veterinary Products Committee for consideration as part of its current review of these sheep dip products. The committee has already indicated that it wishes to conclude the review at its October meeting on the basis of the further data currently being generated. I look forward to receiving its advice on the future licensing of these products, which I will wish to consider carefully before announcing my decision.

## Fisheries Council

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Fisheries Council held in Luxembourg on 24 June.

**Mr. Jack:** I represented the United Kingdom at the Council of EC Fisheries Ministers on 24 and 25 June, together with My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland.

The main decision taken at this meeting was on an improved system of control and enforcement of the common fisheries policy. I was determined to encourage the development of a Community-wide control regime that would address British fishing industry concerns to ensure that the control of the CFP was being undertaken uniformly and rigorously across the Community. This measure will open the way to greater transparency of control measures and give the industry more access to information on how the enforcement of the CFP is being managed throughout the Community.

The regulation will require member states to have monitoring and control systems for ensuring compliance with quota, conservation, structural and market measures. It will give greater powers to the Commission to supervise member states' application of the rules through their own inspectorates, and remove the previous bar on unannounced visits by Commission inspectors. Member states will be obliged to demonstrate that they have systems for penalising those found to be in breach of the rules. There is provision for future decisions to be taken on the introduction of continuous monitoring systems, including satellite surveillance, for fishing vessels. The regulation will come into force on 1 January 1994. While welcoming these developments, I made my agreement subject to seeing the text of the regulation, which is now being finalised for early adoption.

The Commission is required to make proposals, for decision by the Council before the end of 1993, on the application of the Act of Accession of Spain and Portugal. The Council considered a report on the way the rules applying to Spain and Portugal have functioned to date. I set out forcefully the interests of Britain's fishermen in this matter and secured agreement that the Commission would make its proposals in a way which fully respects the reform of the CFP agreed last December, the improved Community control system approved at the present Council, and the principle of relative stability. The Council agreed that any increase in fishing effort must be avoided.

The Council debated the present situation in the Community market for fishery products. The Commission and a majority of member states argued that the weakness of the market necessitated retention of the minimum import price and safeguard mechanisms which have been in force since February. I pointed out that the fundamental problem was one of over supply, and called for fuller analysis. The Commission will now provide a report for the next meeting of the Council in October. Meanwhile the Council decided that the current arrangements to protect the market should be kept in place until October.

The Council discussed proposed fishing agreements with Canada and Argentina and the possibility of negotiating an agreement with the Russian Federation. it was not possible at this Council to reach final agreement on any of these matters.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of those who have applied for disability living allowance and who have undergone medical examinations are awarded disability living allowance.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Michael Bichard to Mrs. Anne Campbell, dated 25 June 1993.*

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what percentage of those who have applied for disability living allowance and who have undergone medical examinations are awarded disability living allowance.

From 1 February 1992 to 31 May 1993 a total of 115,783 Disability Living Allowance (DLA) customers underwent medical examinations. Of these some 68,561 (59%) subsequently received DLA.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Mr. Burt:** The Department of Social Security's policy on the purchase and use of these items are as follows:

*(a) Recycled Paper*

We already use a considerable quantity of recycled material and items made from recycled paper. As a matter of policy we already use recycled products where all of the factors including cost are equal.

*(b) Low Energy Lightbulbs*

We actively encourage the use of low energy lighting in the Department's buildings. When buildings are being refurbished or lighting is being replaced the provision of high frequency low energy fluorescent lighting is always considered.

*(c) Tropical Hardwoods*

The Department has deliberately phased out the use of topical hardwoods in its furniture.

*(d) Peat*

Peat is purchased for use in the gardens at two buildings managed by the resettlement unit. Peat is not purchased for fuel by the Department.

*(e) Cars with Catalytic Converters*

Since January 1991, the Department has only acquired diesel vehicles or cars propelled by petrol and fitted with catalytic converters. Over 80 per cent. of the petrol cars in the current fleet have catalytic converters fitted.

### Invalidity Benefit

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions he has had with the BMA concerning possible changes to the rules governing eligibility for invalidity benefit.

**Mr. Scott:** No discussions have taken place. We will consult fully on proposals for changing invalidity benefit if and when such proposals are developed.

**Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in receipt of invalidity benefit prior to April 1992 have since been disqualified on medical grounds.

**Mr. Scott:** The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consultation with clients and social services is undertaken before any invalidity payment is stopped.

**Mr. Scott:** Decisions about entitlement to benefit are made by independent adjudication officers. It is for them to decide what consultation may be necessary in reaching a decision.

### National Insurance

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress has been made by his department working party to date on consideration of differences in tax and national insurance definitions of earnings and expenses.

**Mr. Hague:** The working group has already met four times and has a programme of weekly meetings through the summer. I look forward to receiving its report at the end of September.

### Quarry House

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many civil servants from his Department have been transferred from London to the Benefits Agency headquarters at Leeds.

**Mr. Hague:** A total of 324 civil servants have moved from London to the Benefits Agency headquarters at Leeds.

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the total number of people provided with relocation expenses in connection with the move to Quarry house.

**Mr. Hague:** A total of 513 staff have been given help with relocation expenses as a result of moving home to the Leeds area to take up posts in Quarry house.

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library *(a)* a copy of the contract and budget for Quarry house between his Department and Norwest Holst and *(b)* copies of the original and final costings of Quarry house.

**Mr. Hague:** It is not possible to place a copy of the Norwest Holst contract and budget for Quarry house in the Library as the document is classified as being commercial-in-confidence.

Following the signing of the contract with Norwest Holst it was estimated that it would cost the Department £57·3 million to build Quarry house but it will actually cost in the region of £55·5 million.

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the estimated costs for the relocation expenses of his Department's move to Quarry house.

**Mr. Hague:** The move to Quarry house will cost approximately £12,900,000 in relocation expenses.

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much was spent in the construction and decoration of Quarry house in Leeds on *(a)* the heated swimming pool, *(b)* squash courts, *(c)* sports hall and gym and *(d)* hand-woven carpets.

**Mr. Hague:** These costs are included within the main building contract for Quarry house. It is not therefore possible to provide a precise figure.

A hand-woven carpet, costing £14,410 excluding VAT, has been laid on a section of the ground floor of Quarry house as part of the Quarry house project's contribution to the "Percent For Art" initiative.

### Medical Assessments

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ensure that medical assessments at DSS instigation are made accessible to the client.

**Mr. Scott:** Copies are made available to the claimant on request and are always included in the papers sent to the claimant if there is an appeal.

### Benefits (Voluntary Assistants)

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has had from charitable bodies in respect of disqualification of voluntary assistants from unemployment, sickness and invalidity benefit.

**Mr. Scott:** We have received a number of written representations from charitable and other bodies representing voluntary workers. In addition, on 24 November last year my noble friend the Lord Henley met representatives of the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux and the Volunteer Centre UK when their concerns were discussed. On 28 April, I announced proposals to extend from 24 to 48 hours, the period during which people registered as unemployed are allowed to rearrange their voluntary activities should a job opportunity arise.

## ENVIRONMENT

### THORP

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the report submitted towards the end of 1992 by the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee on waste issues arising out of the proposed thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to his answer of 7 June *Official Report*, column *108*, when he expects to reply to the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee's proposals on nuclear waste management from reprocessing at Sellafield;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, column *769*, if he will publish the letter sent to him in October by the chairman of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee about radioactive waste arising from the reprocessing of foreign spent nuclear fuel at Sellafield.

**Mr. Yeo:** Since 1976, contracts by British Nuclear Fuels plc—BNFL—to reprocess overseas spent fuel have contained return of waste options. In 1986, the Government confirmed that it was their intention that the options should be exercised and waste returned. However, they indicated that the option of substituting an equivalent quantity, in radiological terms, of more highly radioactive wastes in place of wastes of lower radioactivity was worthy of study.

British Nuclear Fuels plc has made proposals to implement the waste return options. These involve returning to each customer their allocation of vitrified high-level waste arisings, plus an additional quantity of vitrified HLW radiologically equivalent to the arisings of intermediate and low-level wastes which would be retained in the United Kingdom. British Nuclear Fuels plc has also made clear that its plans to operate the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield are not dependent on these proposals for substitution being agreed; nor would it wish to proceed with substitution if there were environmental detriment to the United Kingdom.

The Government consider it important that the basis on which substitution might proceed is sound. Accordingly, the views of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee were sought on the technical basis of BNFL's proposals, and in particular on their likely radiological and environmental impact for the United Kingdom.

The committee has produced a first report on substitution, and I am placing a copy in the Library. However, there remain a number of technical points on which we require further information before the Government can draw any conclusions and the committee will be asked to carry out further work and submit further advice. The technical advice of the Committee will be taken into account by the Government in deciding whether BNFL should be allowed to proceed with waste substitution.

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he made of the corporate plan of BNFL in considering the authorisation of radioactive discharge from THORP.

**Mr. Yeo:** None.

### Sewage Sludge Incinerators

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sewage sludge incinerators have been approved for construction; and what proportion of the funding of these incinerators will be borne by *(a)* the Exchequer and *(b)* the water companies.

**Mr. Baldry:** The construction of sewage sludge incinerators is not approved centrally. However, I understand from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution that 11 applications from water companies for authorisation of sewage sludge incinerators under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 have been, or are being, considered for approval.

None of the funding of any of these incinerators is borne by the Exchequer.

### Litter

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what current steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities keep the streets free from litter.

**Mr. Yeo:** A cleanliness survey carried out by the Tidy Britain Group last year, to measure the impact of the litter control measures introduced in the Environmental Protection Act 1990, showed an average 13 per cent. improvement in cleanliness in the sites surveyed. Most local authorities and other public bodies have responded positively to these new powers and duties with evident improvements to the local environment.

However, there are still too many places with serious litter problems and much work still needs to be done. We are committed to reviewing the operation of the litter provisions of the Environmental Protection Act and as part of this process my Department has recently announced its intention to reconvene the litter code of practice advisory group to examine proposals for improvements in this area.

### Packaging

**Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to encourage a nationwide system for used packaging to be taken back by industry for reprocessing.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Government take the view that companies involved in placing packaging on the market should take a share of the responsibility for dealing with it after it has served its original purpose. We have therefore been conducting intensive discussions with a range of industries on how they might contribute to improved recycling rates. We are still considering how best to achieve this.

### Ministerial Correspondence

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the basis for the forecast in part 3 of the report of the private office directorate in his departmental report MINIS 14, that in 1992-93 it is expected ministerial correspondence will reduce from 35,000 to 30,000; and what assessment he has made of the reasons for his Department's failure to meet its target to reply to 65 per cent. of letters within three weeks of receipt.

**Mr. Gummer:** The forecast fall in correspondence was for the calendar year 1992 in comparison with 1991 and was expected mainly as a result of the calling of a general election, which normally significantly reduces the period during which hon. Members forward correspondence to departmental Ministers. The final correspondence total for 1992 was just over 29,500.

The target of 65 per cent. reply within three weeks was an ambitious one as it represented a 20 per cent. improvement on 1991. In the event some 56 per cent. of my Department's Ministers' correspondence with hon. Members in 1992 was answered within three weeks of receipt. This represents an improvement of 4 per cent. over 1991, and I remain determined to continue progress towards the target of 65 per cent. in future years.

### Natural Resource Accounting

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on work carried out by his Department in preparing its report on natural resource accounting.

**Mr. Yeo:** My Department are not preparing any such report.

### Environmental Evaluation

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been achieved in his review of the application of the guide to the use of economic instruments and the reform of the system for environmental evaluation across Government Departments.

**Mr. Baldry:** We are still preparing our guide to the use of economic instruments, and hope to publish it soon. We issued our guide to environmental appraisal at the end of 1991, and are currently looking at its effectiveness.

### Council Tax

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in which European languages his Department's booklet on the council tax is available; and what consideration was given to making it available in further such languages.

**Mr. Tony Baldry:** The information leaflets about the council tax produced by my Department are published in three European languages other than English—Welsh, Greek and Turkish—and nine other languages.

My Department's main aim in producing these leaflets has been to make the council tax easily understood. The final choice of languages was made in the light of consultation with the Central Office of Information.

### Waste Management Papers

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the reasons for the postponement of publication of revisions of waste management papers.

**Mr. Yeo:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) to my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) on 29 April at column *470*. The delay to the regulations under part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 has meant the postponement of a revised edition of waste management paper No. 4 which will give advice on licensing of waste management facilities under the Act and the postponement of waste management paper No. 26A which will give advice related to section 39 of the Act.

### Water Metering

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the results of the national water metering trials.

**Mr. Yeo:** Two interim reports covering the installation phase of the national water metering trials were published by the water industry in 1989 and 1990. A final report covering other aspects of the trials will be published by the industry shortly. Copies will be placed in the Library.

### Architects

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the responses he has received to *(a)* the consultation paper on the issues paper of the review of the Architects (Registration) Acts 1931-1969 and *(b)* the Warne report; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir George Young:** The responses to the issues paper for the review of the Acts are available for inspection by appointment in the library of my Department. We have received many comments on the Warne report, but it is for those making the comments to decide whether to publish. I also refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) on 2 February, at column *89*.

### Homeless People (Lincoln's Inn Fields)

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people sleeping out were removed from Lincoln's Inn Fields in March; how many of these people have been found *(a)* hostel accommodation and *(b)* permanent accommodation; how many are still living in their allocated accommodation; and how many are receiving follow-up support.

**Sir George Young:** In November 1992, as a part of independent research into the Government's £96 million rough sleepers initiative—RSI—a count was made of people sleeping rough in central London. Around 100 people were found sleeping in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The Department provided almost £100,000 under the RSI to fund a team of outreach and resettlement workers to assess the housing and care needs of people sleeping rough in the fields, and to ensure so far as was possible that both were met. The Department also provided funding for extra hostel places, to help people sleeping rough in the fields to have the greatest chance of starting a new life away from the streets.

The outreach and resettlement team contacted all those known to sleep in the fields and all were offered accommodation. They rehoused 91 people before the fields were fenced off by the London borough of Camden in March this year. Of those 91 people, 37 are currently in hostel or other temporary accommodation; 34 are in permanent housing, provided either by LB Camden or through the RSI; and 20 people have voluntarily left their accommodation, of whom eight are known to have returned to the streets. Resettlement support is availabe to all people who, in the opinion of the resettlement team, require it.

### Sellafield

**Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received the inspector's report following public consultation on the draft revised authorisations for the Sellafield site; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** I received the inspectorates' report on 21 May. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I have been giving careful consideration to the report.

The inspectorates, in discharging their responsibilities under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, have addressed in their report the issues raised during the consultation process which relate to the environmental acceptability of radioactive discharges from the Sellafield site. Having carefully considered all the comments made by the respondents to this consultation, the inspectorates have concluded that no points of substance have been raised that should cause them to reconsider the terms of the draft authorisations, save for some minor amendments/corrections. In their judgment, the provisions of the draft authorisations would effectively protect human health, the safety of the food chain, and the environment generally.

However a substantial number of the responses raised questions as to the justification for the operation of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant—THORP—and therefore whether that part of the site's total discharges arising from this plant should be allowed. Other respondents expressed their support for THORP. These questions were not dealt with by the inspectorates because of the wider issues raised.

In these circumstances, my right hon. Friend and I propose that there should be a further round of consultation in which these questions can be considered. My officials are writing to British Nuclear Fuels plc seeking further information. I shall make their reply available for public comment, together with other material. My right hon. Friend and I do not propose to take final decisions on the exercise of our functions under the Act until after this further consultation.

### Carbon Dioxide Conference

**Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the report of the carbon dioxide conference held at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre on 7 May.

**Mr. Yeo:** I have today placed copies of the report in the Library.

### Public Appointments

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

**Mr. Gummer** *[holding answer 25 June 1993]:* No central record is maintained of all the names, or of the occupations and current employers of members currently holding positions in the public bodies for which I am responsible.

Appointments are to a wide range of bodies and widely different qualities and experience may be required for different tasks. Some appointments call for relevant experience or expert knowledge of a specific subject or sector. Others require no particular specialist knowledge or experience. Interests, location and time commitments may also be relevant.

Information on salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992" has yet to be collated by my Department and could be provided now only at disproportionate cost.

### PA Management Consultants

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the projects undertaken by PA Management Consultants for his Department in the last three years.

**Mr. Gummer** *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* The consultancy contracts awarded by my Department to PA Management Consultants over the last three years are as follows:

*List of projects undertaken by PA management consultants for the DOE in the last three years*

Provision of PSA (IT) Projects Board director
Systems development for the PSA IT operational system (CONQUEST)
IT support for the PSA PROMIS 1 and 2 systems
Support in developing PSA Projects' marketing function and to marketing unit pre-sale
PSA—IT and marketing support
Performance of firms in rural areas
Improving links between MINIS, line management systems and job descriptions
Recruitment of inspectors for the Pollution Inspectorate
Pollution control for pesticide production processes
Microbiological treatment of low level waste
Project management support to the RIMNET national radiological and nuclear emergency response system
Extension of contract competitive tendering in local government
Computerising the assessment of future need for subsidised housing
Future needs for subsidised housing
High technology factory case study
Environmental management systems and the Building Research Establishment assessment method
Scientific staff recruitment in the Building Research Establishment
A review of computer security in the Building Research Establishment
Recruitment of casual statisticians
Studies of dishwashers and washing machines to provide information required to establish ECO-labelling criteria
Treatment of programme expenditure in departmental resource accounts

## SCOTLAND

### Timex

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what dates discussions were held between Timex and his Department with regard to the future of the plant in Dundee; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Stewart:** There were numerous contacts in recent months between the Department and Timex management both here and in the United States of America, the latest of which was on the eve of the company's announcement on 15 June 1993 that its Dundee operation was to close.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial assistance was *(a)* sought and *(b)* offered to Timex in recent discussions on the future of the plant in Dundee; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Stewart:** I can confirm that the recent discussions between the Department and senior Timex management covered the scope which might have existed to assist in the continued development of the Dundee plant, had the company decided to retain its operation there. These discussions were wide-ranging, but as is the case with all such contacts with companies, subject to the constraints of commercial confidentiality.

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Mr. Lang:** The Scottish Office currently uses recycled paper for headed notepaper, office notices, envelopes and high-volume litho work. My staff monitor progress by manufacturers in this field and seek to extend the use of recycled paper when practicable. Low-energy light bulbs are used whenever that is feasible, and new energy-efficient fittings are installed as resources permit. Contracts for furniture and fittings specify that only woods from sustainable forests may be used in their manufacture. My Department does not purchase or use peat. Our policy is to replace petrol-burning engines with diesel across the full range of transport operations. All new vehicles are ordered with diesel engines wherever possible. Remaining petrol units operate on unleaded fuel and have catalytic converters fitted as standard equipment.

### Woodlands

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assistance he is giving to develop the second wood of Caledon; and if he will make a statement on progress to date.

**Sir Hector Monro:** *[holding answer 18 June 1993:]* Special grants are available under the Forestry Commission's woodland grant scheme to encourage the creation of new native pinewoods and the regeneration and management of existing ones. Some 4,200 hectares of native pinewoods have been established under the scheme since 1989.

The Forestry Commission also has a programme to restore and extend native pinewoods on its own estate. By the end of the decade it aims to have protected the 3,000 hectares of existing native pinewoods and extended them by creating regeneration zones of a further 3,000 hectares.

A Caledonian pinewood register is being compiled by the commission. When completed at the end of the year this will record details of all genetically sustainable pinewoods recognised as genuinely native and will provide the basis for future conservation work. Other recent developments by the commission in this area include the setting up of a native woodlands advisory panel to advise on ways of stimulating and encouraging initiatives intended to promote the establishment and management of native woodlands in the Highlands; the appointment of two full-time advisers on native woodland silviculture; and the launch of a Highland birchwoods initiative to restore and extend the birchwoods and to promote their sustainable management for timber production and conservation.

### Forestry Commission

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are directly employed by the Forestry Commission in each region and in total.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* The Forestry Commission does not maintain records of its staff numbers by local authority regions, and this information

could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The commission directly employs 2,095 staff in Scotland, of whom 364 work in its headquarters office in Edinburgh.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current value of the assets of the Forestry Commission.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* The latest valuation of the Forestry Commission's assets, as published in its annual report for the year ended 31 March 1992, was £2,949·5 million.

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the accounted value of the assets of the Forestry Commission; and what advice he has received as to the current price obtainable on the market for these assets.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 23 June 1993]:* The latest valuation of the Forestry Commission's assets, as published in its annual report for the year ended 31 March 1992, was £2,949·5 million. This included plantations—£2,787·9 million—and other assets—net value £161·6 million. The value of the plantations was calculated from the expected future value of the wood production at the time of felling, less the management costs, discounted at the commission's target rate of return of 3 per cent. The market value of the plantations was estimated to be £1,700 million.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the various objections which can prevent public access to land sold by the Forestry Commission under the arrangements made in October 1991.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* The arrangements under which the Forestry Commission offers to enter into access agreements with local authorities in respect of woodlands to be sold cannot apply in the following circumstances:

sales arising from the exercise of reserved powers in the commission's title, such as a landlord's right to resume possession of a leased area;
sales to former owners under the Government's offer-back (Crichel Down) procedures;
sales for public purposes such as highway improvements;
sales involving a change in land use for which planning permission has been granted; and
boundary adjustments which have no impact on public access.

Some Forestry Commission woodlands are also subject to rights and interests held by third parties which could affect public access. In such cases, the completion of an access agreement with the local authority would be subject to the third party's acceptance. In addition, where the title to a woodland being sold contains reserved rights—to the working of minerals, for example—any agreement would be made subject to the exercise of those rights.

## Drugs and Alcohol

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many health education professionals are advising on drugs and alcohol who are in touch with Scottish schools *(a)* currently and *(b)* for each year since 1988.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* The information requested is not held centrally.

## Forestry

**Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed in forestry and forest nursery woodlands activities in each year between 1987-88 and 1991-92 in the United Kingdom.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* The estimated numbers of people employed in forestry in Great Britain are as follows. These include people working for the Forestry Commission, private estates, forest management companies, harvesting companies, forest nurseries and wood processing companies. Employment in Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

| *Year ended 31 March* | *Full-time equivalent numbers* |
|---|---|
| 1988 | 39,850 |
| 1989 | 41,055 |
| 1990 | 40,245 |
| 1991 | 42,213 |
| 1992 | 42,040 |

## Assisted Areas

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many meetings he had with the European Commission prior to the submission of the assisted areas map on 15 June; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 23 June 1993]:* My officials, in concert with officials from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Welsh Office, held informal meetings with the European Commission prior to the submission being sent.

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the criteria submitted by his Department to the European Commission in connection with the submission of the assisted areas map to the European Commission on 15 June; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 23 June 1993]:* In order not to prejudice negotiation with the European Commission no information on the proposed assisted areas map will be released until approval has been received.

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he had with regional and district councils prior to the submission of the assisted areas map to the European Commission on 15 June; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 23 June 1993]:* Discussions took place with a number of local authorities about the review of the assisted areas map. I had meetings specifically to discuss the review with delegations from Central region—including representatives from Central regional council, Clackmannan district council, Falkirk district council and Stirling district council—East Lothian district council and Midlothian district council. The views expressed at these meetings were noted and together with the written responses to our consultation paper, were taken fully into account in the review.

### Non-departmental Organisations

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the operating costs for non-departmental bodies in Scotland individually and cumulatively for each year since 1978.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* Information is not centrally available in the precise form requested. However details of staff numbers employed by each executive non-departmental public body are published annually in "Public Bodies" copies of which are available in the Library. This publication also contains the total expenditure of each executive non-departmental public body; and details of numbers and remuneration of the chairman, deputy chairman and members of each non-departmental public body. Most such bodies also publish annual reports and accounts, again available in the Library.

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce new mechanisms within the Scottish Office to ensure that non-departmental public bodies in Scotland are properly financially accountable, in terms both of their operating costs and their expenditure.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* The arrangements for ensuring the financial accountability of non-departmental public bodies and that they comply with the requirements of "Government Accounting" are kept under constant review. In particular both the internal controls operated by each executive body and the relationships with the department are examined in depth in formal financial management reviews. These reviews are on a rolling programme, with each body being dealt with every five years. Advisory bodies do not undertake expenditure on their own account.

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sums of money non-departmental public bodies have spent in Scotland in each year since 1978.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* Details of expenditure by executive non-departmental public bodies, that part of it funded by government, and other departmental expenditure on such bodies are published annually in "Public Bodies" copies of which are available in the Library. That publication also contains details of departmental expenditure on advisory bodies; such bodies do not undertake expenditure on their own account.

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many appointments he has made each year since 1990 to non-departmental public bodies in Scotland; and what were the financial consequences of these appointments.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* In 1990 I made 308 appointments to non-departmental public bodies, of which 48 were salaried and 73 fee paid. The total salary cost is £462,361. In 1991 I made 248 appointments of which 40 were salaries and 43 fee paid with a total salary cost of £421,218. Between 1 January and 1 September 1992 I made 267 appointments, 50 salaried and seven fee paid. The total salary cost is £289,998.

It is not possible to give the total amount paid in fees. The rates of fee for fee paid appointments is published in "Public Bodies", which is available in the Library. The remaining appointments were unpaid.

The information held on the central database in my Department is as at 1 September 1992, and that is the date of the information I have just given. Because of the way in which the information is held, appointments made in 1990 and 1991 which had expired before 1 September 1992 are not shown and neither are appointments to children's panels, other than chairmen or deputy chairmen, or as justices of the peace, neither of which are held on the central database. Information on salaries and fees are also at 1 September 1992. Information on allowances and travel and subsistence costs are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what mechanisms exist within the Scottish Office to ensure that non-departmental public bodies in Scotland are financially accountable, in terms both of their operating costs and their expenditure.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* The financial accountability of non-departmental public bodies is assured by the provision of their governing statutes and the conditions set out for individual bodies in accounts directions, financial memoranda, and management statements under which they receive grants and other funding from my Department. These conditions apply the rules of "Government Accounting" and the provisions of "Non Departmental Public Bodies: a Guide for Departments" to the activities of such bodies. My Department also undertakes detailed monitoring of the activities of such bodies, the detailed arrangements depending on the individual circumstances of each body.

### Kingsmeadow School, Haddington

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which Kingsmeadow primary school in Haddington has been destroyed by fire; and what arrangements he will make to help Lothian regional council to safeguard the education of pupils in Haddington and to rebuild the school.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* Both my right hon. Friend and I were saddened to hear of the destruction caused by the recent fire at Kings Meadow primary school and understand the distress which the loss of the building will cause to everyone associated with the school. We understand that the preliminary assessment is that the fire was malicious and is subject to further police investigation. Lothian regional council, as education authority, is responsible for alternative arrangements for the pupils and for decisions about the future rebuilding of the school.

## TRANSPORT

### Rail Freight

11. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what initiatives he is taking to increase the volume of freight carried by rail.

**Mr. Macgregor:** We have authorised British Rail investment of over £400 million in preparation for channel tunnel freight services and have asked British Rail to explore opportunities for involving the private sector to develop them further. Open access for freight will break

British Rail's monopoly and allow new operators to provide the services the customer wants. I have also announced three important new measures to boost the prospects for rail freight—improvements to the existing freight facilities grant scheme; the introduction of a new grant scheme to assist with Railtrack's charges; and consultation on a proposal for a lorry weight incentive of 44 tonnes for vehicles delivering to railheads.

### Bus Accidents

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* fatalities and *(b)* injuries have occurred involving buses and (i) other buses, (ii) other road vehicles and (iii) pedestrians in each year since 1986.

**Mr. Key** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* Casualties in accidents involving buses are not readily available for the accident groupings requested. The table shows pedestrian casualties, and casualties in other vehicles and in buses, in those accidents involving at least one bus for the years requested.

*Casualties in accidents involving at least one bus with other road user groups, by casualty type and severity: Great Britain 1986-1991*

*Casualties*

| | *Road user group* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Pedestrian*[1] | *Other road vehicles*[2] | *Bus*[3] |
| *1986* | | | |
| Fatal | 78 | 125 | 0 |
| Injured | 2,160 | 3,784 | 373 |
| TOTAL | 2,238 | 3,909 | 373 |
| *1987* | | | |
| Fatal | 81 | 103 | 2 |
| Injured | 2,134 | 4,012 | 430 |
| TOTAL | 2,215 | 4,115 | 432 |
| *1988* | | | |
| Fatal | 87 | 84 | 0 |
| Injured | 2,127 | 3,924 | 438 |
| TOTAL | 2,214 | 4,008 | 438 |
| *1989* | | | |
| Fatal | 83 | 120 | 0 |
| Injured | 2,149 | 4,226 | 483 |
| TOTAL | 2,232 | 4,346 | 483 |
| *1990* | | | |
| Fatal | 96 | 110 | 0 |
| Injured | 2,171 | 4,126 | 675 |
| TOTAL | 2,267 | 4,236 | 675 |
| *1991* | | | |
| Fatal | 91 | 73 | 1 |
| Injured | 1,883 | 3,680 | 296 |
| TOTAL | 1,974 | 3,753 | 297 |

[1] Excludes bus user and driver casualties and casualties from other road vehicles which may be involved in the accident.
[2] Excludes bus user and driver casualties and pedestrian casualties involved in the accident.
[3] Casualties in accidents involving at least two buses. Excludes casualties in other vehicles and pedestrians which may also be involved in multi-bus accidents.

### British Rail Pension Fund

12. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to provide that the British Rail pension fund will be used for no other purpose than the provision of pensions.

**Mr. MacGregor:** Yes. BR pension funds will be used for no other purpose than the provision of pensions.

### Bicycles (Rail Journeys)

13. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what future plans he has for regulating the charging of the conveyance of bicycles on short rail journeys.

**Mr. Freeman:** We have no plans for regulation of charges but where there is a reasonable level of demand, we expect privatisation franchisees to encourage cyclists to use the Railways.

### Trains (Leasing)

14. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects orders to be placed for rolling stock using the £150 million leasing fund made available in the 1992 autumn statement.

**Mr. MacGregor:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) earlier today.

### Wild Flowers (Highways)

15. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on wild flowers along highways.

**Mr. Key:** We carry out and encourage the planting of native species of wildflowers wherever appropriate. Last Thursday I launched the wild flower handbook. This will act as a welcome stimulus to road planners and designers in carrying out work which I regard as very important.

### A13 (Improvements)

17. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what date he expects the three road improvement schemes for the A13 in the London borough of Newham to be completed.

**Mr. Norris:** The Canning Town flyover and Ironbridge improvement schemes are expected to be completed by 1998. The junction improvements A13/A112 and A13/A117 are expected to be completed in 1997.

The progress on all these schemes is subject to satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and to the necessary funds being available.

### West Coast Main Line

18. **Ms Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail to discuss services on the west coast main line.

**Mr. Freeman:** My right hon. Friend regularly meets the chairman of British Rail to discuss a variety of railway issues.

26. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what support his Department has given to British Rail's request to improve the rolling stock on the west coast main line.

**Mr. Freeman:** An order for new InterCity 225 trains for the west coast main line is one of two options currently

being considered to utilise the £150 million leasing facility made available to British Rail in last year's autumn statement. The choice between the two options is entirely a matter for British Rail in the light of their negotiation with the suppliers and their lessors.

22. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the need for replacement of the rolling stock on the west coast main line; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** It is for British Rail to decide when rolling stock should be replaced. New trains for the west coast main line are one of the options they are pursuing for the £150 million leasing facility announced in last year's autumn statement.

### M5 Widening

19. **Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the widening of the M5 between junctions 6 and 8.

**Mr. Key:** Widening will relieve congestion on this important link and holiday route between the midlands, south Wales and the south west. Use of the parallel widening technique has avoided the need for contraflows and caused minimal disruption to traffic with the work being substantially complete within two years of the start of construction. I visited the site last week to unveil a commemorative plaque and was pleased to see that both three-lane carriageways will be open to traffic within three to four weeks.

### Jubilee Line Extension

20. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to start on the Jubilee line extension; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend, the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink).

### Coastal Waters (Safety)

21. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made in the European Transport Council regarding safety in British coastal waters.

**Mr. Norris:** At the June Transport Council, a resolution was adopted with the strong support of my right hon. Friend, which sets out an action programme of priority measures to improve the safety of shipping throughout the community, including our own coastal waters. We shall seek speedy implementation of the measures proposed. At the same council, my right hon. Friend announced that the United Kingdom will unilaterally pursue higher safety standards for ferries serving United Kingdom ports.

### Railways (Service)

23. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many stations or railway lines won a cup from British Rail for service to customers last year.

**Mr. Freeman:** British Rail, in consultation with user groups and others, organises several categories of award to stations in recognition of quality and service to customers. In addition to the British Railways best station competition, there is the Glasdon award for environmental excellence, the Geoffrey Farr award for community involvement, the London Regional Passengers Committee award for best London termini, the Anglo-Irish best station award, and the Lord Mountevans trophy. A total of 24 such awards were made in 1992.

### Channel Tunnel Rail Link

24. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will visit Thurrock to meet householders and representatives of industry affected by the alteration in the proposed line of route for the channel tunnel link which he announced in March.

**Mr. Freeman:** Union Railways is taking the lead in a full public consultation process on the channel tunnel rail link, including in Thurrock. A report will be prepared when consultation has been completed and so the Government will be properly informed on local opinion in reaching final decisions on the route.

**Ms Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the next Union Railways report on the channel tunnel rail link consultation will be published; and if he proposes to publish it in full.

**Mr. Freeman:** At the end of October Union Railways will submit a report to the Government on the options for refining the rail link identified during public consultation. Decisions will then be reached and most of the report will be published, but excluding commercially confidential material.

**Ms Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the railway inspectorate started work in examining the possible safety risks concerning the channel tunnel rail link running at high speeds through residential areas of the London borough of Barking and Dagenham.

**Mr. Freeman:** Discussions have already taken place between British Rail and the Health and Safety Executive's HM railway inspectorate about the various safety issues relating to the channel tunnel rail link. The assessment of safety risks for the route proposed by Union Railways is being carried out in a structured fashion. Union Railways intends to maintain a programme of discussions with the inspectorate and other authorities and is expected to present a safety case at key stages of the development of the project.

**Ms Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria were applied to the compensation and purchase schemes in respect of the channel tunnel rail link in *(a)* Kent and *(b)* the London borough of Barking and Dagenham; and what reasons underlie the differences in the criteria in *(a)* and *(b)*.

**Mr. Freeman:** The proposed arrangements for the route of the rail link as a whole are set out in the paper "DOT—Paper for the High Level Forum: Property Purchase and Compensation Policy". Copies have been placed in the Library and I also sent one to the hon. Member. Earlier purchase schemes, which covered broader zones, were applied to Kent and the then affected part of London—mainly Peckham. The reasons for the proposed change in coverage are explained in the paper.

**Ms Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if a full environmental impact assessment has been carried out on the proposed channel tunnel rail link; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** Environmental appraisal is a continuing process throughout the development of the project. The results of the most recent stage in the process are described in the appendix "The Union Railway and the Environment" to the Union Railways' March 1993 report. Additonal appraisal is being undertaken which will enable the environmental statement to be produced, in accordance with standing orders, when statutory approval for the project is sought.

### Concessionary Fares (London)

25. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current cost of the statutory London concessionary fare scheme; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** This year the cost of the London boroughs' scheme is £116 million.

### Franchised Passenger Services

27. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what response he has had from British Rail management and staff to running franchised passenger services.

**Mr. MacGregor:** There has been a very positive response. Management-employee buy-out teams have expressed interest in bidding for most of the 25 franchises we have announced.

### Signposting (Isle of Wight)

28. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about signposting on the Isle of Wight.

**Mr. Key:** My predecessor saw a deputation from the county council in March and I have received representations from my hon. Friend which I am looking forward to discussing with him shortly.

### Channel Tunnel (Rail Freight)

29. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on the construction of rail freight depots to take advantage of the opening of the channel tunnel.

**Mr. Freeman:** The Government welcome the new opportunities presented by the channel tunnel for rail freight. Decisions about the number and location of terminals are commercial matters for British Rail and the private sector. British Rail has selected nine sites for intermodal terminals in the light of independent market research.

### Traffic Congestion

30. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the pollutant effects of stationary and slow-moving traffic; and what plans he has to relieve congestion in urban areas.

**Mr. Key:** The quality of urban air review group—QUARG—a group of independent experts, issued its first report in January of this year, and copies have been placed in the Library.

The Government are considering a number of initiatives which could have the effect in the longer term of reducing the rate of traffic growth.

### Pensioners' Travel Passes

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to ensure pensioners using London Transport continue to have a free travel pass when London's public transport is deregulated.

**Mr. Norris:** When we bring forward legislation to deregulate London bus services we shall include provisions to ensure the continuation of a London-wide concessionary fares scheme after deregulation. The level of concessions offered will, as now, be for the London boroughs to determine.

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Mr. Norris:** Subject to securing best value for money, the Department's procurement policy is to promote the use of recycled paper, low energy light bulbs, sustainable alternatives to tropical hardwoods, peat free compost and cars with catalytic converters.

### Rail Services (Portsmouth)

**Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what improvements are in his Department's present plans for rail services between Portsmouth and London.

**Mr. Freeman:** Rail services between Portsmouth and London are at present operated by Network SouthEast's south western division. We announced in February of this year that the south western division is to be one of the first franchises to be offered to the private sector. We expect the franchise to start some time in 1995. We believe that giving the private sector the opportunity to operate existing services and introduce new ones is the best way to bring about the improvements to services which passengers want.

### Blackwall Crossing

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what considerations underlay his decision to publish only section 12 of the cost-benefit analysis used in selecting his Department's preferred option of a bridge, rather than a tunnel, for the A102 Blackwall third crossing; if he intends to publish this analysis in full before the end of the consultation phase; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** Copies of the full technical appraisal report for the A102 Blackwall third crossing river bridge are available for inspection at the Department's London docklands division, South Quay Plaza II, 183 Marsh wall, London, E14 9SH. As he requested, I sent the hon.

Member an advance copy of section 12 which deals solely with the cost benefit analysis. He is now being sent a copy of the full report.

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 17 May, *Official Report*, column *4*, at what stage of a scheme a formal environmental assessment is prepared; when he expects to have one completed on the preferred option of a bridge for the A102 Blackwall third crossing; if he intends to make public this assessment; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** Environmental assessments are carried out throughout the development of highway schemes. The formal environmental impact assessment is prepared and published with the draft orders for the chosen scheme. In the case of the proposed third river crossing at Blackwall, this is expected to be in about two years time.

### Road Signs

**Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on keeping road signs clear of foliage; and how it is enforced.

**Mr. Key:** The trunk roads and motorways for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is the highway authority are regularly inspected. We have issued instructions to our maintenance agents on the need to cut back vegetation where this obscures sight lines for drivers or their view of traffic signs. We have strongly advised local highway authorities to follow the Department's guidance and standards for maintenance of signs on other roads, and similar standards have been incorporated into the Local Authority Associations' "Code of Good Practice on Highways Maintenance", but we do not have powers to force local highway authorities to comply with them.

### Motor Insurance

**Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State of Transport what consideration he is giving to the introduction of a legislative requirement that motorists display proof of insurance on windscreens.

**Mr. Key:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 23 June 1993 at column *171* to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan).

### East-west Trunk Route

**Mr. Walden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration his Department is giving to an alternative east-west trunk route to the A418 in Buckinghamshire.

**Mr. Key:** I expect to make an announcement this summer about alternative corridors for the east-west route to the west of Aylesbury. Elsewhere in Buckinghamshire a planning inquiry has just been completed into the county council proposals for an A418 bypass of Wing and we expect to consult the public about the A418 west of Aylesbury to Wing bypass section of the east-west route later this summer.

### Rail Travel Costs

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the likely change in the cost of travelling to work in London under rail privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** The franchising director will be able to control fares through franchise agreements, and we have announced our intention to bring forward amendments to the Railways Bill to place a statutory duty on him to care for the interests of passengers using his judgment of what is a reasonable level of fares.

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the comparative cost of travelling to work in London and other European capitals.

**Mr. Norris:** The Department has not made comparative estimates of travel-to-work costs for London and other European capitals. Such a comparison would need to take into account a wide range of factors which vary from country to country.

### British Rail (Lease Finance)

**Sir Keith Speed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department is having with British Rail about further tranches of lease finance for replacement rolling stock.

**Mr. Freeman:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on Friday 25 June 1993 at column *283*.

### Petrol Facilities

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the distance on the A414 between the A414/A12 junction and Sandon service station.

**Mr. Key:** Approximately 1.3 km—0·8 miles.

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reconsider the decision given to the hon. Member for Chelmsford in his letter of 11 June not to allow fuel pump flash signs on the junction of the A414/A12; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Key:** No. I am satisfied that the decision taken is the right one. The facilities provided at Sandon service station do not meet the criteria laid down by the Department. The Department's policy on such signing guards against a proliferation of signs to services at some distance from the trunk road.

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport under what criteria emergency roadsigns have been installed on the M40 drawing to motorists' attention the availability of petrol for sale at distances of greater than a mile from the M40.

**Mr. Key:** Apart from a reduction in the minimum permitted spacing of motorway services announced August 1992, the longstanding criteria governing the location of services to be signed on a motorway remain unchanged. The 1991 decision to sign temporarily off-motorway fuel and lavatory facilities from the M40 in Oxfordshire and Warwickshire was taken to meet exceptional circumstances. The signs will be removed when permanent motorway service areas are available.

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the level of traffic using the A414 from the A414/A12 junction to Sandon service station; and what evidence underlies his

conclusion that the installation of fuel pump flash signs at that junction would cause problems at the turn-off and in the local road network.

**Mr. Key:** Encouraging long distance through traffic to divert from the trunk road to Sandon service station would inevitably lead to extra pressure on the A12/A414 junction and adjoining local roads. When the A12 Chelmsford bypass was opened, temporary service signs were agreed only until such time as services with direct or easy access to the A12 were available. As other suitable facilities now exist adjacent to A12 there are neither overriding grounds nor need to divert traffic from the main route.

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what petrol facilities are available to motorists on the A12 between the M25 and the A414/A12 junction; and what is the distance between the M25 and the A414/A12 junction.

**Mr. Key:** There are services adjacent to Brook street interchange on the old A12 and also at Brentwood North, A12/A1023 junction. It is approximately 24 km—15 miles—between M25 and A414/A12 junction and only a further 5 km—three miles—to Boreham interchange.

## Fares

**Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the annual percentage change in fares for *(a)* British Rail Network SouthEast, *(b)* London Underground and *(c)* London Buses for each of the years since 1979; and what was the annual rate of inflation for each of those years.

**Mr. Freeman:** The information requested is given in the table.

*Annual percentage change*

| | *Fares* | | | *Retail Price Index* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *London Bus* | *London Underground* | *NSE* | |
| 1979 | 13·7 | 14·7 | 9·6 | 13·4 |
| 1980 | 38·1 | 35·3 | 22·3 | 18·0 |
| 1981 | 6·6 | 2·9 | 18·3 | 11·9 |
| 1982 | 24·1 | 26·0 | 8·5 | 8·6 |
| 1983 | 1·9 | 4·4 | 7·4 | 4·6 |
| 1984 | −8·4 | −13·4 | 6·7 | 5·0 |
| 1985 | 9·1 | 7·7 | 7·2 | 6·1 |
| 1986 | 7·0 | 5·9 | 7·5 | 3·4 |
| 1987 | 3·0 | 5·3 | 5·0 | 4·1 |
| 1988 | 10·5 | 9·5 | 6·2 | 4·9 |
| 1989 | 11·8 | 12·6 | 9·2 | 7·8 |
| 1990 | 8·5 | 9·6 | 8·6 | 9·5 |
| 1991 | 10·9 | 11·2 | 10·8 | 5·9 |
| 1992 | 7·6 | 7·8 | 7·6 | 3·7 |

## Public Appointments

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

**Mr. Norris** *[holding answer 25 June 1993]:* Lists of names, occupations and current employers of persons appointed to public bodies by my right hon. Friend are not held centrally and up-to-date lists could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The considerations taken into account by him when making appointments will vary according to the needs of the body concerned and any statutory requirements relevant to it.

The main changes in data on posts, salaries and allowances, since it was provided for "Public Bodies 1992", is as follows:

*British Railways Board.* All salaries were increased by 1·5 per cent. for 1992-93, giving a salary of £216,195 for the chairman; the person listed in the deputy chairman column has left the board and a new part-time vice-chairman has been appointed at a salary of £120,000; one of the members in the £65,001-£70,000 salary band has left the board; and there are now eight members—six male and two female—in the £5,001-£10,000 band.

*Civil Aviation Authority.* There are now no members in the £25,000-£30,000 salary band; one instead of two in the £20,001-£25,000 band; one instead of nil in the £15,001-£20,000 band; and five members, one of whom is female, instead of four male members in the £10,001-£15,000 band.

*London Regional Transport.* The salary of the chairman is now £111,030; the part-time deputy chairman has retired and the salary of his successor, a full-time member who is also chief executive, is £100,000. Following changes to board membership and a reallocation of responsibilities, changes in distribution between salary bands are:

| | |
|---|---|
| 3M | £30,001-40,000 |
| 1M | £20,001-30,000 |
| 3M, 1F | £10,001-20,000 |
| 1F | £ 5,001-10,000 |

*Executive Bodies.* The remuneration of the three part-time members of Trinity House lighthouse service nominated by my right hon. Friend is now £6,325; and the salary of the traffic director for London is £61,530.

*Advisory Bodies.* Fee rates shown have been increased from £126 to £153 and from £96 to £117.

*Traffic Commissioners Licensing Authorities.* Six traffic commissioners now come within the £40,001-£45,000 salary band and one in the £45,001-£50,000 band. The fee rate for deputy commissioners—now 15 male and one female—is £177.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Tuesday 29 June 1993*

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Solicitors to the Police

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to require the Law Society immediately to report known cases of dishonest practice by solicitors to the police; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The Law Society is an independent body, regulated by statute. Section 32(4) of the Solicitors Act 1974 gives the Law Society the power to report dishonest practice, where there is prima facie evidence of it, to the Director of Public Prosecutions and it is a matter for it to decide when it should do so.

### Debtors' Addresses

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to give powers to county courts to obtain debtors' current addresses when the courts have made an order in favour of a creditor, and to pass that information on to creditors or their representatives.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** There are currently no plans to give county courts powers to obtain debtors' current addresses when the courts have made an order in favour of a creditor.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** From April 1992 to May 1993 inclusive, the Lord Chancellor's Department has spent £1,850 on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme. All advice was provided in-house.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Sexual Abuse Cases

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Attorney-General how many sexual abuse cases were referred to the Crown Prosecution Service in 1992-93; how many were not proceeded with *(a)* due to staleness and *(b)* in total; and how many cases where the Crown Prosecution Service was satisfied as to the sufficiency of the evidence were not proceeded with.

**The Attorney-General:** The information sought by the hon. Member is not centrally recorded, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Jack:** Since November 1991 the Department has spent no money on the provision of external legal advice regarding the implications of the TUPE Regulations 1981.

Over the period November 1991 to June 1993 the matter has been looked at by the Department's own legal staff as part of their continuing duties.

### Cattle Disease

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received regarding imported disease in live cattle; how many incidents of diseased live imported cattle have been found by her inspectors since 1 January; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Soames:** The Department has received a number of representations seeking reassurance that the single market will not increase the risk of disease entering the country through imported livestock. Since 1 January warble fly has been found in animals imported from Poland, Belgium and France, some of which were imported before that date. A case of enzootic bovine leucosis in an animal that may have been imported is also under investigation.

### Forests (Sales)

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list, by county, those forest areas in England currently available for sale to the private sector.

**Mr. Jack** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* The areas of forest land in England currently being offered for sale by the Forestry Commission on the open market are as follows:

| *County and Name* | *Area (hectares)* |
|---|---|
| *Avon* | |
| Abbotts Wood (East) | 1 |
| East Tanpit | 6 |
| Fifty Acre Wood | 21 |
| Old Park Wood | 10 |
| Round Hill Clump | 2 |
| Scutches | 5 |
| Three Corner Wood | 3 |
| Warren House | 3 |
| West Tanpit Ox House | 16 |
| Wraxall | 13 |
| Yewtree Snakes Well Fishpond | 11 |
| *Cornwall* | |
| Hay Wood | 54 |
| Pathada Perdredda | 69 |
| Penance and Derry's | 7 |
| Port Eliot (small wood) | 39 |
| Treworgey | 17 |
| *Cumbria* | |
| Walton Wood | 89 |

| County and Name | Area (hectares) |
|---|---|
| *Derbyshire* | |
| Birch Wood | 24 |
| Britton Wood | 6 |
| Noton Street Wood | 4 |
| *Devon* | |
| Bedpark | 8 |
| Brownsham Woods | 70 |
| Deershill Wood | 11 |
| Hawkmoor | 22 |
| Lotherton | 13 |
| New Moor | 12 |
| New Part Coppice | 15 |
| *Durham* | |
| Stanley Woods | 64 |
| *Hampshire* | |
| Ashe Park Wood | 37 |
| Peaky Close | 23 |
| Roke Mead Copse | 9 |
| Woodhay House Copse | 5 |
| *Humberside* | |
| Seaton Ross | 43 |
| Sutton | 34 |
| *Kent* | |
| Great and Little Twyvers | 12 |
| *Lincolnshire* | |
| Wraby Wood | 70 |
| *Norfolk* | |
| Blackwater Plantation | 4 |
| *Northumberland* | |
| Colley Law | 8 |
| Corbies Crags Woods | 54 |
| Haydon Fell | 20 |
| *North Yorkshire* | |
| Averhams Wood | 52 |
| Gateforth East | 29 |
| Hayton | 51 |
| Hazelwood | 56 |
| Moreby | 33 |
| Overton | 48 |
| Raisdale | 180 |
| Sawley | 323 |
| Seaton Old Wood | 5 |
| Turf Graft Wood | 3 |
| West Gateforth | 47 |
| *Shropshire* | |
| Coed Detton | 14 |
| Preston Springs | 38 |
| *Somerset* | |
| Chantry | 6 |
| East Wood | 12 |
| Ellicombe Common | 2 |
| Fry's Wood | 24 |
| Higher Bitcombe | 30 |
| Oaktrow Wood | 17 |
| Penny Wood | 2 |
| Pightley Coppice | 1 |
| The Thickets | 4 |
| West Wood | 9 |
| *South Yorkshire* | |
| Green Springs | 12 |
| The Old Park | 41 |
| Walker Wood | 6 |
| *Suffolk* | |
| Langley High Wood | 49 |
| *West Sussex* | |
| Sparwood and Swear Hanger | 12 |
| Wephurst Wood | 38 |
| *Wiltshire* | |
| Roundway Hill Covert | 27 |

## ENVIRONMENT

### Homelessness

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new proposals he has to combat homelessness.

**Sir George Young:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply to his question of 25 June 1993 at column *330*.

In addition, we have made available a further £86 million over the next three years—1993-94 to 1995-96, to continue our rough sleepers initiative in central London. A strategy document, inviting bids for funding, was issued on 16 June. Emphasis will continue to be on funding permanent accommodation in houses and flats. Resources will be targeted more tightly, to make the initiative more effective, and some of the resources will be focused on "zones", starting with the Strand. Copies of the strategy document are in the Library.

The latest quarterly homelessness statistics show an encouraging downward trend in the number of households accepted by local authorities as homeless: the number of acceptances during the first quarter of 1993 was 5 per cent. lower than in the same quarter last year. The number of households in bed-and-breakfast accommodation fell by 37 per cent.

### Green Belt

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of green belt have been used for urban development in the last five years; and if he will make a statement on Government policy.

**Mr. Curry:** Information is not available centrally in the form requested, but individual local authorities may be able to provide information about green belt decisions in their areas. Government policy is set out in "Planning Policy Guidance note 2" published by HMSO in January 1988.

### Property Services Agency

**Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the asset value of the Property Services Agency.

**Mr. Curry:** The value at 31 March 1993 of PSA Services fixed assets, excluding land and buildings, is estimated as £8 million.

### EC Correspondence

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress made in achieving the target of responding to all correspondence from the European Commission within agreed time limits.

**Mr. Baldry:** Since the beginning of the year, we have received nine formal letters from the Commission on environmental issues, requiring a reply within two months. So far we have had to send interim replies in only two cases, but we were able to follow both of them up with full responses shortly afterwards.

### Statistics User Group

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by his Department in establishing a statistics user group.

**Mr. Baldry:** There are well-established liaison groups covering local authority statistics. In addition, a consultative committee on construction industry statistics was set up last year. We are also considering how best to take user interests into account for statistics in other areas.

### Gas Suppliers

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will conduct a survey of the savings which have been achieved by those local authorities which have switched to independent suppliers of gas.

**Mr. Baldry:** I have no plans to conduct such a survey. Local authorities have a duty to their taxpayers to secure value for money in their finanical affairs, including in the procurement of goods and services. It is for each local authority to decide whether value for money could be achieved by switching to an independent gas supplier.

### Standard Spending Assessments

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will use the 1991 census data in compiling SSAs for 1994; and what safeguards there will be for those local education authorities whose grant is thereby reduced.

**Mr. Baldry:** It is our policy to use the most up-to-date information available within SSAs. For 1993-94 SSAs, population estimates based on the 1991 census were incorporated and it is intended to make use of the remaining information now available from the 1991 census for 1994-95 SSAs. We will need to consider the effect of this and the outcome of the wider review of SSAs now in progress, before finally deciding whether it will be necessary to mitigate these effects, and if so what means and to what extent.

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to compensate those local education authorities which have lost revenue as a result of the use of the 1981 census data and not the 1991 census data in compiling the education SSAs for 1993-94.

**Mr. Baldry:** None. The SSAs for 1993-94 were compiled using the best posible information available at the time. For 1994-95 it is the intention that the information now available from the 1991 census will be incorporated.

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authorities on the adequacy of standard spending assessments mechanisms for the tasks now being demanded of them; what account he has taken of the specific criticisms levelled by the recent Audit Commission review; and what action he proposes to take to restore confidence in the revenue support methodology.

**Mr. Curry** *[holding answer 28 June 1993]:* As part of the current review of standard spending assessments—SSAs—we have received representations from more than 140 local authorities on all aspects of the SSA system.

We welcome what the Audit Commission report "Passing the Bucks" has to say about SSAs and will consider the commission's conclusions carefully as part of our current review. The commission's finding that the system of SSAs is a more sophisticated mechanism for equalising needs than any overseas system examined in their study and that it is an improvement on its predecessor in many respects, is particularly welcome.

The current review of SSAs which is being carried out in consultation with local authority representatives shows our continuing commitment to improve the system of SSAs used to distribute revenue support grant wherever possible.

### Council Tax

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made for dealing with proposals to alter council tax valuations.

**Mr. Curry:** The Valuation Office agency (VOA) had received some 525,000 proposals to alter valuation lists in England by 25 June, the great majority in the first month of the initial appeal period. The rate at which new proposals have been received, however, has subsequently fallen significantly. While the initial appeal period does not end until 30 November 1993, the final number is likely to be substantially below earlier estimates. The overwhelming majority of appeals should therefore be settled by the end of 1994, and a high proportion well before then.

We expect the agency and valuation tribunals to have settled some 560,000 council tax banding appeals in England by 31 December 1994, just 13 months after the initial appeal period ends on 30 November 1993. Any remaining appeals will be decided as rapidly as possible in 1995.

In keeping with citizens charter principles, the agency has set standards for service for handling appeals. On receipt of a proposal the Valuation Office agency's objective will be:

- to acknowledge receipt of proposals within 14 days (against a statutory deadline of 28 days);
- to make the taxpayer an offer, within 60 days, to reband the property if the initial banding is clearly wrong;
- to let taxpayers know within 90 days if the agency believes the original banding is correct and that they intend to defend that decision; and
- in any other case, to make contact with taxpayers within 120 days and give them a named contact within the VOA for further discussion.

Council taxpayers should have their appeals settled as quickly and efficiently as possible, giving appropriate priority to identified cases of hardship. We shall monitor progress to ensure that this is so and keep our plans under review in light of developments.

### Additional Educational Needs

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local education authorities on the range of support

funding now generated by the additional educational needs factor in the standard spending assessments methodology; and if he will make it his policy to look afresh at the validity of the small number of proxy indicators employed and the very heavy weighting then given to this AEN factor in determining overall assessments.

**Mr. Curry** *[holding answer 28 June 1993]*: As part of the current review of standard spending assessments—SSAs—we have received representations from more than 140 local authorities, including 57 local education authorities, on all aspects of the SSA system.

We made clear at the start of the review that we would take this opportunity to consider the range of social factors used within SSAs including the additional educational needs index and the weight placed upon them.

### Building and Construction (Finance)

**Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what survey his Department has carried out of banks' lending policies towards building and construction companies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that the building and constuction industry is given sufficient financial support to enable it to expand; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will meet representatives of the Chartered Institute of Building to discuss the institute's Bank Watch Campaign.

**Mr. Baldry** *[holding answer 28 June 1993]*: Banks' lending policies are a commercial matter for the banks themselves to determine; however, I am aware of the construction industry's concern, and of the Chartered Institute of Building's Bank Watch Campaign. I regularly meet representatives of the construction industry and would expect to discuss this and other issues with them at such meetings.

## HEALTH

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department's aim in purchasing goods and services is to obtain the best possible value for money for the taxpayer. Where environmentally friendly products are available which fully meet our specifications and provide value for money then these are preferred. In respect of the specific products our policy is as follows:

recycled paper—we are exploring with potential suppliers as part of a competitive tendering process, the feasibility of substantially increasing the use of environmentally friendly stationery supplies.

low-energy light bulbs—a programme for changing all lighting on our departmental estate to low-energy tubes is well advanced; this also offers demonstrable long-term savings and an improved working environment.

tropical hardwoods—are not purchased.

peat—is not purchased.

cars with catalytic converters—since January 1991 we have acquired only diesel vehicles or cars propelled by petrol and fitted with catalytic converters.

### Handicapped Children

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children were born either mentally or physically handicapped in each year since 1990.

**Mr. Sackville:** The exact information requested is not available centrally. Such information as is available centrally for 1990 is given in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication "Congenital malformation statistics" series MB3 no. 6; copies of which are available in the Library. Information for 1991 and 1992 is not yet available.

### Hepatitis and Dysentery

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of *(a)* viral hepatitis and *(b)* dysentery have been reported in each district health authority in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Sackville:** Notifications of viral hepatitis and dysentery are not collected for district health authorities. Notifications are available for county districts and are published in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication "Communicable disease statistics" series MB2; and are available in the Library. Information for 1992 has not yet been published.

### Emergency Admissions

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of emergency admissions to *(a)* the Doncaster Royal and Montagu trust, *(b)* the Tickhill Road hospital in Doncaster and *(c)* to hospitals in the Trent regional health authority in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

**Mr. Sackville:** The number of non-elective admissions in the general and acute specialties provided by national health service hospitals in Trent region and by Doncaster Royal infirmary and Montagu NHS trust and Doncaster Healthcare NHS trust—of which Tickhill Road hospital is a part—for 1991-92 and 1992-93 are shown in the table.

| *Year* | *Doncaster Royal Infirmary and Montague Trust* | *Doncaster Healthcare Trust* | *Trent Region* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1991-92 | 22,308 | 1,948 | 333,311 |
| 1992-93 | 23,097 | 1,821 | 348,327 |

*Source:*
Quarterly Monitoring of Provider Activity.

### Acute Beds

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many acute beds would be closed or created on current trends by the year 2001 based on *(a)* growth in patient activity of 1 per cent. per annum, *(b)* decline in length of hospital stay of 4 per cent. per annum and *(c)* an increase in day care surgery of 25 per cent.

**Mr. Sackville:** All the information required to make the proposed calculation is set out in the "Statisical Bulletin" for 1991-92, a copy of which is available in the Library.

## Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much her Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Sackville:** All legal advice on these regulations has been provided by the Department's in-house solicitors office. It is not possible to identify separately the costs.

## Wessex Regional Health Authorities

**Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a copy of each letter sent to the chairman of the Wessex regional health authority by the Secretary of State following each annual review meeting in the years from 1986 to 1989.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Copies of the letters will be placed in the Library. From 1989 annual reviews have been conducted by the chief executive of the national health service management executive with the regional general managers.

## Research

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 25 May, *Official Report*, columns *507-8*, if the funding which her Department will provide for the multidisciplinary research centre will come wholly from her existing research and development budget.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Yes.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each research project her Department currently funds in the field of primary health care, with *(a)* the institution in which it is based, *(b)* the funds provided by her Department, *(c)* the numbers of staff involved and *(d)* the start and end date.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The Department's research and development division currently funds and manages the following primary health care related research projects:

*Project:* Child Health Surveillance, including general practitioners' involvement
*Institution:* University of Kent
*Total estimated cost:* £330,815
*Number of staff involved:* 3
*Start date:* 1 October 1990
*End date:* 30 September 1994

*Project:* Ambulatory Care Research Programme
*Institution:* University of Newcastle
*Total estimated cost:* £728,938
*Number of staff involved:* 10
*Start date:* 1 January 1991
*End date:* 31 March 1994

*Project:* Randomised Controlled Trial of Coronary Risk Factor Intervention
*Institution:* Royal South Hampshire Hospital
*Total estimated cost:* £232,559
*Number of staff involved:* 6
*Start date:* 1 July 1992
*End date:* 30 June 1993

*Project:* The Health Benefits of Routine Histological Examination of GP Excision Specimens
*Institution:* University of Leicester
*Total estimated cost:* £42,609
*Number of staff involved:* 2
*Start date:* 1 June 1992
*End date:* 31 May 1994

*Project:* Evaluation of Collaborative Clinical Guidelines in Hackney General Practices
*Institution:* The Medical College of St. Bartholomew's
*Total estimated cost:* £59,794
*Number of staff involved:* 1
*Start date:* 1 October 1992
*End date:* 13 October 1994

*Project:* Breast Cancer in Remission: Follow up by GPs
*Institution:* University of Oxford
*Total estimated cost:* £74,567
*Number of staff involved:* 5
*Start date:* 1 December 1992
*End date:* 30 November 1994

*Project:* Process and Outcomes of Consultation in Primary Care
*Institution:* University of Wales
*Total estimated cost:* £37,296
*Number of staff involved:* 3
*Start date:* 1 January 1993
*End date:* 31 December 1994

*Project:* Doctor Variability
*Institution:* RCGP Research Unit, Birmingham
*Total estimated cost:* £110,780
*Number of staff involved:* 4
*Start date:* 1 January 1988
*End date:* 31 December 1995

*Project:* Retrieval of Patients from Long-Term Follow-up in Hospital Outpatient Departments
*Institution:* University of Manchester
*Total estimated cost:* £163,500
*Number of staff involved:* 4
*Start date:* 1 April 1992
*End date:* 31 March 1994

*Project:* Cross Referrals in Hospitals
*Institution:* University of Manchester
*Total estimated cost:* £70,000
*Number of staff involved:* 3
*Start date:* 1 January 1993
*End date:* 30 June 1994

*Project:* Specialist Outreach in General Practice
*Institution:* University of Manchester
*Total estimated cost:* £51,193
*Number of staff involved:* 3
*Start date:* 1 January 1993
*End date:* 31 December 1993

*Project:* Out of Hours Care in General Practice
*Institution:* University of Manchester
*Total estimated cost:* £33,000
*Number of staff involved:* 2
*Start date:* 1 January 1993
*End date:* 28 February 1994

*Project:* Death Registers and Audit of Death in General Practice
*Institution:* University of Newcastle
*Total estimated cost:* £121,157
*Number of staff involved:* 3
*Start date:* 1 October 1991
*End date:* 31 March 1994

*Project:* Evaluating the Outcomes of Treatment for Menorrhagia
*Institution:* University of Oxford
*Total estimated cost:* £56,503
*Number of staff involved:* 1
*Start date:* 3 September 1990
*End date:* 31 August 1993

*Project:* Feedback of Patient Specific Morbidity Data in Asthma: a Randomised Controlled Trial in General Practice
*Institution:* King's College Hospital
*Total estimated cost:* £198,999
*Number of staff involved:* 4
*Start date:* 1 January 1991
*End date:* 31 March 1994

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 25 May, *Official Report*, columns *507-8*, what will be the prime consideration in judging tenders for the multidisciplinary research centre.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The prime consideration will be the extent to which the universities concerned can provide high-quality, scientific, research-based information for the Department, in the key strategic field of primary care. Of particular importance will be intentions as to leadership, clarity of management arrangements and the commitment of the university to the centre, its funding and staff. Proposals will be expected to specify how collaboration with other funders is to be achieved. A copy of the statement of requirements for the centre for research and development in primary health care will be placed in the Library. This has been sent to all vice-chancellors, a wide range of researchers and all those inquiring.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 23 April, *Official Report*, column *233*, if she will list for each of the 13 research units currently subject to peer review *(a)* the date of the site visit, *(b)* the end date of the unit's current contract and *(c)* the timetable for making decisions about the future of each unit.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Site visits to two of the units have already taken place. For the remaining 11 units, five site visits are taking place over the next four months. Dates for the final six site visits are to be arranged soon and are expected to be completed in March 1994.

*Current contract end dates for units are on the last day of month*

| *Contract* | *Date* |
|---|---|
| Childhood Cancer Research Group | August 1994 |
| Medical Care Research Unit | March 1995 |
| Cancer Screening Evaluation Unit | May 1995 |
| National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit | June 1995 |
| Centre for Primary Care Research | June 1995 |
| Social Medicine and Health Services Research Unit | July 1995 |
| Clinical Operational Research Unit | September 1995 |
| National Institute for Social Work | October 1995 |
| Personal Social Services Research Unit | October 1995 |
| Social Policy Research Unit | December 1995 |
| Centre for Health Economics | January 1996 |
| Dartington Social Research Unit | February 1996 |
| Thomas Coram Research Unit | March 1996 |

Decisions about the future of units will be announced once the series of site visits has been completed and following due discussion and full consideration. Earlier decisions may be required, depending on the particular circumstances of the unit.

### "The Health of the Nation"

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost to public funds of *(a)* publication, *(b)* conferences, *(c)* staff and *(d)* press liaison costs in connection with the paper, "The Health of the Nation".

**Mr. Sackville:** Total costs of publicity and communications in connection with "The Health of the Nation" Green and White Papers are shown in the table:

| *Year* | *£'000s* |
|---|---|
| 1991-92 | 1,005 |
| 1992-93 | 2,680 |
| 1993-94 | [1]1,710 |

[1] budget estimate.

This includes conference costs of £230,641 for 1991-92 and £568,885 for 1992-93.

"The Health of the Nation" is an integral part of the work of the Department and the national health service. For this reason, it is not possible to separately identify staff and press liaison costs.

### Ethnic Minorities

**Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the assessed accuracy, expressed in percentage terms, of census figures relating to the size of the ethnic minority communities settled in the United Kingdom; and to what extent the census figures are believed to reflect the numbers of immigrants living illegally in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Sackville:** The 1991 census is estimated to have counted 98·1 per cent. of the resident population of Great Britain.

No estimates are yet available of the coverage of particular ethnic groups in the census. Such estimates as are possible when the "Census Report for Great Britain on Ethnic Group and Country of Birth" is published in late summer will be included in that volume. A copy will be placed in the Library.

The census validation survey for Great Britain, carried out soon after the census to help assess coverage and quality of census statistics, will provide some information on the accuracy of answers to the ethnic group question. Preliminary results on accuracy of answers will be published in an Office of Population Censuses and Surveys monitor in the autumn. A full report will be published in 1994.

As the census contained no questions relating to nationality or immigration status, no information on these topics is available from the census.

The 1991 census in Northern Ireland did not contain a question on ethnic group.

### Nurses and Midwives

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the distribution of average gross weekly earnings per person for each of the NHS clinical nursing and midwifery grades, listing the percentages of each grade earning under *(a)* £140, *(b)* £150, *(c)* £160, *(d)* £170, *(e)* £180, *(f)* £190, *(g)* £200, *(h)* £210, *(i)* £220, *(j)* £230, *(k)* £240, *(l)* £250, *(m)* £275, *(n)* £300 and *(o)* those earning £300 and over in 1991 and 1992.

**Dr. Mawhinney** *[holding answer 23 June 1993]:* The information is in the tables.

*Percentage distribution of average gross weekly earnings per person for each of the national health service clinical nursing and midwifery grades*

*Great Britain—Full-time staff*

*1991-92*

*Per cent.*

| | Clinical grade | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *A* | *B* | *C* | *D* | *E* | *F* | *G* | *H* | *I* |
| Under £140 | 12·63 | 8·85 | 5·71 | 6·33 | 6·76 | 5·72 | 2·38 | 2·89 | 1·90 |
| £140 to £149 | 8·42 | 1·78 | 0·81 | 0·71 | 0·70 | 0·68 | 0·31 | 0·44 | 0·02 |
| £150 to £159 | 11·18 | 2·99 | 1·09 | 0·76 | 0·64 | 0·62 | 0·20 | 0·34 | 0·19 |
| £160 to £169 | 11·12 | 6·25 | 1·28 | 0·80 | 0·62 | 0·57 | 0·33 | 0·35 | 0·23 |
| £170 to £179 | 12·81 | 7·28 | 3·20 | 0·91 | 0·80 | 0·52 | 0·31 | 0·50 | 0·31 |
| £180 to £189 | 11·42 | 8·71 | 5·67 | 1·12 | 0·88 | 0·61 | 0·29 | 0·35 | 0·15 |
| £190 to £199 | 7·00 | 10·00 | 12·46 | 2·62 | 0·89 | 0·54 | 0·27 | 0·29 | 0·21 |
| £200 to £209 | 5·67 | 10·36 | 13·51 | 4·05 | 0·87 | 0·64 | 0·33 | 0·38 | 0·21 |
| £210 to £219 | 4·39 | 9·15 | 12·50 | 8·56 | 1·01 | 0·75 | 0·31 | 0·47 | 0·10 |
| £220 to £229 | 2·47 | 7·05 | 12·57 | 13·46 | 1·96 | 0·68 | 0·34 | 0·25 | 0·13 |
| £230 to £239 | 1·51 | 6·20 | 9·06 | 13·12 | 2·76 | 0·67 | 0·31 | 0·32 | 0·29 |
| £240 to £249 | 0·94 | 3·90 | 4·69 | 10·89 | 4·90 | 1·25 | 0·40 | 0·34 | 0·27 |
| £250 to £274 | 0·95 | 3·85 | 5·94 | 14·14 | 20·64 | 4·82 | 0·89 | 1·03 | 0·67 |
| £275 to £299 | 0·46 | 1·25 | 2·49 | 7·46 | 21·03 | 10·73 | 2·55 | 0·90 | 0·71 |
| £300+ | 9·05 | 12·37 | 9·01 | 15·06 | 35·55 | 71·20 | 90·79 | 91·14 | 94·59 |
| TOTAL[1] | 100·02 | 99·99 | 99·99 | 99·99 | 100·01 | 99·96 | 100·01 | 99·99 | 99·98 |

[1] Total percentage figures may not equal 100 per cent. due to rounding.

*1992-93*

*Per cent.*

| | Clinical grade | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *A* | *B* | *C* | *D* | *E* | *F* | *G* | *H* | *I* |
| Under £140 | 30·25 | 14·28 | 6·40 | 6·95 | 6·99 | 5·97 | 2·50 | 3·35 | 1·50 |
| £140 to £149 | 9·40 | 3·33 | 1·96 | 0·73 | 0·62 | 0·47 | 0·29 | 0·40 | 0·22 |
| £150 to £159 | 8·21 | 3·88 | 2·84 | 1·10 | 0·66 | 0·53 | 0·28 | 0·44 | 0·05 |
| £160 to £169 | 8·43 | 5·93 | 6·78 | 1·81 | 0·71 | 0·51 | 0·32 | 0·36 | 0·30 |
| £170 to £179 | 7·81 | 6·48 | 6·55 | 2·90 | 0·72 | 0·56 | 0·22 | 0·48 | 0·27 |
| £180 to £189 | 6·70 | 8·26 | 7·36 | 5·60 | 0·91 | 0·55 | 0·22 | 0·36 | 0·19 |
| £190 to £199 | 5·25 | 7·33 | 9·13 | 7·33 | 1·24 | 0·57 | 0·27 | 0·41 | 0·27 |
| £200 to £209 | 4·36 | 9·37 | 10·68 | 15·10 | 6·11 | 1·67 | 0·54 | 0·63 | 0·27 |
| £210 to £219 | 2·74 | 6·98 | 10·54 | 8·08 | 11·81 | 2·87 | 0·53 | 0·66 | 0·36 |
| £220 to £229 | 2·49 | 5·83 | 6·88 | 5·75 | 12·45 | 7·21 | 1·65 | 0·69 | 0·44 |
| £230 to £239 | 1·70 | 4·07 | 5·46 | 6·51 | 5·56 | 8·98 | 3·24 | 1·03 | 0·38 |
| £240 to £249 | 0·93 | 3·67 | 4·60 | 6·83 | 3·70 | 10·64 | 14·13 | 2·82 | 0·30 |
| £250 to £274 | 1·22 | 5·23 | 5·96 | 11·14 | 6·69 | 5·98 | 14·21 | 14·49 | 2·43 |
| £275 to £299 | 0·40 | 1·64 | 3·20 | 5·22 | 11·32 | 6·02 | 7·66 | 13·50 | 4·48 |
| £300+ | 10·10 | 13·53 | 11·63 | 14·95 | 30·51 | 47·44 | 53·92 | 60·37 | 68·51 |
| TOTAL[1] | 99·99 | 100·01 | 99·99 | 100·00 | 100·00 | 99·99 | 99·99 | 99·99 | 99·97 |

[1] Total percentage figures may not equal 100 per cent. due to rounding.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### HMSO

**Mr. Garrett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the terms of reference of the imminent consultancy study of HMSO.

**Mr. David Davis:** I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** All such legal advice to my Department—including its agencies, HMSO and COI—has come from the Treasury Solicitor's Department at an estimated cost to date of £16,500.

## TRANSPORT

### Road Freight

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the maximum road freight movements which the existing road system can accommodate; and if he will set targets for reducing such movements.

**Mr. Key:** My right hon. Friend has made no estimates of the maximum road freight movement that can be accommodated on the existing road system, which would depend on assumptions about vehicles used, other traffic and many other variables.

He has no intention of setting targets for a reduction in such movements. It is to the advantage of the economy if generators of freight movement can choose the most appropriate mode for their purposes.

### Traffic Volume

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will consider setting targets for traffic flow reductions *(a)* within urban areas and *(b)* on inter-urban roads; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the initiatives he is assessing to reduce traffic flows and the use of private vehicles; and if he will set targets for each initiative.

**Mr. Key:** The Government set no targets for reducing traffic flows: it is for individuals and businesses to decide where and how to travel. Nevertheless, the Government do have a responsibility to ensure that, collectively, individual decisions do not have unacceptable consequences for the environment.

Policies aimed at reducing congestion and the environmental impacts of traffic include:

—measures to reduce harmful emissions from vehicles (particularly through requiring 3-way catalytic converters to be fitted to new cars);
—the annual increases in fuel duty announced in the March budget;
—the programme of research into road pricing in London;
—high levels of investment in public transport;
—assistance for local authorities in introducing traffic calming measures;
—assistance for local authorities in developing strategies for urban areas, supported by investment in all forms of transport;
—the recently issued draft planning policy guidance note (PPG 13) on reducing the need to travel;
—investment in bypasses, included in the current roads programme.

### Traffic Growth

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what traffic growth forecasts have been made for *(a)* each region of England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland, for (i) the period 1993 to 2000 and (ii) periods beyond 2000.

**Mr. Key:** My right hon. Friend does not make forecasts for traffic growth for the regions of England. Forecasts are made for particular roads and areas as necessary when considering road schemes. The method used, which is described in the Department's "Traffic Appraisal Manual"—a copy of which is available in the Library—ensures that these scheme specific forecasts are consistent with the national road traffic forecasts. My right hon. Friend's responsibilities do not extend to Scotland and Wales.

### Rail Track (European Gauges)

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the route mileage, listing the actual sections, of British Rail track capable of operating to western European or Berne loading gauges; and what studies of the extension of such mileage are under consideration; and along which routes.

**Mr. Freeman:** There are no railways cleared to such loading gauges in the United Kingdom at present. Although there are no plans to upgrade existing British Rail track to European gauges, it is proposed that the channel tunnel rail link—68 route miles—should be built to the UIC B+ loading gauge. The merits of upgrading certain freight routes to an intermediate gauge are being discussed by British Rail and other interested parties.

### Driver Training

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what proposals he has to improve driver training and testing; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proposals he has to introduce compulsory or voluntary motorway training as part of a programme to improve driving standards; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when he will issue a consultation paper on issuing a probationary driving licence after taking the driving test.

**Mr. Key:** My right hon. Friend is considering possible measures to reduce accidents involving new drivers and to improve their training and testing, and hopes to issue a consultation paper shortly.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Norris:** Approximately £15,000 has been spent on external legal advice on the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations in the past year. Costs of in-house legal advice by activity is not separately recorded.

### Ships (Pollution Control)

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of his Department's programme of port inspection of ships, targeted on pollution control compliance; how many prosecutions the port inspection of ships has led to; and if he will give details of the offences which have been committed.

**Mr. Norris** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* The United Kingdom has inspection programmes for both United Kingdom and foreign-registered ships which include the targeting of ships which may present a special hazard such as tankers. All ship types may be inspected for pollution control compliance as part of such an inspection. Port inspections have led to two successful prosecutions of ships in the last 12 months, both for deficiencies in safety equipment. However, detention has been found to be generally more effective than prosecution in securing early remedial action and can result in the shipowner incurring considerable financial penalties. Non-compliance with international safety and pollution prevention standards led to the detention in United Kingdom ports of 188 United Kingdom and foreign-registered ships during 1992.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of prosecutions that have taken place under the United Kingdom Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage) Orders since 1988; and if he will give details of the fines imposed and the policing that enforces the regulations.

**Mr. Norris** *[holding reply 24 June 1993]:* Since the regulations entered into force, one prosecution has been

instigated by my Department's marine pollution control unit. The vessel concerned was found guilty of the offence, fined £750 and ordered to pay £515 in costs. Further cases may have been brought by other authorities but records are not held centrally.

My Department investigates reports of contravention of the regulations and recommends prosecution where it is considered there is adequate evidence.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Police Inspection

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary met *(a)* the Atomic Energy Police Federation, *(b)* the British Transport Police Federation and *(c)* the Ministry of Defence Police Federation and the representative organisation of other ranks, without their management representatives being present on the occasion of his last inspection of the respective forces.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The British Transport police has its own inspector, separate from Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary. The Atomic Energy police force and the Ministry of Defence police are inspected by Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary by invitation. The conduct of the inspection is a matter for the HMI concerned.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether copies of reports of Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary are made available to the respective local police federation and representative organisations of other ranks.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Yes.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what powers Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary has with respect to *(a)* the Royal Parks constabulary and *(b)* the Northern Ireland Airport police.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary may inspect non-Home Office forces only by invitation.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to request Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary to meet local police federation and representatives of other ranks, without their management representatives being present, when he makes an inspection of a police force.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** It is the existing policy and practice to do so.

### Young Offenders

**Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new methods his Department is proposing to deal more effectively into persistent juvenile offenders.

**Mr. Maclean:** I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend, the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) on 2 March at columns 139-42, in which he announced the Government's intention to provide courts with a new sentence, provisionally entitled a secure training order, to assist them in dealing with persistent juvenile offenders aged 12 to 15. We will bring the necessary legislation before the House as soon as possible.

**Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made in enabling young people who have committed serious offences and represent a danger to the community to be named at an early stage.

**Mr. Maclean:** We are examining the current legislation closely to determine the extent of the present restrictions on publication in order to see what precise changes are necessary. We are determined to come forward with proposals as soon as possible with a view to introducing the necessary legislation in the next Session.

**Mr. Donald Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how often, over the most recent period for which figures are available, courts have bound over the parents of *(a)* children under 16 years who have committed criminal offences and *(b)* 16 and 17-year-olds who have committed criminal offences.

**Mr. Maclean:** Information for 1991 is given in the table. Data for 1992 will not be available until the autumn.

*Number of parents or guardians ordered to enter into a recognisance if juvenile found guilty of a criminal offence by age of juvenile, 1991 England and Wales*

| *Age of offender* | *Number of parents or guardians* |
|---|---|
| 10 to under 16 years | 3 |
| 16 to under 18 years | 1 |
| Total under 18 years | 4 |

### Drug Offences

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the value of the assets seized from people convicted of drug offences in the United Kingdom in each of the last three years.

**Mr. Maclean:** For information relating to England and Wales only, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on 27 May at column 722.

Similar information is not readily available for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

### Entry Clearance

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women waiting for entry clearance visas for entry into the United Kingdom at high commission offices in Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka as at 1 June.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The latest available information for posts in Pakistan and India relates to 31 March 1993 and is given in the table. No information is available centrally on the gender of applicants.

*Number of applicants for Entry Clearance Visas waiting for first interview at 31 March 1993*

*Number of persons*

| *Settlement queues* | *Bombay* | *New Delhi* | *Islamabad* | *Madras* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Queue 1* | | | | |
| Persons with a claim to the right of abode, dependent relatives over 70 years old, special compassionate cases | 0 | 0 | 35 | — |
| *Queue 2* | | | | |
| Spouses, and children under 18 years old | 256 | 337 | 1,096 | — |
| *Queue 3* | | | | |
| Fiance(e)s and others applying for the first time for resettlement | 338 | 183 | 226 | — |
| *Queue 4* | | | | |
| Re-applicants | 246 | 116 | 865 | — |
| Total | 840 | 636 | 2,222 | [1]26 |

[1] Madras does not operate a separate queuing system.

In Calcutta and Colombo, there are no applicants awaiting first interview. Information on the number of applicants in Karachi is not available centrally but all applicants are expected to receive a first interview within three weeks.

### Crime Prevention, Portsmouth

**Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what specific help his Department is giving to assist action against theft and vandalism through the use of video cameras to assist in crime prevention in Portsmouth.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** No specific assistance has been given to Portsmouth. But the Home Office crime prevention centre gives practical advice to all police forces on the use of closed circuit television as a crime prevention measure and the police research group has published an evaluation of the effectiveness of CCTV in car parks which has been sent to all police forces.

### Domestic Violence

**Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the Government's response to the third report of Session 1992-93 from the Home Affairs Committee on domestic violence (HC 245).

**Mr. Maclean:** I refer the hon. Member to the Government's reply to this report which is being published today as Command Paper 2269. A copy has been placed in the Library.

### Chinese Refugees

**Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Chinese nationals are now political refugees in the United Kingdom arising from the Tiananmen square demonstrations; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The available information is that in the period 4 June 1989 to 31 December 1992 a total of 115 Chinese nationals—excluding dependants—who had applied for asylum in the United Kingdom were recognised as refugees and granted asylum here. In addition, 95 Chinese nationals—excluding dependants—who had applied for asylum were not recognised as refugees but were granted exceptional leave. At 31 December 1992, about 600 applications for asylum by Chinese nationals—excluding dependants—were awaiting a decision.

Also, as at end January 1993, an estimated 900 Chinese nationals—excluding dependants—had been allowed to remain in the United Kingdom on an exceptional basis without applying for asylum, under the arrangements announced in June 1989 for those in the United Kingdom on 4 June 1989 and who were unwilling to return to China for the time being.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Since November 1991 all legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1988 for the Home Office market-testing programme has been obtained from Home Office legal advisers. It is not possible to isolate the cost of this advice.

### Sheehy Report

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many copies of the Sheehy report he proposes to supply free of charge to the Superintendents Association of England and Wales, on publication of the report.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Sixty.

### Immigration Statistics

**Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many dependants have been admitted for settlement in each of the past 25 years from *(a)* Africa, *(b)* the Indian sub-continent, *(c)* the rest of Asia, *(d)* the Caribbean and *(f)* the rest of the world.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Information on the total numbers of spouses and dependants for settlement in the United Kingdom in the years of 1974 to 1992 is given in table 14 of Home Office Command Paper "Control of

Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 1984", table 9 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 1991" and table 3 of Home Office statistical bulletin issue 14/93 "Control of Immigration Statistics-Third and Fourth Quarters and Year 1992". Copies of these publications are in the Library.

A breakdown by the nationality regions requested of acceptances of spouses and children in the years 1981 to 1992 is given in the table. Breakdowns are by region of acceptances of other dependants, and of spouses and children.

The numbers of spouses and dependants accepted in the years 1968 to 1973 are not separately identifiable in the statistics.

*Acceptances for settlement of spouses and children by geographical region, 1982-1992*

*United Kingdom* — *Number of persons*

| *Geographical region* | *1982* | *1983* | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* | [1]*1992* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Africa | 2,570 | 3,000 | 3,100 | 3,400 | 2,950 | 3,760 | 4,290 | 4,420 | 6,450 | 7,500 | 6,540 |
| Indian sub-continent | 17,230 | 14,380 | 12,900 | 15,310 | 12,360 | 9,580 | 9,930 | 9,530 | 10,360 | 11,190 | 11,820 |
| Remainder of Asia | 4,670 | 5,330 | 5,180 | 5,340 | 5,150 | 5,470 | 5,510 | 5,290 | 6,560 | 7,050 | 6,530 |
| Caribbean countries[2] | 400 | 490 | 490 | 600 | 650 | 710 | 830 | 640 | 1,120 | 1,640 | 1,400 |
| Rest of the world | 9,940 | 11,240 | 11,630 | 11,750 | 10,080 | 10,710 | 10,530 | 8,630 | 11,370 | 12,310 | 11,440 |
| Total (all nationalities)[3] | 34,810 | 34,440 | 33,300 | 36,400 | 31,190 | 30,230 | 31,090 | 28,510 | 35,860 | 39,690 | 37,730 |

[1] Provisional.

[2] Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and (for 1982 and 1983 only) West Indian Associated States. Information for other Caribbean countries is not separately identifiable in the statistics and is contained in the figures for "Rest of the world".

[3] The fall in acceptances after 1985 and 1988, and part of the increase in 1990 and 1991 reflects the temporary effect, and subsequent unwinding, of the introduction in 1985 and extension in 1988 of the requirement that wives serve a probationary year prior to settlement. Acceptances from 1986 were also reduced by an estimated 1,200-3,000 a year as a result of a determination by the Immigration Appeal Tribunal that those who apply for settlement but have the right of abode should be given a certificate or confirmation of that right instead of an entry clearance.

### Hong Kong

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he has made to allow applicants for British national (overseas) status in Hong Kong to continue to hold a British dependent territories citizen passport when they are registered as British national (overseas) status.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** We have agreed with the Hong Kong Government that the following arrangements will come into effect on 1 July:

(i) A person registered as a British national (Overseas) (BN(O)) who has a British dependent territories citizen (BDTC) passport which is valid until 30 June 1997 may retain it when issued with his BN(O) passport.

(ii) A BN(O) applicant who wishes to have a new BDTC passport as well as a BN(O) passport must pay the prescribed fees for both the BDTC and BN(O) passports.

(iii) The fee for a BDTC passport will be the same for all applicants regardless of when the passport is issued.

(iv) An existing BN(O) who gave up his BDTC passport when registering as a BN(O) and who wishes to re-acquire a BDTC passport may do so on payment of the appropriate BDTC passport fee.

All BDTC passports will, of course, expire on 30 June 1997.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Hepatitis and Dysentery

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of *(a)* viral hepatitis and *(b)* dysentery have been reported in each regional health authority in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Ancram:** The information is as follows:

| | *Viral Hepatitis* | *Dysentery* |
|---|---|---|
| 1988 | 527 | 58 |
| 1989 | 402 | 375 |
| 1990 | 313 | 51 |
| 1991 | 440 | 66 |
| 1992 | 304 | 174 |

### 11-plus Examination

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what dates the 11-plus examination will be held this year; what provision has been made for trial examination papers to be available; what guidelines primary school teachers have received for this examination; how parents of children for this examination have been kept advised; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ancram:** The transfer procedure tests will be held on 15 October and 26 November 1993. Practice tests will not be issued to schools. A specimen paper was issued to all schools on 27 April to give an indication of the variety and type of questions which may appear in the main tests; a further batch of sample questions will be issued to schools at the beginning of September. The tests will be based on the programmes of study for English, mathematics and science which schools have been required to follow since 1990.

Schools were notified of the test arrangements by circular on 17 February 1993; further details were given in a circular on 27 April which accompanied the specimen paper and in a further circular on 22 June. Copies of an information leaflet about the new tests have been sent to all primary schools for distribution to the parents of all pupils eligible to take the tests in the autumn. I am satisfied that schools have sufficient information to enable them to prepare pupils adequately for the tests.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** During the period of the market-testing programme identified in the citizens charter White Paper last November, some £400 has been spent on legal advice from the private sector on the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations for the market-testing programme. It is not possible to identify separately the cost advice provided by in-house legal advisers during the same period.

### Disabled People

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were registered as disabled in Northern Ireland on the most recent date for which this information is available.

**Mr. Atkins:** Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Training and Employment Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. S. Crozier. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from J. S. Crozier to Mr. Terry Davis, dated 28 June 1993:*

You recently asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were registered disabled in Northern Ireland on the most recent date for which this information is available.

The Secretary of State has passed your question to me as Chief Executive of the Training and Employment Agency, for reply.

The latest date for which the information you require is available is 25 June 1993 when the number of people on the Register of Disabled Persons was 10,180.

## SCOTLAND

### HIV

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether he will review the level of funding for non-statutory providers of education about HIV risks;

(2) what information he has on the resources allocated to counselling people who are HIV positive;

(3) what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the current strategy for HIV prevention; and if he will hold discussions on the subject with relevant groups;

(4) whether he will fund research into the effectiveness of current education strategies aimed at decreasing the risk of HIV infection;

(5) whether he will review existing mainstream health education on HIV with a view to targeting gay men more effectively.

**Mr. Stewart:** The prevention of HIV and AIDS was identified as a priority in the national policy statement "Health Education in Scotland" published in March 1991. Later that year, a ministerial task force was set up to consider how current prevention initiatives could be further developed and enhanced. The task force report, "Prevention the Key", was published in 1992 and its wide-ranging recommendations are now being implemented.

The task force recognised the invaluable contribution made by voluntary organisations in providing educational information on the risks of HIV and in providing support to those infected and affected by HIV or AIDS. Grants are made to voluntary bodies under section 16B of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 for HIV and AIDS services and/or initiatives. Planned expenditure for such purposes in 1993-94 by the Scottish Office Home and Health Department amounts to £154,000, 7 per cent. more than in 1992-93.

The task force report stressed the importance of prevention initiatives among gay men and this continues to be one of the themes of public education campaigns. The report also underlined the need for evaluation strategies and the AIDS Prevention Co-ordinating Group for Scotland (APCGS), set up in November 1992 in accordance with a recommendation of the task force, has been paying particular regard to the effectiveness of current strategies and discussing ideas for new prevention initiatives. The APCGS includes health board and local authority representation and representatives from the voluntary sector, the Health Education Board for Scotland and the police and prison services.

### NHS Reforms

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the cost to date of implementing NHS reforms.

**Mr. Stewart:** No details of actual expenditure by health boards on the NHS reforms are held centrally. However, an extra £121 million has been allocated to boards, in the four years since 1990-91, to help meet any additional costs incurred. This amounts to about 1 per cent. of health board expenditure over this period. The considerable benefits for patient care flowing from the reforms support the Government's investment in them.

### Hepatitis and Dysentery

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of *(a)* viral hepatitis and *(b)* dysentery have been reported in each health authority in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Stewart:** The numbers of cases of viral hepatitis and bacillary dysentery, notified by health board area since 1988, are set out in the tables.

*Table 1: Notifications of Bacillary Dysentery*

| | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* | *1992* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Scotland | 196 | 154 | 235 | 1,526 | 3,486 |
| Argyll and Clyde | 16 | 7 | 13 | 12 | 57 |
| Ayrshire and Arran | 7 | 3 | 7 | 51 | 306 |
| Borders | 10 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 25 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 3 | 2 | — | 80 | 20 |

| | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fife | 8 | 16 | 5 | 111 | 439 |
| Forth Valley | 6 | 13 | 76 | 51 | 52 |
| Grampian | 18 | 11 | 11 | 16 | 387 |
| Greater Glasgow | 32 | 31 | 50 | 778 | 702 |
| Highland | 3 | 5 | 2 | 11 | 14 |
| Lanarkshire | 27 | 21 | 15 | 115 | 241 |
| Lothian | 47 | 34 | 37 | 266 | 753 |
| Orkney | — | — | 1 | — | 1 |
| Shetland | 1 | 1 | — | — | — |
| Tayside | 18 | 2 | 16 | 32 | 489 |
| Western Isles | — | 1 | — | — | — |

*Table 2: Notifications of Viral Hepatitis*

| | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Scotland | 848 | 831 | 546 | 556 | 319 |
| Argyll and Clyde | 14 | 23 | 20 | 13 | 13 |
| Ayrshire and Arran | 35 | 26 | 60 | 100 | 34 |
| Borders | 9 | 2 | 2 | 21 | 4 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 11 | — | 4 | — | 24 |
| Fife | 39 | 17 | 26 | 9 | 21 |
| Forth Valley | 18 | 11 | 5 | 7 | 7 |
| Grampian | 31 | 46 | 51 | 55 | 21 |
| Greater Glasgow | 135 | 142 | 175 | 224 | 99 |
| Highland | 14 | 18 | 10 | 17 | 5 |
| Lanarkshire | 26 | 16 | 28 | 12 | 10 |
| Lothian | 448 | 364 | 78 | 75 | 69 |
| Orkney | — | — | 1 | 1 | — |
| Shetland | — | — | — | — | — |
| Tayside | 68 | 166 | 86 | 19 | 12 |
| Western Isles | — | — | — | 3 | — |

## Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Lang:** Legal advice on the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations in relation to market testing has been provided by my Department's own in-house legal advisers. It is not possible to disaggregate the cost of this advice from the totality of their legal advice on all market-testing matters.

## Tourism

**Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the review of tourism support arrangements in Scotland.

**Mr. Lang:** The tourism review shows that Scottish tourism is in good heart and eager to work at an evolving partnership. The Minister with responsibility for tourism at the Scottish Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), will ensure that this is achieved.

Under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend, the composition of the Scottish tourism co-ordinating group will be reviewed and strengthened. It will supervise the preparation of a national strategic plan for Scottish tourism covering business development as well as marketing. The preparation of this plan will be the responsibility of the Scottish tourist board, working in close collaboration with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The plan will be put into effect by all three national bodies and will provide a framework for co-operation at local level between business interests, area tourist boards, local enterprise companies and the local authorities. The preparation of effective local strategies will be facilitated. In this way the public sector will help the Scottish tourist industry to forge a strong new sense of purpose.

At the national level the arrangements for supporting Scottish tourism will be clarified. As from 1 April 1994 responsibility for tourism marketing and for area tourist board support will be consolidated in the Scottish tourist board. Also from this date business development activities will be consolidated in the Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise networks. STB's activities under the section 4 scheme of capital assistance will be phased out. As from the date of this announcement no further formal applications for assistance will be accepted. Resources will be transferred to reflect these adjusted responsibilities. In terms of public expenditure the effect will be neutral.

Collaboration among the national agencies will be underpinned by suitable appointments at board level. Arrangements for consulting the tourist industry will be improved by strengthening the Scottish Confederation of Tourism. As part of the "Scotland in the Union" initiative, the Scottish tourist board will establish, by 1 April 1995, a substantial office presence in Inverness and make compensating reductions in staffing levels in Edinburgh, which will remain the head office.

As facilitators, providers of infrastructure and operators of tourist attractions, Scottish local authorities will remain major partners in the tourist industry. The proposed legislation for restructuring local government in Scotland will contain a statutory obligation on councils to

participate in the formation of area tourist boards, the number of which will be greatly reduced. It will also provide a power to make an order defining the boundaries of area tourist boards. The Scottish tourist board will be responsible for consulting local authorities and other interests and for advising me on the most suitable future area tourist board structure, which will cover the whole of Scotland.

The proposed legislation will provide a duty on local authorities, where they wish to market their areas as tourist destinations and provide services to visitors, to do so only through an area tourist board. Area tourist boards will be required to co-ordinate overseas activities with those of the Scottish tourist board. In order to encourage further evolution of industry involvement in area tourist boards, the proposed legislation will provide that on executive committees, the members representing trade interests shall be in a majority. My hon. Friend will consider ways of strengthening local authority and area tourist board involvement in the development of tourism policy at the national level.

Overall these changes build on the Scottish tourist industry's strengths, especially its understanding of the need for effective partnerships. They will eliminate the present duplication of effort identified by many who responded to the tourism review. The improved arrangements will help ensure the continued profitability and competitiveness of an industry which has a world-wide reputation for quality, friendliness and good service. My colleagues and I are grateful to all those who contributed to the tourism review with their time and ideas.

## Health Service Costs

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what the total budget for the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland region blood donor centre was in each of the past 10 years;

(2) what the total budget for the protein fractionation centre in Scotland was in each of the past 10 years;

(3) what the total budget for the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland region regional centre at the Royal Infirmary was in each of the past 10 years.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 28 June 1993]:* The information available relates to expenditure and is as follows:

*South East Regional Transfusion Centre*

| *Year ended 31 March* | *Expenditure* *Revenue* £ | *Capital* £ |
|---|---|---|
| 1983 | 2,452,659 | n/a |
| 1984 | 2,822,873 | 10,459 |
| 1985 | 2,951,939 | 206,018 |
| 1986 | 3,227,797 | 238,905 |
| 1987 | 3,274,916 | 111,652 |
| 1988 | 3,586,185 | 233,812 |
| 1989 | 3,798,245 | 230,366 |
| 1990 | 4,013,776 | 732,161 |
| 1991 | 4,241,865 | 618,422 |
| 1992 | 4,920,147 | 857,856 |

*Note:*—Separate figures for the Edinburgh and South East Scotland Region Blood Donor Centre are not available. The expenditure is included in the above figures.

*Protein Fractionation Centre*

| *Year ended 31 March* | *Expenditure* *Revenue* £ | *Capital* £ |
|---|---|---|
| 1983 | 2,065,563 | n/a |
| 1984 | 2,190,680 | 242,520 |
| 1985 | 2,339,254 | 756,928 |
| 1986 | 2,700,728 | 716,656 |
| 1987 | 2,855,554 | 278,090 |
| 1988 | 3,239,405 | 647,205 |
| 1989 | 3,284,053 | 531,563 |
| 1990 | 3,667,996 | 1,315,526 |
| 1991 | 4,081,428 | 978,776 |
| 1992 | 4,459,572 | 2,505,399 |

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### RECHAR

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps his Department has made to extract funds from the European Commission to enable the RECHAR 2 programme to go ahead on 1 January 1994.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** RECHAR has been one of 14 Community initiatives under the European structural funds. The future of these Community initiatives as a whole is at present under discussion in the Council in Brussels.

### Contact Lens Cleaners

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to encourage the provision of more sales outlets for cleaning and soaking solutions for contact lenses.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** This is already the Government's policy. A recent Monopolies and Mergers Commission report recommended, among other things, that the retailing of contact lens solutions—CLS—should be opened to all retailers who wished to sell them, subject to satisfying standards for storage and product recall. As I announced on 27 May, my hon. Friend the Minister for Health has decided, following recent independent expert advice, that the existing rules restricting retail sales of CLS to opticians and pharmacies could be relaxed without any increased risk to health. Companies may now apply for appropriate changes to their product licences to permit supply of CLS via general sales outlets, such as supermarkets.

### Manufacturing Industry

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received on the competitiveness of British manufacturing industry.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade receives a wide range of representations on the competitiveness of British manufacturing industry. The competitive position of United Kingdom industry has strengthened considerably in the 12 months to April this year, during which period manufacturing productivity has increased by nearly 8 per cent.

### Assisted Areas

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) of 17 June, *Official Report*, column *715*, what response he has had from the European Commission to his proposals for a new assisted areas map.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I refer to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 25 June, *Official Report*, columns *293-94*.

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The Department is committed to purchasing recycled paper and recycling paper stationery products, wherever possible; installing energy efficient lighting wherever practicable; and reducing the use of tropical hardwoods where possible in the Department's building works and furniture, making every effort to ensure that, when tropical hardwoods are used, they come from sustainable sources. All new petrol cars purchased have catalytic converters fitted. The Department's green housekeeping strategy does not at present cover the use of peat; however, this will be kept under review.

### Accounting Firms

**Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration he has given to the introduction of legislation debarring firms of accountants who have prepared a report on a business from accepting a commission for a receivership consequent upon such a report.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** I have considered carefully the arguments both for and against investigating accountants being debarred from taking subsequent insolvency appointments and I am not convinced that the practice should be proscribed.

### House Insurance

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimates he has of the increases in insurance premiums for home *(a)* buildings and *(b)* contents policies in each of the last five years, and in the current year; what are those figures deflated by the retail prices index; and what estimates he has of the number of householders or occupiers who do not have (i) buildings and (ii) contents insurance.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The Department does not collect data on premium levels. The individual components of the retail prices index relating to buildings and contents insurance are not published separately. The latest family expenditure survey figures indicate that 24·1 per cent. of households are not holders of household contents insurance policies and 37·9 per cent. are not holders of building insurance polices.

### Deregulation

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of his Department's consultation on deregulation opportunities conducted with seven buisness sectors; and if he will indicate the environmental areas which will be affected by deregulation.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The seven sectoral deregulation task forces are still examining the impact of regulation on business and have not yet made recommendations.

### Nuclear Power Industry

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will include nuclear waste management, decommissioning of plants, financial controls and United Kingdom Government cover of future liabilities within the terms of reference of his review of the future of the United Kingdom nuclear power industry; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Eggar:** The timing and scope of the review of the future prospects for nuclear power in the United Kingdom are under consideration within Government. A further announcement will be made in due course.

### Coal Industry

**Mr. Churchill:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to underpin the future of the 12 pits of which he announced the reprieve on 29 March; if he will make a statement about the future of each of these 12 pits; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the most recent guidelines he has given British Coal and the generators about the level of strategic reserve coal stocks and the rate at which these are being drawn down.

**Mr. Eggar:** Decisions about the future of individual collieries are a matter for British Coal, after consultation with the unions. However, the Government have offered a subsidy to both British Coal and private sector coal producers that can secure a genuinely additional market for United Kingdom underground coal for electricity generation at world-related prices where this is consistent with the relevant European Community provisions.

I understand British Coal is continuing to test the market for supplementary sales.

Guidance on the level of coal stocks for 1993-94 based on an analysis by the National Grid Company was given to the generators in March. It contains commercially confidential information which it would not be appropriate to make public. This guidance will remain in force pending the outcome of the Government's review of the basis for the current arrangements, which was announced in the White Paper, "The Prospects for Coal: Conclusions of the Government's Coal Review".

### Exports

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of United Kingdom manufacturing exports were accounted for by internal company trading in each year since 1979.

**Mr. Needham:** The information is not available.

### Inward Investment

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate has been made of the number of new jobs achieved through inward investment in *(a)* the past five years and *(b)* the preceding five years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** My Department's Invest in Britain Bureau has been notified of 1,411 inward investment decisions between 1982 and 1986 with 95,035 new jobs created. Similarly, between 1987 and 1991 there were 1,696 decisions, creating 129,955 new jobs. These figures are based on information provided by the companies at the time of the announcement to invest. There is no requirement to notify the Department and so the figures include only those projects where the Department's Invest in Britain Bureau and its regional partners were involved or which have come to their notice. They take no account of subsequent developments.

### Plutonium 240

**Mr. David Alton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps his Department takes to monitor the end-use of plutonium 240 exported overseas.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* A licence is required for the export of plutonium-240. The Government take into account end-use and destination in assessing a licence application.

Plutonium-240 is not classified as a special fissionable material. However, materials containing plutonium-240 are associated with other isotopes of plutonium which are subject to safeguards. Such materials would therefore come under the oversight of the international safeguards authorities.

### National Environmental Technology Centre

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 10 June to the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), *Official Report*, columns *303-04*, if he will outline the environmental research work he expects the national environmental technology centre to conduct for the Government.

**Mr. McLoughlin** *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on 21 June, *Official Report*, column *23*.

### British Nuclear Fuels

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the forward corporate plan from BNFL covering the next 15 years as submitted to his Department.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* No.

### Assisted Areas

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many meetings he had with the European Commission prior to the submission of the assisted areas map on 15 June; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 23 June 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has not met the commission to discuss the assisted areas map. Officials from the DTI held informal meetings with commission officials prior to the submission of the proposed map on 15 June.

### Public Appointments

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of Public Bodies 1992.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 25 June 1993]:* There would be disproportionate cost involved in providing the names, occupations and current employers of all the Department's public appointees. The key considerations taken into

account in making public appointments, in addition to any statutory criteria which may relate to a particular post, are the needs of the post and the skills of the particular individual. The following table indicates the current position in relation to those bodies where posts or salaries have changed since 1 September 1992. In addition, various allowances are paid to cover travel and subsistence and other costs in some cases.

| Body | Posts: Chairman | Posts: Deputy, etc. | Posts: Members | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Nationalised industries* | | | | |
| British Shipbuilders | 1. £17,368 | — | 2. £5,000 and under | No change |
| British Coal Corporation[1] | 1. £234,360 | 2. £110,000* | 4. £95,000*<br>£93,744*<br>£88,536*<br>£85,000*<br>5. under £8,000 | * Plus performance related bonus (currently under review) of up to 25 per cent. of salary |
| British Nuclear Fuels plc[1] | 1. £85,300** | 1. £100,000—£105,000** | 1. £145,000**<br>1. £135,000**<br>1. £115,000**<br>1. £100,000—£105,000**<br>1. £80,000—£85,000**<br>5. £10,000 | One member is a Chief Executive.<br>** The Chairman and full-time Board Members receive performance related bonus of up to 30 per cent. of salary |
| Nuclear Electric plc[1] | 1. £150,925† | 1. £160,000†<br>1. £145,777†<br>1. £95,000†<br>1. £85,000†<br>1. £81,505† | 6. £10,015 | No change.<br>† A performance related bonus of up to 30 per cent. of salary is available |
| Post Office | 1. £91,500‡ | 1. £58,662‡ | 1. £175,001—£180,000‡<br>1. £100,001—£105,000‡<br>2. £95,001—£100,000‡<br>1. £15,001—£20,000<br>1. £10,001—£15,000<br>2. £5,001—£10,000 | ‡ Plus performance related bonus of up to 40 per cent. of salary |

[1] Transferred from Department of Energy to Department of Trade and Industry in April 1992.

| Body | Posts: Chairman | Posts: Deputy, etc. | Posts: Members | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Consumer consultative bodies* | | | | |
| Advisory Committees on Telecommunications for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland | 3. £60 per day | — | 34 | |
| Area Transport Users' Consultative Committees | 8. £6,310 | 8 | 118 | |
| Central Transport Consultative Committee | 1. £7,910 | 1 | 12 | |
| Domestic Coal Consumers' Council | 1. £60 per day | 1 | 10 | |
| Gas Consumers' Council | 1. £14,150 | 1. £6,730 | 11. £5,300<br>5 | |
| London Regional Passengers' Committee | 1. £11,010 | 2 | 20 | |
| National Consumer Council | [1. £43·90 per day]<br>1. £19,905<br>2. £4,730 | 1. £12,720 | 16. £4,730<br>25. £72 per day | |
| Post Office Users' National Council | 1. £10,610 | — | 16 | |
| Post Office Users' Councils for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland | 3. £60 per day | — | 29 | No change |

Square brackets denote an appointment by others.

| Body | Posts: Chairman | Posts: Deputy, etc. | Posts: Members | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Executive, etc. bodies* | | | | |
| British Hallmarking Council | [1. £5,750] | — | 10. [6] | No change |
| National Enterprise Board[1] | 1 | — | 6 | No change |
| National Research Development Corporation | | | | No change |

| Body | Chairman | Posts: Deputy, etc. | Members | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Design Council | — | 1 | 21 | |
| English Industrial Estates Corporation (EIEC) | 1, £25,315 | 1, £9,648 | 4, £5,220<br>1[2] | |
| Hearing Aid Council | 1 | — | 12 | No change |
| Monopolies and Mergers Commission | 1, £90,150† | 3, £31,625 | 28, £12,735[3]<br>5, £12,735[4] | † Full-time appointment |
| Policyholders' Protection Board | 1, £350 per day | — | 4, £230 per day[4] | No change |
| The Simpler Trade Procedures Board | 1 | [1] | 1, £51,540‡ [9] | No change.<br>‡ Full-time appointment |
| United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority[5] | 1, £55,640 | 1, £104,000†* | 3, £83,200<br>5, £7,570 | † Full-time appointment<br>* Chief Executive |

[1] The figures reflect the privatisation (January 1992) and the subsequent sale (March 1992) of BTG and the continued existence of the NEB and NRDC Board to facilitate orderly winding up.
[2] EIEC's Chief Executive.
[3] Including eight reserve members paid only when serving on references.
[4] Including one reserve member paid only when serving as a reference.
[5] Transferred from Department of Energy to Department of Trade and Industry in April 1992.

Square brackets denote an appointment by others.

| Body | Chairman | Posts: Deputy, etc. | Members | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Advisory bodies* | | | | |
| Advanced Manufacturing Technology Committee | 1 | — | 11 | No change |
| Advisory Committee on Arbitration Law | 1 | 1 | 16 | No change |
| Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for England | 1, £60 per day | — | 9 | No change |
| Advisory Council of Research and Development[1] | 1 | — | 10 | |
| Advisory Panel on Deregulation | 1 | — | 7 | |
| Aviation Committee | 1 | — | 14 | No change |
| British Overseas Trade Board | 1, £19,985 | 1 | 18 | |
| Coal Task Force[1] | 1 | — | 14 | |
| Engineering Technology Advisory Committee | 1 | — | 14 | |
| Industrial Development Advisory Board | 1 | — | 10 | No change |
| Information Technology Advisory Board | 1 | — | 15 | No change |
| Innovation Advisory Board | 1 | — | 10 | |
| LINK Steering Group | 1 | — | 7 | |
| Monitoring Committee on Misleading Price Indications | 1 | — | [30] | No change |
| Offshore Industry Advisory Board[1] | 1 | — | 23 | |
| Overseas Projects Board | 1 | — | 14 | |
| Regional Industrial Developments Boards | 5 | — | 47 | No change |
| Renewable Energy Advisory Committee[1] | 1 | — | 15 | No change |
| Standards, Quality and Measurement Advisory Committee | 1 | — | 12 | No change |

| Body | Chairman | Posts Deputy, etc. | Members | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Standing Advisory Committee on Industrial Property | 1 | — | [17] | No change |

[1] Transferred from Department of Energy to Department of Trade and Industry in April 1992.

Square brackets denote an appointment by others.

| Body | Chairman | Posts Deputy, etc. | Members | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Tribunals, etc.* | | | | |
| Copyright Tribunal | 1, £300 per day* | 2 | 7, £177 per day* | * Appointed from a panel of 3 chairpersons and 7 members |
| Insolvency Practitioners Tribunal | 1, £10 per day** | — | 2, £16 per day** | ** Appointed from a panel consisting of 5 chairpersons and 16 members |
| Persons Hearing Consumer Credit Licensing Appeals | 1, £221 per day† | — | 2, £113 per day† | † Appointed from a panel of 21 chairpersons and 12 members |
| Persons Hearing Estate Agents Appeals | 1, £221 per day‡ | — | 2, £113 per day‡ | ‡ Appointed from a panel of 14 chairpersons and 18 members |

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Mr. Sproat:** The Department of National Heritage has not yet finalised the formulation of its environmental policy. None the less, where possible we are practising the policy in anticipation of its formal introduction. The majority of the Department's staff have recently moved into a new central headquarters building and we have adopted the following practices with regard to the items mentioned:

*(a)* Recycled paper—Recycled paper is used wherever possible. Our bulk supply of white A4 paper and our letterheaded paper are all recycled.

*(b)* Low-energy light bulbs—Low-energy light bulbs have been installed in the new headquarters building. Automatic presence detectors ensure that no lights are left on unnecessarily.

*(c)* Tropical Hardwoods—No tropical hardwoods or woods from unreplenished forests have been used in fitting out the new headquarters.

*(d)* Peat—Use of peat or similar substances is minimal at our headquaters building, as we have no grounds. A total volume of only 3,000 litres (approximately) of potting mixture is used for live plant displays within the offices and the compost used is a mixture containing part moss peat.

*(e)* Cars—The Department does not purchase any cars and relies on the Government car service for its needs.

The Department has two agencies, the Historic Royal Palaces agency and the Royal Parks, which follow environmental guidelines for making the most efficient and economic use of the resources under their control. Recycled paper and low-energy light bulbs are used wherever possible. Tropical hardwoods are not used in furniture purchased by the agencies. English oak is used wherever possible for garden furniture at the royal palaces. Both agencies are committed to reducing the use of peat by replacing it with alternative formulations wherever possible. The Historic Royal Palaces agency does not purchase any cars. From 1995 a new vehicle hire contract will require all royal parks and royal parks constabulary vehicles to be fitted with catalytic converters whenever possible.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Sproat:** Nothing.

## PRIME MINISTER

### European Council

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral statement on the European Council in Copenhagen of 23 June, *Official Report*, columns 309-10, what were the main elements of the Commission paper on information disclosure and transparency discussed at the Council; and what was the policy position advanced by the United Kingdom on openness during the Council deliberations on the Commission's proposals.

**The Prime Minister:** The main points of the Commission's paper are:

—a positive assessment of progress since Birmingham/Edinburgh;

—suggestions for future activity, including follow-up to the Sutherland report on the single market (which addressed the need to ensure its effectiveness, for example through better explanation of the legislation and its rationale) and simplification of Community legislation to reduce burdens on business;

—the possibility of a round table meeting with regional/local authorities and NGOs;

—the need for a more responsive and effective Commission information/press service;

a request to member states to improve openness at national level about the implementation of Community policies;

the idea of an inter-institutional agreement on access to information.

At Copenhagen, we welcomed the progress made since the Edinburgh European Council, in opening up the work of the Council of Ministers, had emphasised the importance of continuing work in this area, including on the Commission's proposals for granting public access to information held by the Community's institutions.

### Third World Debt

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to propose at the July summit of the G7 nations steps to ensure compliance with, and full implementation of, the Trinidad terms in relation to African poverty and debt; and if he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** The summit agenda is a matter for the Japanese. But we hope debt of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries will be one of the central issues for discussion at the summit. Our position on Trinidad terms for these countries is well known. I shall certainly continue to press for full Trinidad terms, in line with my original proposal for a benchmark of two thirds immediate reduction on the whole stock of debt, with up to 80 per cent. reduction for those in the greatest need.

### Yugoslavia

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will seek to convene a special EC Heads of Government meeting to consider emergency financial and other assistance to Croatia and Slovenia to support refugees in both countries and to review the EC refugee burden sharing arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** The European Community has, since the beginning of the crisis in former Yugoslavia, made available £397 million for humanitarian relief. This includes a £119 million contribution at the end of last month. The United Kingdom has given a further £44·5 million bilaterally. Both these figures include substantial grants to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee—UNHCR. UNHCR will hold a donor meeting in mid-July to consider future needs.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Prime Minister what further financial and other assistance European Community countries are proposing to make available to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia to support refugees and displaced persons; and if he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will chair a meeting of donors in mid-July in Geneva. That meeting will focus on the latest detailed analysis of the needs of displaced people and others affected by the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, including Slovenia and Croatia. The acceptance of refugees and displaced people from the former Yugoslavia is the subject of frequent discussion between EC member states but at present there are no formal burden-sharing arrangements.

### Engagements

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 June.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 June.

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of his Departments on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Sir John Cope:** The Chancellor of the Exchequer's Departments all pursue a policy of green housekeeping. In respect of the items referred to:

(a) where possible and cost effective, recycled paper is used;

(b) low-energy light bulbs are already in use or are being progressively installed in all Departments;

(c) where technically feasible, tropical hardwoods will not be used;

(d) peat is not used by several Departments; advice on avoiding the use of peat will be issued by others;

(e) some Departments already use cars with catalytic converters and in future all cars purchased or leased will have catalytic converters where practicable.

### Departmental Speeches

**Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to place copies of speeches given by officials of his Department and the Inland Revenue in the Library.

**Mr. Dorrell:** No. Officials in the Treasury and the Inland Revenue make a large number of speeches in the course of a year, many on subjects of interest only to a small number. However if a Member expresses interest in a particular speech that is on the record, a copy can then be placed in the Library.

### Unit Trusts

**Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate has been made of the direct revenue effect in the years 1993-94 and 1994-95 of the announcements *(a)* that unit trust managers will be allowed to stream income which they receive and pay to corporate unit holders as between franked and unfranked income and *(b)* that there will be legislation to allow unit trusts to pay interest and other unfranked income gross to non-UK residents.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The estimated costs of the proposals are in the table.

| | | £ million |
|---|---|---|
| | 1993-94 | 1994-95 |
| (a) Unit trust dividends received by companies to be divided into franked and unfranked components | 10 | 25 |
| (b) Distributions out of underlying interest income of unit trusts to be paid gross to certain non-UK residents | nil | negligible |

*Note:* The position regarding unfranked income other than interest paid to non-UK residents is not yet settled.

### Finance Industry (Debt)

**Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of (a) general and (b) specific provision for debt, as classified by the Inland Revenue, in the bank, finance and insurance sector for each year since 1985-86.

**Mr. Dorrell:** I regret the information requested is not available.

### Corporation Tax

**Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff have been employed at the Inland Revenue on tax compliance work in connection with the corporation tax liabilities of banks and the finance sector in each year since 1985.

**Mr. Dorrell:** This information is not available.

### Construction Industry

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to combat tax evasion in the construction industry.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Improvements to the existing tax regime in the construction industry are currently under consideration, as part of our commitment to tackling tax evasion wherever it arises.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to lower the VAT registration threshold to nil turnover for businesses in the construction industry.

**Sir John Cope:** None.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to review the value added tax arrangements for the construction industry in order to reduce evasion; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir John Cope:** There are no plans to introduce special VAT arrangements in the construction industry. However, Customs and Excise seek to minimise evasion as a matter of course.

### VAT

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to simplify the VAT regime.

**Sir John Cope:** The Government keep the VAT system under regular review, in consultation with the relevant trade and professional bodies. Improvements proposed in the last Budget include the reform of VAT penalties and default surcharge, halving the qualifying period for claiming bad debt relief, and increasing the turnover threshold for using the cash accounting scheme to £350,000.

In addition, Customs and Excise have embarked on a deregulation five-year rolling review of VAT law and administrative procedures with the aim of making VAT more user-friendly. Trade and professional bodies have been invited to identify areas in which there is scope for simplification.

**Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is is estimate of the total official revenue that will accrue to the Exchequer in a full year by imposing VAT at the rate of 5 per cent. on the goods and services described in categories 1, 6, and 8 of annex A of directive 92/77/EEC.

**Sir John Cope** *[holding answer 28 June 1993]:* Estimates of VAT revenue that would occur in a full year from a 5 per cent. rate are as follows:

| | £ million |
|---|---|
| Food | 2,000 |
| Books, newspapers and magazines | 300 |
| Artist royalties | −50 |

These estimates are for 1992-93 and make no allowance for behavioural change.

### Uncollected Tax

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimated level of uncollected PAYE and national insurance contributions deducted but not paid over to the Revenue, in figures and as a percentage, for each year since 1979.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The amounts of PAYE and NIC remitted or written off as irrecoverable since 1979 are as follows:

| Year | PAYE amount in £ thousands | As a percentage of total PAYE collected | Classes 1 and 1A NIC—amount in £ thousands | As a percentage of total NIC classes 1 and 1A collected |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1979 | n/a | n a | n a | n a |
| 1980 | 9,914 | 0·05 | 1,056 | 0·01 |
| 1981 | 11,432 | 0·08 | 1,158 | 0·01 |
| 1982 | 15,281 | 0·06 | 1,261 | 0·01 |
| 1983 | 22,622 | 0·08 | 1,555 | 0·01 |
| 1984 | 33,312 | 0·11 | 1,971 | 0·01 |
| 1985 | 46,695 | 0·14 | 2,213 | 0·01 |
| 1986 | 60,915 | 0·17 | 4,377 | 0·02 |
| 1987 | 92,560 | 0·25 | 8,514 | 0·03 |
| 1988 | 130,724 | 0·33 | 15,894 | 0·06 |

| Year | PAYE amount in £ thousands | As a percentage of total PAYE collected | Classes 1 and 1A NIC—amount in £ thousands | As a percentage of total NIC classes 1 and 1A collected |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1989 | 122,890 | 0·28 | 15,127 | 0·05 |
| 1990 | 107,091 | 0·22 | 17,239 | 0·05 |
| 1991 | 135,258 | 0·26 | 21,644 | 0·06 |
| 1992 | 381,172 | 0·71 | 32,570 | 0·09 |

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimated level of uncollected capital gains tax, in figures and as a percentage, for each year since 1979.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The amounts of capital gains tax remitted or written off as irrecoverable since 1979 are as follows:

| Year | Amounts in thousands | As a percentage of total CGT collected |
|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 15,182 | 0·51 |
| 1980 | 3,591 | 0·71 |
| 1981 | 2,734 | 0·60 |
| 1982 | 4,868 | 0·78 |
| 1983 | 6,496 | 1·01 |
| 1984 | 5,998 | 0·84 |
| 1985 | 7,562 | 0·93 |
| 1986 | 10,064 | 0·99 |
| 1987 | 8,822 | 0·79 |
| 1988 | 12,680 | 0·80 |
| 1989 | 10,864 | 0·47 |
| 1990 | 12,002 | 0·64 |
| 1991 | 29,721 | 1·58 |
| 1992 | 57,836 | 4·69 |

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimated level of uncollected schedule D tax, in figures and as a percentage, for each year since 1979.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The amounts of schedule D tax remitted or written off as irrecoverable since 1979 are as follows:

| Year | Amounts in Thousands | As a percentage of total Schedule D collected |
|---|---|---|
| 1979 | N/A | N/A |
| 1980 | 33,081 | 0·79 |
| 1981 | 41,552 | 0·75 |
| 1982 | 52,763 | 0·84 |
| 1983 | 68,536 | 1·04 |
| 1984 | 91,229 | 1·32 |
| 1985 | 90,196 | 1·18 |
| 1986 | 124,297 | 1·29 |
| 1987 | 133,878 | 1·88 |
| 1988 | 252,424 | 3·06 |
| 1989 | 242,024 | 2·53 |
| 1990 | 254,989 | 2·35 |
| 1991 | 383,566 | 3·17 |
| 1992 | 703,422 | 5·16 |

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimated level of uncollected corporation tax, in figures and as a percentage, for each year since 1979.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The amounts of corporation tax remitted or written off as irrecoverable since 1979 are as follows:

| Year | Amounts in Thousands | As a percentage of total Corporation tax collected |
|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 15,182 | 0·50 |
| 1980 | 16,214 | 0·49 |
| 1981 | 20,688 | 0·70 |
| 1982 | 34,396 | 0·89 |
| 1983 | 40,912 | 0·11 |
| 1984 | 58,051 | 1·23 |
| 1985 | 75,342 | 1·27 |
| 1986 | 91,365 | 1·11 |
| 1987 | 92,830 | 0·93 |
| 1988 | 225,597 | 1·92 |
| 1989 | 151,368 | 1·05 |
| 1990 | 184,725 | 1·17 |
| 1991 | 320,929 | 2·09 |
| 1992 | 542,233 | 4·64 |

### Tax Relief (Domestic Maintenance Work)

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received concerning the possibility of allowing tax relief against VAT-receipted invoices for domestic maintenance and extension work.

**Mr. Dorrell:** We have received no recent representations on this subject, although the idea has occasionally been put forward in the past. The Government's policy is to widen the tax base by reducing rather than extending reliefs. This has enabled us to reduce income tax rates for all taxpayers.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *299*, if he will now make it his policy to estimate the extent of the black market in the construction industry and the annual cost to the Exchequer of lost revenue through tax evasion in that industry.

**Mr. Dorrell:** No. It is not possible to make an accurate estimate of the revenue effects of tax evasion.

### Non-domicile Taxpayers

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many individuals, for each year since 1979, enjoyed non-domicile tax status; and what estimate he has made for each year of the revenue lost to the Exchequer through the availability of this status.

**Mr. Dorrell:** I regret that this information is not available.

### Income Tax

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many cases of evasion of payments of *(a)* income tax and *(b)* other tax evasion have been discovered in each of the last five years; and what has been the value of the revenue recovered.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The information requested is as follows:

| | *Income tax investigations* | *Other investigations* | *Yield from counter-evasion work (£ million)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 52,894 | 12,032 | 706 |
| 1989-90 | 57,997 | 12,551 | 933 |
| 1990-91 | 61,755 | 13,219 | 1,091 |
| 1991-92 | 59,993 | 14,421 | 1,324 |
| 1992-93 | 55,611 | 12,952 | 1,361 |

### Foreign-owned Firms

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the percentage of United Kingdom manufacturing output accounted for by foreign-owned firms in each year since 1979.

**Mr. Nelson:** The information on manufacturing output including that for foreign-owned businesses is contained in "Business Monitor PA 1002, Report on the Census of Production, Summary Volume". Copies of this volume up to 1990, the last year for which figures are available, can be obtained from the Library of the House.

### Valuation Office

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff are employed in the Valuation Office and at what cost to public funds; when notices were issued requesting supply of information in respect of non-domestic rating; when these notices were issued; and at what cost.

**Mr. Nelson:** The average number of staff employed in the Valuation Office in the 1992-93 financial year was 5,806 at a cost of £121,558,000.

Notices requesting supply of information in respect of non-domestic rating were issued in a phased programme spread over April to June 1993. The cost of issuing the notices will amount to approximately £500,000.

### Nationalised Industries

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total value of the receipts accrued from the sale of nationalised industries for each year since 1979.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Privatisation proceeds—including from the sale of nationalised industries—from 1979-80 to 1992-93 were about £50 billion, shown in the table by year.

*Privatisation proceeds*

| | *£ billion* |
|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 0·4 |
| 1980-81 | 0·2 |
| 1981-82 | 0·5 |
| 1982-83 | 0·5 |
| 1983-84 | 1·1 |
| 1984-85 | 2·1 |
| 1985-86 | 2·7 |
| 1986-87 | 4·5 |
| 1987-88 | 5·1 |
| 1988-89 | 7·1 |
| 1989-90 | 4·2 |
| 1990-91 | 5·3 |
| 1991-92 | 7·9 |
| 1992-93 | 8·1 |

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Pugin Room (Rodents)

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee what proposals he has to engage a cat for rodent control duties in the Pugin Room.

**Mr. Colin Shepherd:** None.

### Palace of Westminster Terrace

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee on what terms the press are permitted access to the Terrace of the Palace of Westminster within the jurisdiction of the House of Commons.

**Mr. Michael J. Martin:** In accordance with a decision of the Catering Sub-Committee of the former Services Committee and regulations now determined by the Catering Committee, certain members of the Press Gallery may use the Terrace Pavilion and Bar. Parliamentary Lobby correspondents and sketch writers are also allowed access to the southern part of the House of Commons Terrace but are not allowed to entertain guests there.

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what restrictions exist as to who may be admitted to the Terrace of the Palace of Westminster within the jurisdiction of the House of Commons; and how these are monitored and enforced.

**Mr. Michael J. Martin:** On sitting days throughout the year, Members and Officers of the House may take up to six guests on to the southern part of the House of Commons Terrace from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm or the rising of the House, whichever is the later.

On sitting Mondays to Thursdays between 10.00 am and 1.00 pm; on sitting Fridays from the rising of the House to 6.00 pm—except during the period from 1 May to the adjournment of the House for the summer recess—Members and Officers of the House may entertain up to 16 guests on the Terrace.

A Peer or Member may give interviews on the Terrace which may involve handheld filming equipment. On sitting days these interviews should be brought to an end by 12 noon; on non-sitting days they should be completed by 5.30 pm. Visitors may take photographs on the Terrace, but not while either House is sitting.

No guest may be left unattended for more than 15 minutes nor may they be taken to the two northern parts of the Terrace one of which is reserved for the use of Members and Officers of the House alone, and the other for the sole use of the Speaker as she decides.

Staff of the House who are Senior or Higher Executive Officers and Parliamentary Lobby correspondents on a list maintained by the Serjeant at Arms may use the southern part of the House of Commons Terrace, but may not take visitors there.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### World Service Television

**Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the role Mr. Li Ka Shing has played in the setting up of World Service Television.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** World service television was set up in 1991 as a commercial subsidiary of the BBC with no outside investors. It has since made commercial agreements for the provision of the service in various parts of the world, including one with Hutchvision of Hong Kong in which Mr. Li Ka Shing has an interest.

### Non-proliferation Treaty

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library all public statements made by participants at the first meeting of the preparatory committee for the 1995 non-proliferation treaty conference of which his Department has copies, including his Department's translations, where appropriate.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Copies of participants' statements at this meeting have been deposited in the Library of the House, as requested.

### Sudan

**Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Government of Sudan about human rights in that country.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Such representations have been made on many occasions, most recently last week by a European Community Troika ministerial mission, in which the United Kingdom was represented.

### Hong Kong Airport

**Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest discussions which have taken place on the future of the Hong Kong airport.

**Mr. Goodlad:** Meetings with the Chinese side in the airport committee resumed this month. Agreement was reached on the letting of the western harbour crossing franchise, one of the airport core projects. Some progress was also made on the overall financing arrangements for the airport, but further discussions will be required. The next meeting of the airport committee will be held on 30 June.

### China

**Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest assessment of the extent of religious persecution in the people's republic of China; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** We continue to receive reports, often via non-governmental organisations, of human rights abuses in China including the persecution of religious believers. This matter is covered in chapter 4 of the report of the delegation of my right hon. noble and learned Friend Lord Howe, which is being published today. We regularly raise human rights with the Chinese authorities and urge them to adhere to international standards of behaviour.

**Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest situation regarding human rights in China.

**Mr. Goodlad:** We remain deeply concerned by continuing reports of human rights abuses in China. Ministers have made our concerns clear to the Chinese at a high level both in public and in private on many occasions. The report of the delegation led by my right hon. noble and learned Friend, Lord Howe, which visited China last December, is being published today, and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the report on Lord Howe's visit to China is complete; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** The report on my right hon. noble and learned Friend Lord Howe's visit to China was published on 29 June. Copies have been deposited in the Library of both Houses and are available through Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

I should, on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, like to thank my right hon. noble and learned Friend and his colleagues, for all their efforts in undertaking this important visit and in producing such a comprehensive and constructive document.

Human rights abuses in China, including Tibet, are of continuing conern to Members of the House and to the public. We hope that the Chinese authorities will study the report carefully and give it positive consideration. We, for our part, will consider urgently how to follow up those recommendations which involve action by Her Majesty's Government.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Goodlad:** The diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has spent £438·28 on legal advice from the Treasury Solicitors on the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 since 1 April 1992. The aid wing has spent nothing so far.

### Subsidiarity

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the EC matters which it was agreed, in connection with the subsidiarity principle, should continue to be dealt with at the EC level rather than the national level, at the meeting between the British and French Governments of 15 June.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The meeting between the United Kingdom and French Governments on 15 June discussed ways to take forward implementation of the subsidiarity principle. This included work to identify existing legislation for amendment or repeal, to strengthen the Commission's report on subsidiarity which it will present at the Brussels European Council in December. There was no specific discussion between the two Governments about which European Community matters should continue to be dealt with at Community level.

## Immigration

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which diplomatic posts abroad are designated to accept entry clearance applications.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The list of posts designated to accept entry clearance applications is as follows:

*Entry Clearance Issuing Posts*

Abidjan
Abu Dhabi
Accra
Addis Ababa
Algiers
Amman
Amsterdam
Ankara[1]
Antananarivo
Ascension Island[1]
Athens
Atlanta
Auckland
Bahrain
Bandar Seri Begawan
Bangkok
Banjul
Beirut[1]
Belgrade[1]
Belmopan
Berne[1]
Bogota
Bombay
Bonn[1]
Brasilia[1]
Bridgetown
Brussels
Bucharest
Budapest
Buenos Aries
Cairo
Calcutta
Canberra
Cape Town
Caracas
Casablanca
Chicago
Colombo
Copenhagen
Dakar
Damascus
Dar es Salaam
Dhaka
Doha
Douala
Dubai
Dublin
Dusseldorf
Florence
Freetown
Gaborone
Geneva
Georgetown
Gibraltar
Guatemala City
Hamilton
Hanoi
Harare
Havana
Helsinki
Holy See[1]
Hong Kong
Honiara
Houston
Islamabad
Istanbul
Jakarta
Jedda
Jerusalem
Johannesburg
Kaduna
Kampala
Karachi
Kathmandu
Khartoum
Kiev
Kingston
Kinshasa
Kuala Lumpur
Kuwait
La Paz
Lagos
Lilongwe
Lima
Lisbon
Los Angeles
Luanda
Lusaka
Luxembourg
Madras
Madrid
Manila
Maputo
Maseru
Mbabane
Mexico City
Milan
Montevideo
Montreal[1]
Moscow
Muscat
Nairobi
Naples
Nassau
New Delhi
New York
Nicosia
Nuku'alofa
Oslo
Ottawa
Panama City
Paris
Peking
Port Loius
Port Moresby
Port of Spain
Prague
Quito
Rabat[1]
Rangoon
Reykjavik
Rio de Janeiro
Riyadh
Rome
San Jose
San Salvador
Sana'a
Santiago
Seoul
Singapore
Sofia
St. Helena[1]
Stanley
Stockholm
Suva
Taipei[1]
Tegucigalpa
Tehran[1]
Tel Aviv
The Hague[1]
Tokyo
Toronto[1]
Tripoli[1]
Tunis
Ulaanbaatar
Valetta
Vancouver[1]
Victoria
Vienna
Vila

Warsaw
Washington
Windhoek
Yaounde
Zagreb

[1] Restricted service only

### Consular Co-operation

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements exist in the European community for consular co-operation.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** European Community partners have agreed guidelines for the protection of unrepresented EC nationals by EC missions in third countries. This means British nationals can seek help from any EC mission in a country where there is no British mission. This is a positive development and an excellent example of practical EC co-operation which will have direct benefit for Britons overseas.

### Trade Negotiations

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress of negotiations between the United States and the EC on *(a)* telecommunications, *(b)* audiovisual exports and *(c)* intellectual property.

**Mr. Needham:** I have been asked to reply.

Negotiators from the EC, the United States, Japan and Canada have been discussing a range of issues forming part of the GATT Uruguay round of trade negotiations over recent weeks, including proposals for improving market access for both goods and services. Following a meeting in Tokyo last week, Ministers involved in these discussions said that they had been able

"to attain meaningful progress that would contribute to further momentum towards a positive outcome of the Uruguay round".

The Ministers will meet again on 6 July in order to finalise a report on progress to the Tokyo economic summit.

I welcome the progress that has been made. This must be sustained if the Uruguay round is to be successfully concluded by the end of this year, and a comprehensive agreement reached on all issues, including telecommunications, audiovisual exports and intellectual property.

## EDUCATION

### Ethnic Minorities

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the impact there has been of the removal of section 11 funded grants previously available in inner-city schools with significant proportions of ethnic minority background children.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Section 11 funding continues to support existing projects in the 1993-94 financial year at the current grant rate of 75 per cent. Thereafter, on current planning assumptions, the grant will be available to support the same volume of posts, albeit at a reduced rate.

### Secondary Transfer

**Ms Estelle Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for education if he will list, by local education authority area, how many pupils gained entry to their first preference school at secondary transfer for each of the last five years.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** This information is not collected centrally.

### LEA Secondary Schools

**Ms Estelle Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much money in local education authority maintained secondary schools was spent in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Forth:** The table gives the net institutional expenditure on LEA-maintained secondary schools in cash and real terms for the years 1987-88 to 1991-92, the latest year for which figures are available. The figures for 1991-92 include estimates of expenditure for six LEAs.

Numbers of full-time equivalent secondary school pupils fell from 3·1 million in 1987-88 to 2·8 million in 1991-92. Spending per secondary pupil rose from £2,068 to £2,277—both in 1992-93 prices—over the five-year period.

*Net institutional expenditure on LEA-maintained (England) secondary schools*

| Year | Total expenditure £ million (cash) | (1992-93 prices) |
|---|---|---|
| 1987-88 | 4,742 | 6,477 |
| 1988-89 | 5,053 | 6,435 |
| 1989-90 | 5,353 | 6,396 |
| 1990-91 | 5,709 | 6,317 |
| 1991-92[1] | 6,173 | 6,389 |

[1] Provisional.

*Note:* Net institutional expenditure covers the direct costs in schools of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the costs of school meals, home to school transport, LEA central administration, and financing costs of capital expenditure. Figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 include unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management of schools schemes.

### Teacher:Pupil Ratios

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) of 17 May, *Official Report*, column *232*, if he will make it his policy to fund a research project into the effect of teacher:pupil ratios on individual pupils' educational achievement.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Given the research in this area already carried out by other organisations, my right hon. Friend has no current plans to fund a project of this nature from the small budget he has for policy-related research projects. That budget is heavily committed at present with many competing priorities for future funding.

### Special Needs

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what modifications will be made in national curriculum tests to cater for pupils with special educational needs.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Teachers may adapt or modify the tests to suit the individual circumstances of pupils with

special educational needs. The School Examinations and Assessment Council has given guidance to schools about ways in which this might be done in order to allow pupils to show what they can achieve, without compromising the rigour of the tests.

Future test arrangements will be decided in the light of the review which Sir Ron Dearing is undertaking. His first recommendations are expected during July. Sir Ron is paying particular attention to special needs issues.

### Primary School Teachers

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the cost of his proposed one-year training scheme for primary school teachers; and what is the cost of training primary school teachers on conventional teacher training courses.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** There is no standard unit of resource figure for primary initial teacher training students. The cost of training any current primary student will vary according to the type and length of course, the institution attended and whether or not the student attracts grant from the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The same will be true of the proposed one-year courses.

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consultations he has had with parent-teacher associations on his proposal to introduce one-year courses for primary school teachers.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** My right hon. Friend has circulated his proposals for the reform of primary initial teacher training to the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations.

### City Technology Colleges

**Mrs. Anne Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will update the table in his written answer of 12 March 1992, *Official Report*, columns *602-4*, giving the latest available information in respect of each city technology college or proposed and planned city technology college.

**Mr. Forth:** The table covers announced CTCs.

| *Name* | *Kingshurst CTC Solihull* | *Emmanuel College Tyneside* | *Dixons CTC Bradford* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Site | Kingshurst School site | St. John Fisher School site | Newby Square, Bradford |
| LEA | Solihull | Gateshead | Bradford |
| Opening Dates | 1988 | 1990 | 1990 |
| Planned number of pupils | 1,150 | 900 | 980 |
| Total Capital cost £ million | 9·71 | 8·61 | 9·16 |
| Exchequer contribution £ million | 7·60 | 6·89 | 7·33 |
| Sponsors' contribution | | | |
| (i) committed[1] £ million | 2·11 | 1·72 | 1·83 |
| (ii) confirmed[2] £ million | 3·07 | 1·60 | 2·90 |
| Principal Sponsors | Hanson Trust | Peter Vardy | Dixons plc, Mr. Haking Wong |
| Contracts awarded to sponsors | None | Building Contract—Laings Northern | None |

| *Name* | | *Leigh CTC Dartford* | *Britschool CCTA Croydon* | *Djanogly CTC Nottingham* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site | | Downs School site | Site of Selhurst Tertiary Centre | Sherwood Rise, Nottingham |
| LEA | | Kent | Croydon | Nottinghamshire |
| Opening dates | | 1990 | 1991 | 1989 |
| Planned number of pupils | | 1,250 | 720 | 1,000 |
| Total Capital cost | £ million | 8·95 | 10·00 | 9·75 |
| Exchequer contribution | £ million | 7·16 | 8·00 | 8·20 |
| Sponsors' contribution | | | | |
| (i) committed[1] | £ million | 1·79 | 2·00 | 1·56 |
| (ii) confirmed[2] | £ million | 1·82 | 2·94 | 2·04 |
| Principal Sponsors | | Sir Geoffrey Leigh | The British Record Industry Trust | Sir Harry Djanogly |
| Contracts awarded to sponsors | | None | None | None |

| *Name* | *Macmillan college Teesside* | *Harris CTC Norwood* | *Bacon's college Bermondsey* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Site | St. Michael RC School, Middlesbrough | Sylvan School site Croydon | Bacon's School site, Southwark |
| LEA | Cleveland | Croydon | Southwark |
| Opening dates | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 |
| Planned number of pupils | 1,100 | 1,100 | 1,100 |
| Total capital cost £ million | 8·45 | 8·66 | 15·47 |
| Exchequer contribution £ million | 6·74 | 6·93 | [3]13·87 |
| Sponsors' contribution | | | |
| (i) committed[1] £ million | 1·71 | 1·73 | [3]1·60 |
| (ii) confirmed[2] £ million | 1·67 | 1·80 | [4]1·00 |
| Principal sponsors | BAT Industries plc | Philip and Pauline Harris Charitable Trust | Philip and Pauline Harris Charitable Trust/Southwark Diocesan Board of Education |
| Contracts awarded to sponsors | None | None | None |

| *Name* | *Haberdashers' CTC, New Cross* | *Brooke CTC, Corby* | *Landau Forte College, Derby* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Site | Haberdashers' Aske's, Hatcham, School site | Great Oakley, Corby | Wood Street, Derby |
| LEA | Lewisham | Northants | Derbyshire |
| Opening Dates | 1991 | 1991 | 1992 |
| Planned number of pupils | 1,150 | 900 | 900 |
| Total Capital cost £ million | 9·15 | 10·19 | 10·20 |
| Exchequer contribution £ million | 5·70 | 8·15 | 816 |
| Sponsors' contribution | | | |
| (i) committed[1] £ million | 3·45 | 2·04 | 2·04 |
| (ii) confirmed[2] £ million | [3]4·45 | 2·09 | 2·05 |
| Principal Sponsors | Haberdashers' Company as Trustees of Robert Aske Charity | Mr. Hugh de Capell Brooke | The Landau Foundation Forte plc |
| Contracts awarded to sponsors | None | None | None |

| *Name* | *Thomas Telford School, Telford* | *ADT College, Wandsworth* | *John Cabot CTC, Bristol* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Site | Old Park, Telford | Mayfield School | Kingswood, Bristol |
| LEA | Shropshire | Wandsworth | Avon |
| Opening Dates | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 |
| Planned number of pupils | 1,000 | 1,000 | 900 |
| Total Capital cost £ million | 10·75 | 11·32 | 11·20 |
| Exchequer contribution £ million | 8·40 | 9·06 | 8·96 |
| Sponsors' contribution | | | |
| (i) committed[1] £ million | 2·35 | 2·26 | 2·24 |
| (ii) confirmed[2] £ million | 2·63 | 2·39 | 2·30 |

| Name | Thomas Telford School, Telford | ADT College, Wandsworth | John Cabot CTC, Bristol |
|---|---|---|---|
| Principal Sponsors | The Mercers Tarmac plc | ADT plc | Wolfson Foundation and Cable and Wireless plc |
| Contracts awarded to sponsors | None | None | None |

[1] Committed sponsorship contributions represent agreed percentage contributions to CTC capital cash limits as secured in formal funding agreements with CTCs.
[2] Confirmed sponorship includes sponsorship beyond the cash limit.
[3] The sponsors commitment is stated net of the proceeds of sale of the site of the former school: the Exchequer contribution will be reduced by the amount of the net proceeds of sale.
[4] The confirmed contribution is net of the proceeds of sale of the former school site and of contributions to community provision and the chapel.
[5] This figure includes the donation of the present site, which has been valued at £3·445 million.

### Ethnic Minority Languages

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to ensure that schools with a high proportion of children with an ethnic minority background continue to be able to offer mother tongue language classes.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** All secondary pupils are required to study a modern foreign language as a national curriculum foundation subject. Nineteen languages qualify as a foundation subject. Schools must offer at least one of the eight working languages of the European Community and may offer 11 other languages of cultural and commercial importance—Arabic, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Japanese, Mandarin or Cantonese Chinese, modern Hebrew, Panjabi, Russian, Turkish and Urdu.

To meet the national curriculum requirement, pupils choose one modern foreign language from among those offered by the school. Pupils with one of these languages as their mother tongue may therefore choose to study that language as a foundation subject if the school is able to offer it. All schools, including primary schools, are also free to provide languages outside the national curriculum if demand exists and they have the resources to meet it.

### EC Students

**Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *123*, what was the total cost of the awards covering the fees of students from other EC member states studying third level courses in the United Kingdom in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

**Mr. Boswell:** Expenditure on fees-only awards to students from other EC member states studying in the United Kingdom in the academic years 1990-91 and 1991-92 is set out in the table.

| Sources of Award | 1990-91 Expenditure £ million | | 1991-92 Expenditure £ million | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | u/grad | p/grad | u/grad | p/grad |
| *England and Wales* | | | | |
| 1. DFE and LEAs | 11·068 | 0·008 | [1]32·008 | 0·011 |
| 2. MAFF | — | 0·002 | — | 0·002 |
| Scotland (SOED) | [2]2·596 | — | [2]3·756 | — |
| Northern Ireland (DENI) | 2·515 | 0·042 | 3·718 | 0·055 |
| *United Kingdom Postgraduate Awards Schemes* | | | | |
| 1. Research Councils | — | 1·306 | — | 1·360 |
| 2. British Academy | — | [3]0·098 | — | [3]0·172 |

[1] Provisional.
[2] Undergraduate and postgraduate awards expenditure combined.
[3] Estimate.

**Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *123*, how much of the funds for the various EC student mobility programmes comes to the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Boswell:** In 1993-94 the United Kingdom's allocation of the funding available for student mobility grants to support EC student mobility within the ERASMUS programme is expected to be some £6·99 million or 14·2 per cent. of the total programme funding available for this purpose; and for LINGUA £0·65 million —13·4 per cent.

As leading participants and co-ordinators of inter-university co-operation programmes (ICPs) within these programmes, United Kingdom higher education institutions will also benefit from the funding available in support of the costs of establishing and running ICPs. The expected United Kingdom share of the student placement budget within the COMETT programme in 1993-94 is £2·4 million—18·3 per cent.

### School Leavers

**Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the expected number of school leavers who will join the labour market in July.

**Mr. Boswell:** Information on intended destinations of school leavers is no longer collected centrally. In 1992, the most recent year for which information is available, the

school examination survey estimated that 147,000 school leavers in England intended to enter employment or the youth training scheme.

### Class Sizes

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will announce the January class size figures for each local education authority.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** This information from the January 1993 schools' census will become available in the late autumn.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Boswell:** The Department has incurred no expenditure on this matter additional to the normal cost of its own legal branch. It is not possible to identify separately the cost of advice provided by in-house legal advisers on particular issues such as the TUPE regulations.

### Pupils (Ethnic Minorities)

**Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools have 50 per cent. or more of their pupils drawn from the ethnic minority population; and what additional resources are made available to assist such schools, with particular reference to the teaching of English, where required.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Under the ethnic monitoring survey schools collect information on the ethnic origin of pupils on admission at ages five and 11. Data relating to individual schools are not returned to the Department, except in the case of grant-maintained schools. For other schools, returns are aggregated by local education authority area.

Grant under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 is available for the employment of additional staff to meet the special needs of new Commonwealth pupils arising from language and cultural barriers. In 1993-94, section 11 grant for education will be around £120 million, the majority of which will be used to support provision for English as a second language. In addition, there is an ethnicity factor intended to take account of the needs of pupils who may not have English as a first language in the additional educational needs index which is used to weight standard spending assessments.

### Standard Spending Assessments

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will monitor the education effects in individual local authorities arising from the education standard spending assessments for 1993-94 being based on the 1981 census data and not on the 1991 data.

**Mr. Forth:** No. In our view, the standard spending assessments set for 1993-94 are sufficient to allow authorities to maintain service provision. SSAs for 1993-94 were calculated using the latest information available for all authorities. Although it was possible to use population estimates derived from the 1991 census in the calculations, other 1991 census indicators were not available in time for the settlement.

The most appropriate method of incorporating the full 1991 census data into the education element of SSAs is still under consideration. All the relevant 1991 census data will be incorporated into the education elements of SSAs for 1994-95.

### "A Common Funding Formula in Schools"

**Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many of the respondents to the consultative document, "A Common Funding Formula in Schools", issued on 18 December 1992 who were listed in his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, columns *132-34*, stated *(a)* that they had objections, or *(b)* that they had no objection, to their responses being published or made available to others; and if he will list them in each case.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The consultation did not suggest that responses would be made public, although it is open to respondents to publicise their own responses.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Local Training Initiatives (Essex)

12. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what local training initiatives are available in Essex.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Essex training and enterprise council supports a wide range of training activities for young people and unemployed adults, including help for owners of new small businesses, and is taking forward the "Investors in People" initiative which encourages companies to embed good training practice throughout their organisation.

### Labour Statistics

13. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of those leaving employment training in Yorkshire and Humberside got a job in the last quarter for which figures are available.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The latest figures, an increase on the previous year, show that for the quarter ended June 1992, 37 per cent. were in a job three months after leaving. There will, in addition, be others who were in full-time education, on other Government training programmes or undertaking voluntary work. These figures do not, of course, reflect the outcomes of the new training for work programme and the other measures we announced in this year's Budget.

16. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to retain and create jobs on Tyneside.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The Department's aim is to promote a free and flexible labour market to encourage employment on Tyneside as elsewhere. The employment service and Tyneside training and enterprise council deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help unemployed people in Tyneside find the best and quickest route back to employment.

17. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are unemployed in Britain.

**Mr. David Hunt:** In May 1993, on the seasonally adjusted basis, there were 2,809,300 unemployed claimants in Great Britain.

24. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for long-term unemployment in the United Kingdom.

**Miss Widdecombe:** In April 1993 and on the unadjusted basis, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over a year was 1,075,067.

**Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been unemployed for more than one year in the London borough of Greenwich, in each of the past three years.

**Miss Widdecombe:** On the unadjusted basis, the number of unemployed claimants in the London borough of Greenwich who had been unemployed for over a year was 6,886 in April 1993, 5,063 in April 1992 and 2,896 in April 1991.

### Agriculture and Horticulture

14. **Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what initiatives he plans to provide additional employment opportunities in those rural areas particularly hard hit by reductions in the agricultural and horticultural work force.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The promotion of enterprise, economic diversity and employment in rural areas is primarily the role of the Rural Development Commission and Scottish Enterprise. But acting through the employment service and training and enterprise councils, the Department has a range of facilities and programmes available to people in rural areas, to help equip them for work and enable them to take advantage of employment opportunities as they arise.

### Invalidity Benefit

15. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of people that have left the unemployment register during the last 12 months by having been granted invalidity benefit.

**Mr. Purchase:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many claimants have been transferred directly from unemployment benefit to sickness or other related benefit in the last two years in Wolverhampton, North-East.

**Mr. David Hunt:** No information is recorded on whether a person who subsequently claims sickness or invalidity benefit had previously claimed unemployment benefits.

### Accidents (Retraining)

18. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new proposals he has for retraining people disabled by accidents.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** People with disabilities, including those disabled by accidents, have priority for places on a wide range of employment and training programmes.

New arrangements are being introduced to make additional funding available to training and enterprise councils to help buy local specialist provision for severely disabled people.

### Productivity

19. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about the effect on employment of increasing productivity; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** We have received no such representations.

Increases in productivity—of both capital and labour—increase the ability of the economy to create wealth. Our task is to combine rising productivity with higher employment, and thus fully realise this increased potential.

### Industrial Relations

21. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the state of industrial relations in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The figures on industrial disputes demonstrate the healthy state of industrial relations in this country. The incidence of stoppages and working days lost in 1992 was the lowest since records began in 1891. The number of working days lost in the 12 months to the end of April 1993 was equivalent to 34 per 1,000 workers compared with an average for the 1970s of 569 per 1,000 workers. It can be no coincidence that these improvements have taken place at the same time as our step-by-step reforms of industrial relations and trade union law.

### Job Clubs

22. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to extend the job club scheme in the north-west; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Seven new job clubs opened in the north west in May 1993 and there are now 194 job clubs in total. The number of people helped through job clubs in the north west, in 1992-93 was 31,530. There will be 35,235 job club places available for 1993-94.

### Training (TEC Funding)

23. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are now receiving training via funding by TECs in England and Wales.

**Miss Widdecombe:** As at the end of March 1993 there were 375,300 people on employment training and youth training programmes in England and Wales.

### May Day Bank Holiday

25. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about the possible abolition of the May day bank holiday.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The Department published a consultation document on the future of the May day bank holiday in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on 1 December. Responses to the consultation exercise were received from a wide range of individuals and organisations.

An announcement on the future of the May day bank holiday will be made in due course.

### Apprentices

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *452* on apprentices, what is the sector breakdown of the figures given.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Estimates from the labour force survey since 1983, of the number of people in Great Britain undertaking apprenticeships within each industry sector, are given in the table. Data for earlier years are not comparable.

*Apprentices by industrial sector (1983-92)*

*Great Britain (thousands)*

| *Industry Division* | *Number of persons of working age doing trade apprenticeship* | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1983* | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* | *1992* |
| Total number of apprentices | 363 | 332 | 357 | 318 | 314 | 329 | 367 | 352 | 350 | 325 |
| 0 Agriculture, forestry and fishing | [1] | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 Energy and water supply industries | 18 | 13 | 14 | 10 | - | - | 10 | - | - | - |
| 2 Extraction of minerals and ores other than fuels: manufacture of metals, mineral products and chemicals | 11 | 11 | 13 | 12 | | | | | 10 | |
| 3 Metal goods, engineering and vehicles industries | 79 | 74 | 72 | 64 | 57 | 47 | 55 | 74 | 55 | 58 |
| 4 Other manufacturing industries | 28 | 29 | 27 | 30 | 24 | 29 | 35 | 27 | 25 | 22 |
| 5 Construction | 75 | 64 | 68 | 54 | 64 | 64 | 81 | 77 | 74 | 66 |
| 6 Distribution, hotels and catering; repairs | 55 | 40 | 50 | 44 | 47 | 60 | 57 | 52 | 49 | 57 |
| 7 Transport and communication | 18 | 15 | 10 | 10 | - | 12 | - | | 11 | 11 |
| 8 Banking, finance, insurance, business services and leasing | 10 | 12 | 13 | 10 | 15 | 14 | 19 | 22 | 23 | 21 |
| 9 Other services | 49 | 49 | 57 | 53 | 53 | 64 | 63 | 48 | 49 | 47 |
| Not applicable | - | 20 | 30 | 28 | 24 | 22 | 27 | 29 | 26 | 31 |

Source: Labour Force Survey, Spring 1983-1992.
[1] Less than 10,000 in cell; estimate not shown.

### Off-shore Oil and Gas Workers

**Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimates he has made of the effects of the proposed workers time directive on off-shore oil and gas workers; and what derogations have been negotiated for such workers.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The proposed EC working time directive would have been wholly inappropriate to working patterns off-shore. As a result of our negotiations the Social Affairs Council agreed on 1 June that all work at sea would be excluded from the scope of the proposed directive. If and when the directive is adopted it would therefore not affect the working time of workers on off-shore installations, divers and workers in other related activities at sea.

### Working Week (Manufacturing)

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average working week in manufacturing industry in the latest two years for which figures are available.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The information requested is published in table X2.1 of part A of the 1991 and 1992 "New Earnings Survey". A copy is available in the Library.

### Noel Employment Ltd.

**Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his Department's policy on the payment of redundancy to temporary contract workers employed by Noel Employment Ltd., now in liquidation; and what account his Department takes in such decisions of whether tax and national insurance contributions were deducted by the employer of temporary contract workers.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Under sections 106 and 122 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, the Secretary of State may, on application, make redundancy and other payments to employees, as defined in the Act, of insolvent businesses. Each application is considered on its own facts and in accordance with the relevant case law. In determining eligibility consideration is given to a number of factors, including whether schedule E tax and class 1 national insurance contributions were deducted. However, the employment appeals tribunal has previously ruled that such deductions are not conclusive evidence of employee status.

Decisions have yet to be taken on the majority of claims in respect of Noel Employment Ltd.

### Work Permits

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what conveniently available information he has on how many Iraqi nationals benefited from the work permit scheme run by his Department's overseas labour service in each year since 1984.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The number of work permits issued to Iraqi nationals by the Department in each of the years since 1984 is as follows:

*Number of work permits issued*

| *Year* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1984 | 41 |
| 1985 | 52 |
| 1986 | 45 |

| Year | Number |
|---|---|
| 1987 | 44 |
| 1988 | 33 |
| 1989 | 40 |
| 1990 | 43 |
| 1991 | 53 |
| 1992 | 62 |
| [1]1993 | 31 |

[1] Up to 17 June.

### Residential Care Workers

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received concerning the conditions of residential care and nursing home workers; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The Department receives letters from individuals about pay and conditions of employment, some of which refer specifically to residential care and nursing homes. Pay and conditions of employment in the private sector are matters for employers and employees.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Malawi

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had, and with whom, in Malawi following the recent democratic referendum results; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** None. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I have given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff).

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the result of the recent referendum held in Malawi on whether to adopt a multi-party system of government.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We have noted with satisfaction the view of the joint international observer group that the referendum vote was an accurate expression of the wishes of the Malawi people. We hope that there will now be an orderly move towards the introduction of multi-party democracy. It is for Malawians to decide upon the timetable for this change, and we hope that restraint will be exercised on all sides. In this context we welcome President Banda's acceptance of the result and his commitment to legalise political parties and review legislation to take account of human rights concerns.

## WALES

### Schools and Colleges (Performance)

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 15 June, *Official Report*, column *523*, if he will make it his policy to deposit in the Library, and provide to the hon. Member for Pembroke, the costs of implementing his proposals for the publication of information on the performance of schools and colleges when they are known.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** Yes.

### Home Helps

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of home helps employed in each local authority area in the county of Dyfed in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1992.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The number of people employed by the social services department of Dyfed county council is not reported at district level. The total numbers of home helps—including home help organisers and assistants—employed in the county at the 30 September of each year are shown in the table:

| | Number | Whole time equivalent |
|---|---|---|
| 1980 | 846 | 323·5 |
| 1985 | 841 | 351·3 |
| 1992 | 913 | 426·8 |

### Dental Services

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each family health service authority area in Wales the number of general dental practitioners that are available on call for carrying out emergency treatment outside normal surgery hours.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** This information is not available centrally. General dental practitioners are obliged by their terms and conditions of service to provide emergency cover for their registered patients. It is for family health services authorities to satisfy themselves as to the adequacy of local arrangements for providing emergency dental treatment outside normal surgery hours.

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what study his Department has made of the adequacy of the community dental services in meeting the needs of all children who have difficulty in accessing general dental services; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** It is a matter for local health authorities to determine the appropriate level of community dental service provision within their areas. Returns submitted by family health services authorities in Wales indicate that a significant majority of general dental practitioners in Wales continue to provide national health service treatment for children.

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to encourage adults in west Glamorgan who remain unregistered for regular dental care to use the community dental service.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Local management responsibility for general dental service in west Glamorgan rests with the family health services authority. Returns submitted by that authority to the Welsh Office indicate that all patients who seek general dental services treatment in west Glamorgan are able to obtain it.

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many salaried dentists are employed by each family health services authority in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Approval has been given for Dyfed and Gwynedd family health services authorities to employ

a total of six whole-time equivalent salaried dentists. Both authorities are in the process of identifying suitable applicants and premises to accommodate them.

### Hepatitis B

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken in Wales to ensure all health staff are immunised against hepatitis B; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Hepatitis B immunisation is recommended for a number of at-risk groups including all health care workers involved in invasive procedures. This policy is kept under review, with expert advice from the Advisory Group on Hepatitis and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. The health service has been asked to prepare immunisation programmes for staff exposed to occupational risk.

### Road Safety

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to improve road safety in Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The Department and the local authorities are continually seeking ways to improve the safety of road users throughout Wales. Clwyd county council has produced a road safety plan for the county. On 8 June we commissioned the consultant, Oscar Faber TPA, to advise on a road safety strategy for Wales, including a road safety plan for trunk roads.

### Hepatitis and Dysentary

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of *(a)* viral hepatitis and *(b)* dysentery have been reported in each district health authority in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The number of cases of *(a)* viral hepatitis and *(b)* dysentery notified in each health authority in Wales in each of the last five years are shown in the table:

| *Health authority* | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* | *[1]1992* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(a) Viral Hepatitis* | | | | | |
| Clwyd | 10 | 18 | 18 | 42 | 21 |
| East Dyfed | 12 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 6 |
| Pembrokeshire | 4 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 7 |
| Gwent | 37 | 17 | 33 | 77 | 212 |
| Gwynedd | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 9 | 12 | 45 | 134 | 95 |
| Powys | 1 | 4 | 9 | 3 | 2 |
| South Glamorgan | 94 | 55 | 103 | 48 | 20 |
| West Glamorgan | 24 | 7 | 36 | 42 | 114 |
| *(b) Dysentery* | | | | | |
| Clwyd | 10 | 27 | 10 | 72 | 180 |
| East Dyfed | 6 | 6 | 3 | 11 | 14 |
| Pembrokeshire | 4 | 0 | 2 | 305 | 17 |
| Gwent | 31 | 5 | 0 | 78 | 96 |
| Gwynedd | 3 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 16 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 3 | 4 | 39 | 23 | 110 |
| Powys | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 6 |
| South Glamorgan | 25 | 52 | 166 | 472 | 228 |
| West Glamorgan | 8 | 17 | 13 | 2 | 9 |

[1] 1992 data are provisional

*Source*: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys Communicable Disease.
Statistics—Series MB2.
Registrar General's Weekly Return—Series WR.

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Mr. Redwood:** My Department's strategy for green housekeeping includes specific commitments to extend the use of recycled paper in the Welsh Office and to reduce energy consumption by various means including the procurement and use of low-energy light sources where appropriate.

Our general purchasing policy also gives full weight to environmental considerations in the procurement of all goods including tropical hardwoods and we seek to use environmentally acceptable alternatives to peat and peat-based products wherever possible. We are considering a policy of operating vehicles fitted with catalytic converters.

### Telephone Helplines

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to encourage all family health services authorities in Wales to introduce a dedicated telephone helpline for the community along the lines of that established in West Glamorgan.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** As part of the patients charter family health services authorities are required to be accessible to those who need their advice. All authorities have published details of a telephone number and an officer who will deal with questions and give advice about family health services. The telephone number need not be a dedicated line but there are officers ready and available to answer inquiries.

### AIDS

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales have died of AIDS; and if he will disaggregate the figures by health authority area.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To 31 March 1993, 78 of the AIDS cases reported by health authorities are known to have died. Of these, 34 were reported in South Glamorgan health authority and 15 in West Glamorgan health authority. The remaining 29 AIDS cases also known to have died were reported in Clwyd, East Dyfed, Pembrokeshire, Gwent, Gwynedd and Mid Glamorgan health authorities. The numbers of AIDS deaths in each of these health authorities does not exceed 10 and for reasons of confidentiality and in line with the AIDS (Control) Act 1987 are reported as "less than 10" for each health authority.

In addition, to 31 March 1993, 24 AIDS cases reported from outside Wales died while last known to be living in Welsh health authority areas.

### Public Transport

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to support and promote public transport in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The Government's policies of deregulation and privatisation will help to promote

increased choice and increased competition for the provision of public transport services in Wales. Unhypothecated revenue support grant is made available to local authorities towards the costs of services including support for local public transport. In addition local authorities have received increased resources for bus priority schemes and for supporting new rail passenger services, notably in the areas of the Cardiff valleys, Maesteg and West Glamorgan.

### Wind Farms

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many wind farms are now in operation in Wales; how many are planned for completion in the next two years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** There are three wind farms currently operating in Wales at Mynydd Cemaes, Llandinam and Rhyd-y-Groes. A further six projects are expected to be completed within the next two years.

### Prince Philip Hospital, Llanelli

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the number of *(a)* days and *(b)* nights that the Prince Philip hospital, Llanelli was closed for the admission of accident and emergency patients in (i) 1992 and (ii) the first five months of 1993.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The Prince Philip hospital was closed for accident and emergency admissions for a total of seven days and nights in 1992 and for the same period of time in the first five months of 1993 due to increased demand for admissions combined with short-term staffing problems. The hospital is taking steps to overcome these difficulties, including measures to increase bed use efficiency.

### Radiographers

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what review he is undertaking of the provision for the funding of postgraduate and post-diploma training for radiographers in Wales.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** None. This is a matter for employers.

### HIV

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients have been confirmed as carrying the HIV virus in each health authority area in Wales, for each month since January 1990.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Between 1 January 1990 and 31 March 1993, 164 new HIV positive individuals were reported from Wales. A monthly breakdown of the number of new HIV positives reported by each health authority would give individual figures of less than 10. For reasons of confidentiality and in line with the AIDS (Control) Act 1987, numbers between one and nine inclusive are given as "less than 10" by each health authority.

### Teenage Vandalism

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new measures are being taken in Wales to tackle vandalism by teenagers; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** There is substantial activity across Wales which helps to reduce vandalism and the opportunities for vandalism by teenagers. Some measures, such as neighbourhood watch schemes will have a very local impact. Others, for example, Wrexham Anti Vandalism Year, cover a large area. The scheme was launched in January 1993 by Wrexham Maelor borough council with the help of local businesses, voluntary organisations and the North Wales police and involves the whole community to counter vandalism with an information campaign, education and practical events, including a schools competition.

In addition there are schemes which encourage young people towards positive activity, for example, motor projects, crime awareness projects. Others seek to develop facilities and activities for young people. Initiatives such as "Secured by Design" and programmes to improve street lighting have their effect in reducing the opportunities for vandalism and other forms of anti-social behaviour. Comprehensive records of all the measures currently being taken in Wales to tackle vandalism are not available.

The police, the probation service, local authorities, voluntary organisations, employers, teachers, parents and many individuals are all playing a part in the extensive measures that are being taken to help reduce vandalism and other crime in Wales. Wherever possible the Welsh Office supports local communities in their efforts to improve neighbourhoods and to reduce vandalism and other crime.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken in Clwyd further to reduce hospital waiting lists; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Clwyd health authority and family health services authority plan to reduce waiting times further in the current financial year while continuing to meet patients charter guarantees. Under the waiting times initiative, Clwyd health authority has been provisionally allocated £233,400 and Clwyd family health services authority £160,850 for GP fund holders in the county to help them achieve this objective.

Clwyd health authority has also been allocated £70,045 under the 1993-94 treatment centre initiative for hip and knee replacements, cataracts, hernias and varicose veins.

### Children (Injuries)

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken in Wales to help reduce the number of injuries to young children; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** All health commissioning authorities in Wales are developing local strategies for health. In doing so they are taking into account the advice and targets included in the "Protocol for Investment in Health Gain: Injuries", published by the Welsh Health Planning Forum in June 1992. This offers guidance on how the national health service can reduce injuries to children, as measured by numbers attending accident and emergency departments, by 25 per cent. by the year 2002.

## NHS Trusts

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which class and vote covers the payment of salaries of national health service trust chief executives in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The salaries of chief executive officers of national health service trusts in Wales are paid from the income which trusts generate from their contracts to provide health services with health authorities, GP fund holders and the private sector. The provision which health authorities and GP fund holders in Wales receive to obtain services from health service providers is contained within class XV Wales, vote 8 of the 1993-94 supply estimates.

## Assisted Areas

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much regional selective assistance was given, and how many jobs were created or safeguarded as a result, for each travel-to-work area in Wales subject to assisted area status in the latest year for which figures are available.

**Mr. Redwood:** It is not possible to provide information on jobs associated with individual payments of regional selective assistance. Information on RSA offers accepted in 1991-92 together with forecasts of job creation and safeguarding is as follows:

*Regional Selective Assistance: Offers accepted 1991-92*

| *Travel to work area* | *Offer Value (£000)* | *Forecast jobs* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *New* | *Safeguarded* |
| Aberdare | 25 | 3 | 0 |
| Bangor and Caernarfon | 311 | 34 | 193 |
| Blaenau Gwent Abergavenny | 2,568 | 325 | 97 |
| Bridgend | 15,633 | 2,505 | 772 |
| Cardiff | 3,810 | 493 | 531 |
| Cardigan | 35 | 9 | 0 |
| Haverfordwest | 83 | 30 | 0 |
| Holyhead | 3,500 | 221 | 25 |
| Llanelli | 1,042 | 297 | 102 |
| Merthyr and Rhymney | 7,055 | 596 | 712 |
| Neath and Port Talbot | 9,410 | 316 | 671 |
| Newport | 5,107 | 268 | 622 |
| Pontypool and Cwmbran | 1,365 | 438 | 0 |
| Pontypridd and Rhondda | 5,785 | 603 | 177 |
| Porthmadog and Ffestiniog | 1,005 | 159 | 26 |
| Shotton, Flint and Rhyl | 8,953 | 698 | 308 |
| South Pembrokeshire | 500 | 93 | 0 |
| Swansea | 2,397 | 635 | 171 |
| Wrexham | 8,271 | 593 | 524 |
| TOTAL | 76,855 | 8,316 | 4,931 |

## Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Redwood:** Expenditure amounting to £5,697·71 has been identified. The latter sum includes counsel's fees and charges from the Treasury Solicitor's Department.

## Ancient Monuments Board for Wales

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to publish the 38th annual report of the Ancient Monuments Board for Wales.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The 38th annual report of the Ancient Monuments Board for Wales has been published today. The report covers the financial year 1991-92 and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

## Council Tax

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements have been made for dealing with proposals to alter council tax valuation lists.

**Mr. Redwood:** The Valuation Office agency (VOA) had received some 33,500 proposals to alter valuation lists in Wales by 24 June, the great majority in the first month of the initial appeal period. The rate at which new proposals have been received, however, has subsequently fallen significantly.

We expect the agency and valuation tribunals to have settled some 38,000 council tax banding appeals in Wales by 31 December 1994, just 13 months after the initial appeal period ends on 30 November 1993. Any remaining appeals will be decided as rapidly as possible in 1995.

In keeping with citizens charter principles, the agency has set standards of service for handling appeals. On receipt of a proposal the Valuation Office Agency's objective will be:

To acknowledge receipt of proposals within 14 days (against a statutory deadline of 28 days);

To make the taxpayer an offer, within 60 days, to reband the property if the initial banding is clearly wrong;

To let taxpayers know within 90 days if the agency believes the original banding is correct and that they intend to defend that decision; and

In any other case, to make contact with taxpayers within 120 days and give them a named contact within the VOA for further discussion.

Council tax payers should have their appeals settled as quickly and efficiently as possible, giving appropriate priority to identified cases of hardship. We shall monitor progress to ensure that this is so and keep our plans under review in light of developments.

### School Meals

**Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average price of a school meal in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in cash and real terms in each year since 1979.

**Sir Wyn Roberts** *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* The average costs of set price school meals in maintained primary and secondary schools are shown in the table.

| | *Cash prices (pence)* | | *Constant prices (pence)* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Primary* | *Secondary* | *Primary* | *Secondary* |
| 1979-80 | 30 | 30 | 69 | 69 |
| 1980-81 | 42 | 45 | 83 | 88 |
| 1981-82 | 42 | 50 | 75 | 89 |
| 1982-83 | 47 | 55 | 78 | 91 |
| 1983-84 | 52 | 57 | 83 | 90 |
| 1984-85 | [1]58 | [1]59 | [1]88 | [1]89 |
| 1985-86 | 58 | 62 | 83 | 89 |
| 1986-87 | 63 | 68 | 87 | 94 |
| 1987-88 | 65 | [1]70 | 85 | [1]92 |
| 1988-89 | 66 | [1]72 | 81 | [1]89 |
| 1989-90 | [1]66 | [1]70 | [1]76 | [1]80 |
| 1990-91 | [1]67 | [1]75 | [1]72 | [1]80 |
| 1991-92 | 73 | [1]83 | 73 | [1]83 |

[1] Based on an incomplete response from all local education authorities.

*Source:* Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Income Support

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of people in the United Kingdom over the age of 65 years are in receipt of income support.

**Mr. Burt:** It is estimated that 16·6 per cent. of people aged 65 or over in Great Britain are in receipt of income support. Information relating to Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

*Sources:*
1. Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry May 1992.
2. Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

### Child Benefit

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those countries in the European Community which do not have a universal form of child benefit/family allowance.

**Mr. Burt:** All EC countries except Italy, Spain and France have a universal child benefit/family allowance scheme. The French scheme, although universal in application, pays nothing for the first child, thus effectively excluding a significant proportion of families. There are numerous differences in coverage between countries, often varying according to the ages and number of children.

### European Year of the Elderly

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the actions taken by his Department in support of this year's European Year of the Elderly within the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Hague:** We have worked closely with Department of Health which has overall co-ordinating responsibility for the year. Together we have provided funding to support the year and official representation on both the EC and United Kingdom advisory committees which oversee the varied programme of events. As part of its customer care provisions for older people, the Benefits Agency will shortly be launching a major new publication informing older pensioners and their carers of their benefit rights.

### Pensioners (State Benefits)

**Mr. Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of pensioner units receive income from state benefits to the value of *(a)* 100 per cent. of income, *(b)* 75 per cent. of income or more and *(c)* 50 per cent. of income or more.

**Mr. Hague:** The estimates are in the table.

*The proportion of pensioner units whose gross income comes mostly from state benefits*

*(Per cent.)*

| *Proportion of gross income that comes from state benefits* | *Proportion of pensioner units* |
|---|---|
| 100 per cent. | 14 |
| 75 per cent. or more | 53 |
| 50 per cent. or more | 72 |

*Notes:*
1. Pensioner units are defined as single pensioners over state pension age or pensioner couples in which the husband is over state pension age.
2. Estimates are based on data from the 1989 Family Expenditure Survey.
3. Estimates are cumulative e.g. the figure for 75 per cent. or more includes those units with no income other than that from state benefits.

### Benefits

**Sir Rhodes Boyson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the total amount of expenditure on provision within the responsibility of his Department in *(a)* England, *(b)* Greater London and *(c)* the south-east, excluding Greater London, for each year from 1982-83 to 1992-93, estimated, distinguishing between current and capital expenditure, though excluding local authority credit approvals/capital allocations.

**Mr. Burt:** The Department's total administrative expenditure for the latest available years is in the table.

| | *1982-83* | *1983-84* | *1984-85* | *1985-86* | *1986-87* | *1987-88* | *1988-89* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Running costs | — | — | — | — | 1,751 | 1,628 | 1,718 | 1,713 | 1,960 | 2,156 |
| Capital | — | — | — | — | 89 | 99 | 158 | 301 | 294 | 333 |
| Other | — | — | — | — | 1 | 315 | 345 | 384 | 426 | 526 |
| Total | 1,068 | 1,234 | 1,402 | 1,412 | 1,841 | 2,042 | 2,221 | 2,398 | 2,680 | 3,015 |

*Notes:*

Up to and including 1988-89 the figures included administrative costs for the Department of Health when the Department was the Department of Health and Social Security.

A regional breakdown could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Prior to 1986-87 no breakdown was kept between current and capital expenditure.

**Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consultations he has had to correlate the payment of unemployment payments with other benefits.

**Mr. Burt:** Regular discussions take place between this department and the Department of Employment on the administration of benefits for unemployment, with a view to improving the service provided to unemployed people.

### Income Support

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of people in the United Kingdom over the age of 65 years have income support which is less than £400 per annum above the level of eligibility for income support.

**Mr. Hague:** The information requested is not available.

### Resettlement Agency

**Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, if he has conducted the three-year review of the Resettlement Agency; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hague:** The Department recently completed a full evaluation of the Resettlement Agency, which has been in existence since 1989, in accordance with the Government's commitment to evaluate "Next Steps" agencies. This evaluation concluded that the agency successfully met its objectives in its first three years of operation and should continue for a further three years at which time another evaluation will take place. I have today placed in the Library copies of the agency's evaluation and framework documents.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Burt:** No external costs have been incurred. It is not possible to identify separately the cost of work done by the Department's own lawyers.

### Social Fund

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make it his policy to ensure that, if a social fund officer requires a condemnation report when considering a social fund application for a fuel appliance, the Benefits Agency should meet the cost of a provisional report;

(2) if he will amend social fund guidelines to ensure that the Benefits Agency should bear the cost of a condemnation report for a social fund application for a fuel appliance if one is required by the agency.

**Mr. Scott:** Guidance currently requires social fund officers to decide each application on its merits and I have no plans to change this. Where a condemnation—or provisional—report is produced the social fund officer will usually include its cost in any award made.

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to respond to the recommendations made by the Social Security Advisory Committee on its report entitled "The Social Fund: A New Structure".

**Mr. Scott:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 22 June 1993 at column *165*.

### Invalidity Benefit

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many prosecutions in Wales have been brought against people for fraudulently claiming invalidity benefit in each year since 1979.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of benefit fraud is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Rod Richards, dated 28 June 1993:*

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Wales asking, how many prosecutions in Wales have been brought against people for fraudulently claiming invalidity benefit in each year since 1979.

I regret that I am unable to provide all the information you requested.

The Sector Fraud Organisation has only been in existence since January 1991 and the information you asked for has only been collated in the format requested from 1 April 1992. The first full year for which figures are available is, therefore, the year ended 31 March 1993.

In that period there were twenty-one prosecutions in Wales for offences involving Invalidity Benefit. In all twenty-one cases guilty verdicts were returned.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

### Local Offices

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list each Benefits Agency office that processes claims for invalidity benefit from persons resident in Pendle.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of invalidity benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 28 June 1993:*

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking if he will list each Benefit Agency Office within Pendle that

processes claims for Invalidity Benefit from persons resident in Pendle.

The area of Pendle is dealt with by Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale District. Within the District there are two offices, Burnley District Office which processes Invalidity Benefit claims from persons resident in Pendle and Rossendale Benefit Office which is a "caller office" providing advice and information only to the public.

The District covers not just Pendle itself but all the following areas, Padiham, Hapton, Nelson, Colne, Earby, Foulridge, Barnoldswick, Trawden, Briarfield, Barrowford, Whitworth, Bacup, Stacksteads, Haslingdon, Helmshaw, Rawtenstall, Waterfoot, Edenfield and Crawshawbooth.

Statistical information is maintained for the District as a whole and is not available for individual areas.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the Library.

## Medical Assessments

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many medical assessments have been undertaken at the Sheffield DHSS office this year, broken down by month.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of medical assessments is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Michael Bichard to Mrs. Helen Jackson, dated 28 June 1993:*

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many medical assessments have been undertaken at the Sheffield DHSS office this year, broken down by month.

Firstly, I should explain that I have taken your question as referring to the Medical Boarding Centre located in Queens St. Sheffield. This is the office that deals with medical assessments for the area.

The information that you have requested has only been recorded since 2 February 1993. I am therefore unable to provide you with any figures for the month of January 1993. Additionally the figure provided for the month of June 1993 represents a count of medical assessments completed up to 18 June 1993. The table below sets out, by month, the number of medical assessments that have been undertaken in 1993. The numbers quoted are in respect of Severe Disablement Allowance, Sickness Benefit and Invalidity Benefit customers.

| *Month* | *Numbers* |
|---|---|
| February | 236 |
| March | 334 |
| April | 357 |
| May | 387 |
| June | 200 |

I hope that this reply is helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

## Legal Aid

**Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what guidance is given to assessment officers in applying the discretionary provisions of the Civil Legal Aid (Assessment of Resources) Regulations 1989;

(2) what are the relevant qualifications possessed by assessment officers determining legal aid eligibility; what training and guidance are provided to assessment officers; and what monitoring and supervision of assessment officers' performance take place.

**Mr. Burt:** The assessment of financial eligibility for civil legal aid is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Michael Bichard to Mrs. Jane Kennedy, dated 28 June 1993:*

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking (i) what guidance is given to assessment officers in applying the discretionary provisions of the Civil Legal Aid (Assessment of Resources) Regulations and (ii) what are the relevant qualifications possessed by assessment officers determining legal aid eligibility; what training and guidance is provided to assessment officers; and what monitoring and supervision of assessment officers' performance takes place.

I should first of all point out that the assessment of financial eligibility for civil legal aid is performed on behalf of the Legal Aid Board by the Benefits Agency at a centralised office situated in Preston.

Assessment officers are provided with written guidance on all aspects of the financial assessment of civil legal aid cases. This includes the application of the discretionary provisions which permit an allowance against, or a disregard of, an item of income or capital to be made where reasonable.

The advice, however, only gives general guidelines. It encourages assessment officers to use their powers in a way which is consistent with the Regulations, that shows impartiality between the interests of the applicant, the opponent and the legal aid fund and for their decisions to be made taking into account all relevant information about the circumstances of each individual case. Such guidance cannot, therefore, be prescriptive although examples are given where it might be reasonable to exercise discretion.

The Secretary of State for Social Security has authorised all officers of the grade of Administrative Officer and above employed in the Benefits Agency's Legal Aid Assessment Office to be assessment officers for the purpose of determining the financial resources of persons seeking civil legal aid.

In practice most assessment work is carried out by Administrative Officers who will have the minimum qualifications applicable to the grade, unless they have been promoted from Administrative Assistant or equivalent.

The Legal Aid Assessment office provides extensive and discreet in-house technical training for assessment officers. This consists of both classroom training and operational experience followed by support from a trained mentor. Further advice and information is provided by the written guidance given to assessment officers and supported by a section within the Assessment Office responsible for considering policy and procedural matters.

The performance of assessment officers is monitored on an ongoing basis by their line managers. In addition, a random sample of assessment work is checked by a quality evaluation sections which is entirely independent of the operational section responsible for making financial assessments. Furthermore, civil legal aid assessment work is subject to scrutiny by both Benefits Agency Internal Audit and the National Audit Office.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

## Child Support

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to commission research on the workings of the new child support scheme; and what form such research will take.

**Mr. Burt:** We have consistently stressed the importance of monitoring and evaluating the effects of the new policy and there is ongoing work built in to the Department's research programme. It involves both the careful analysis of management information on the activities of the Child Support Agency and the commissioning, as necessary, of research by external experts including; a customer satisfaction survey: work on how professionals view the new system and an extension of work on lone parents, benefits and maintenance by the Policy Studies Institute.

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what was the average time taken to fill in the Child Support Agency form in the Child Support Agency tests;

(2) how many pages are contained in the Child Support Agency form which is given to the absent parents to complete;

(3) how many pages are contained in the Child Support Agency form which is given to the mother or carer for completion.

**Mr. Burt:** The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Mrs. Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Barry Jones, dated 9 June 1993:*

As Chief Executive of the Child Support Agency (CSA) it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your three recent Parliamentary Questions about the number of pages in the form which is given to the absent parent to complete, the number of pages in the form which is given to the mother or carer for completion, and the average time taken to fill in the form in the tests.

The CSA form given to the absent parent to complete is 36 pages long.

The CSA form given to the parent with care of the child to complete is 36 pages long or, where the client is claiming Income Support, 16 pages long.

The findings of three rounds of market research indicate that on average completion of the maintenance application form (MAF) by the parent with care of the children would take about an hour and completion of the Maintenance Enquiry Form by the absent parent would take a similar amount of time. Completion of the shortened version of the MAF (for use by clients claiming Income Support) should take less than half an hour.

## DEFENCE

### Ministry of Defence Police Federation

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates Ministers in his Department held formal meetings with the Ministry of Defence Police Federation during the past five years.

**Mr. Hanley:** Defence Ministers have met representatives of the Defence Police Federation formally on the following dates during the past five years:

10 July 1989
3 October 1989
2 October 1990
1 October 1991
20 October 1992

In addition, my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence has a policy of open access for the federation if problems occasionally arise which cannot be resolved through official channels.

### RAF Boulmer

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many aircraft, of what type and of what age, are deployed at RAF Boulmer for the provision of search and rescue operations.

**Mr. Hanley:** Two Sea King helicopter air rescue mark 3 helicopters, in the search and rescue role, are deployed at RAF Boulmer. These aircraft first flew in March 1978.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many rescue operations have been flown from RAF Boulmer since the cessation of search and rescue flights from RAF Leuchars to incidents in Tayside, Central, Fife, Strathclyde and Lothian regions.

**Mr. Hanley:** It is not normally possible to provide statistical data by regional area without incurring disproportionate costs. Due to the very small number of rescues, including incidents such as transfer of sick or injured people from ship to hospital, however, details for the period 1 April to 23 June 1993 are as follows:

| *Region* | *Number of callouts* |
|---|---|
| Tayside | 1 |
| Central | — |
| Fife | 2 |
| Strathclyde | — |
| Lothian | — |

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what time RAF Boulmer received a request to provide search and rescue assistance for the rescue of Diane Robertson near Benarty woods, Fife on 20 June; and how long after the receipt of that request it was before an aircraft reached the scene of the rescue.

**Mr. Hanley:** RAF Boulmer recorded the request at 15.14 on 20 June. The SAR helicopter was diverted from a training sortie and, after refuelling at Boulmer, it reached the incident site at 16.13. The local fire brigade and ambulance were in attendance while the helicopter was on its way to the scene of the incident.

**Mr Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in each of the last five years for which information is available search and rescue aircraft from RAF Boulmer have engaged in rescue operations with the Anstruther lifeboat or training exercises for such operations.

**Mr. Hanley:** The search and rescue helicopters from RAF Boulmer have attended two incidents in the past five years which involved the Anstruther lifeboat. There are no records of the RAF Boulmer helicopters training with the Anstruther lifeboats.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Aitken:** Legal advice provided by the Treasury Solicitor to the Department includes, where appropriate, advice on the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme. The costs of that element of advice are not separately identifiable.

### Uranium-tipped Ammunition

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the practice of issuing British troops with uranium-tipped bullets and shells; and to what extent these weapons were used by British troops in the Gulf war.

**Mr. Hanley:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) on 11 June 1993, *Official Report*, column *309*.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, column *194*, if he will place in the Library copies of *(a)* the health evaluation of depleted uranium-tipped shells and *(b)* the advice on risk in use issued to British forces.

**Mr. Hanley:** No. The documents are classified because they give information about the size and composition of United Kingdom ammunition which could be of advantage to an enemy.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, column *194*, what general or informal information he has received from the United States Government regarding dangers to service men in the Gulf resulting from the use of shells tipped with depleted uranium.

**Mr. Hanley:** Potential risks from handling depleted uranium (DU) were well understood in the United States and United Kingdom before the Gulf conflict. Since then, my Department has monitored reports in mass media and specialist journals quoting United States officials on the subject. Most recently and authoritatively, my Department has received a copy of a United States Department of Defence fact sheet of 11 June 1993 which specifically relates to the possible health effects of DU and analyses known incidents involving exposure of United States personnel to it. These personnel continue to be monitored, but the fact sheet concludes that exposure to DU has not caused the unexplained symptoms associated with the so-called Desert Storm syndrome (DSS). The existence of DSS and its possible causes have also been a subject of discussion between United States and United Kingdom medical officers in the course of normal liaison, which supports the Department of Defence official assessment. For the convenience of the House, I am arranging to have a copy of the document placed in the Library.

### Dockyards

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many Hunt class refits are to be carried out at Rosyth;

(2) how many aircraft carriers are to be *(a)* refitted before 2005 and *(b)* allocated to Rosyth;

(3) if he will list for each year until 2005, the guaranteed surface ship refits allocated to Rosyth dockyard; what is his estimate of the number of man weeks, per vessel; and how many jobs he attributes to each refit;

(4) what is the proportion of refit expenditure he expects to be paid to *(a)* Rosyth and *(b)* Devonport in 1993 and in each year until 2005;

(5) what is his estimate of the restructuring costs for *(a)* Rosyth and *(b)* Devonport under his proposals announced on 24 June;

(6) how many *(a)* type 42, *(b)* type 23 and *(c)* type 22 refits are (i) allocated to Rosyth and (ii) guaranteed to Rosyth between now and 2005;

(7) if he will list the job numbers for each year until 2005 in defence work he has estimated to be attributed to *(a)* Rosyth and *(b)* Devonport;

(8) what is his estimate of the costs of defence refitting each year until 2005; and what is the amount he expects will be paid to *(a)* Rosyth, *(b)* Devonport and *(c)* other shipyards.

**Mr. Aitken:** As my right hon. and learned Friend said in the House on 24 June, *Official Report*, column 449, further information relating to the Government's conclusions regarding future refitting arrangements for the Royal Navy will be published in a consultative document which will provide a basis for consultation with the parties concerned. This document will be issued next week.

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the construction of the nuclear storage facility at Rosyth;

(2) when he will remove all nuclear waste from Rosyth.

**Mr. Aitken:** The nuclear storage facility at Rosyth is required to provide a temporary local integrated complex to store items and materials arising from the continuing nuclear refitting and decommissioning work at Rosyth dockyard.

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) where the decommissioned Polaris submarines will now be stored; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to move all decommissioned submarines from Rosyth;

(3) when he expects to move the Dreadnought submarine from Rosyth.

**Mr. Aitken:** Our present policy is that decommissioned nuclear submarines, including Polaris, will continue to be stored afloat at the location where they are decommissioned, pending eventual disposal. This policy is kept under review. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said in the Trident refit debate on 24 June, columns 449-58, this will be the subject of further consideration.

### F3 Tornado

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 June, *Official Report*, columns *339-40*, if the four F3 Tornados which had undergone fatigue index modification by Airwork Services and had been returned to operational bases, have now been returned to St. Athan and classified as to the extent of damage.

**Mr. Aitken:** No. It will take some time before the damage assessment of Tornado F3 aircraft affected by this contract is complete.

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 June, *Official Report*, columns

*339-40*, if he has received the report of the Royal Aeronautical Establishment, Farnborough, on the preferred method of rectification of the F3 Tornados modified by Airwork Services at RAF St. Athan, and damaged in the course of that modification; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Aitken:** I do not expect to receive the recommendations of the aircraft design authority on repair schemes for several months and the Defence Research Agency will not be in a position to provide its own advice until some time after that.

### Low flying

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the operation of the low-flying management system over Cumbria on 23 June; and if he will make a statement on progress towards implementing the automated low-flying flight planning inquiry and notification system.

**Mr. Hanley:** The management of the United Kingdom low-flying system over Cumbria was operating in accordance with normal procedures on 23 June. The automated low-flying flight inquiry and notification system will be introduced into service as quickly as possible.

### MOD Police

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he has taken concerning the allegations made against MOD police officers by Ms Lindis Percy of Bradford, in a letter dated 31 May to the chief constable of MOD police; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** I can confirm that the chief constable of MOD police received a letter dated 31 May concerning allegations made against MOD police officers by Ms Lindis Percy of Bradford. It has been recorded as an official complaint and is now being investigated in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. A report will be forwarded to the Police Complaints Authority when the investigation has been completed.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Wednesday 30 June 1993*

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Dangerous Dogs Acts

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the role of magistrates in enforcing the Dangerous Dogs Acts.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** We continue to keep under review all aspects of the working of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

### Truth Drugs

**Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration has been given to the use of the so-called truth drug in criminal investigations within the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** In the Government's view, it is unlikely that evidence obtained using "truth drugs" would be admissible in English or Welsh courts. There are no plans to use such drugs in criminal investigations.

### Victim Support

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the outstanding grant applications in Bradford under the victim support scheme; when a decision is to be taken on each application; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** I understand from the national office of Victim Support that the Bradford victim support scheme made an application to the local funding panel earlier this month for a third salary grant but that the panel has not yet considered it.

The Government greatly appreciate the excellent work done by local victim support schemes and provide substantial funding for this purpose. Home Office grant to Victim Support this year will amount to £8·4 million. This is 15 per cent. more than last year's grant to the organisation, which itself was 28 per cent. more than the previous year's.

The grant is paid to Victim Support's national office and is allocated to local schemes and branches by the Victim Support local funding panel. This is independent of both local schemes and the Home Office. The panel considers applications from local schemes in accordance with criteria agreed annually between the Home Office and Victim Support.

### Sheehy Inquiry

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the report of the Sheehy inquiry will be made available.

**Mr. Howard:** The report of Sir Patrick Sheehy's inquiry into police responsibilities and rewards is being published today. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House. I and the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland are most grateful to Sir Patrick and his team for their work. Before reaching any conclusions on their recommendations, we shall want to have the views of the police and other interests. We have invited written comments on the report by the end of September, but we shall, of course, be glad to have earlier views on all or any parts of the report from all those with an interest in its contents.

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Mr. Howard:** In line with our aim of securing best value for money at the least possible cost to the environment, the Department's policy on the purchase and use of the products listed is as summarised below.

*(a) Recycled paper*

The Department will continue to promote effective and economic use of paper, using recycled stationery where possible and encouraging the development of new and existing paper recycling schemes.

*(b) Low-energy light bulbs*

The practice of replacing filament type light bulbs with low-energy bulbs where practicable, having been largely achieved in Prison Service establishments, is to be extended across the Department.

*(c) Tropical hardwoods*

So far as practicable, the use of tropical hardwoods is to be avoided in building projects and in the procurement of office furniture, etc.

*(d) Peat*

The use of peat is to be avoided where acceptable alternatives are available.

*Cars with catalytic converters*

The purchase and use of vehicles with diesel engines is preferred as the fuel is lead-free and more economical. Where petrol-engined vehicles are in use, they should run on unleaded petrol and be fitted with catalytic converters. Vehicles are to be checked annually to ensure that all emissions comply with statutory requirements.

### Correspondence

**Sir John Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Ravensbourne may expect a reply to his letter of 8 March, acknowledged under the reference 06624/93, on the subject of police resources in Bromley; and if he will explain the reason for the delay which has occurred in respect of this correspondence.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** A reply was sent on Wednesday 23 June.

### Animal Procedures Committee

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a chairman will be appointed to the Animal Procedures Committee.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to be in a position to make an announcement shortly.

### Racially Motivated Crimes

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make it his policy to keep figures for murders in which race has been a factor.

**Mr. Maclean:** There are no plans to record information on murder in this way.

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) on 23 March, *Official Report*, column *529*, if the figure for racially motivated incidents in 1992 is now available.

**Mr. Maclean:** The only information currently available relates to the number of reported racial incidents which are shown in the following table. These 1992 figures were provided in the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) on 26 April, columns *266-67*, except that the Kent figure for 1992 has now been corrected.

*Reported racial incidents*

| *Forces* | *1992* |
|---|---|
| Avon and Somerset | 98 |
| Bedfordshire | 57 |
| Cambridgeshire | 110 |
| Cheshire | 29 |
| City of London | 0 |
| Cleveland | 73 |
| Cumbria | 13 |
| Derbyshire | 60 |
| Devon and Cornwall | 7 |
| Dorset | 10 |
| Durham | 40 |
| Dyfed Powys | 0 |
| Essex | 80 |
| Gloucestershire | 33 |
| Greater Manchester | 401 |
| Gwent | 31 |
| Hampshire | 139 |
| Hertfordshire | 106 |
| Humberside | 68 |
| Kent | 56 |
| Lancashire | 231 |
| Leicestershire | 338 |
| Lincolnshire | 5 |
| Merseyside | 134 |
| Norfolk | 30 |
| North Wales | 4 |
| North Yorkshire | 22 |
| Northamptonshire | 120 |
| Northumbria | 349 |
| Nottinghamshire | 222 |
| South Wales | 311 |
| South Yorkshire | 151 |
| Staffordshire | 95 |
| Suffolk | 55 |
| Surrey | 61 |
| Sussex | 98 |
| Thames Valley | 195 |
| Warwickshire | 35 |
| West Mercia | 19 |
| West Midlands | 379 |
| West Yorkshire | 218 |
| Wiltshire | 24 |
| Provincial total | 4,507 |
| Metropolitan police | 3,227 |
| England and Wales total | 7,734 |

### Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what consultation he is undertaking with regard to possible changes in the criminal injuries compensation scheme; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received regarding the criminal injuries compensation scheme this year; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** The Government announced last November their intention to replace the present criminal injuries compensation scheme with a tariff scheme in 1994. The aim is to offer a better, more straightforward service to claimants. Details of the new scheme will be set out in a White Paper later this year.

No formal consultation exercise is being undertaken, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) explained to the House on 18 March, column 508, we will listen carefully to what people have to say about our proposals. We have already received helpful comments from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and the national charity, Victim Support.

We receive a steady stream of correspondence from hon. Members and members of the public about various aspects of the current scheme.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Parliamentary Counsel's Office

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the cost of the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in each of the last five years.

**Mr. David Davis:** The cost of the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel in each of the last five years was:

| | £ |
|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 1,898,000 |
| 1989-90 | 2,126,000 |
| 1990-91 | 2,303,000 |
| 1991-92 | 2,729,000 |
| 1992-93 | 2,763,000 |

### Citizens Charters

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total amount of compensation the state paid out on all charters; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Waldegrave** *[pursuant to his answer, 10 May 1993, c. 307-8]:* I would like to correct the figure for British Rail compensation given in my answer of 10 May, *Official Report*, columns *307-8*. That figure—£1 million—was based on information from British Rail which it has now revised. The final amount of compensation paid out in the first year of British Rail's passengers charter is £1·9 million. All other figures quoted in my original answer are correct.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### UNHCR

**Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the question of a further tranche of funding for the programme for national persecutees by the German Government.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** We have requested details of this programme from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as the information is available.

### Ethnic Conflicts

**Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which conference on security and co-operation in Europe mechanisms have been used to resolve the ethnic conflict in *(a)* Azerbaijan, *(b)* Bosnia-Herzegovina, *(c)* Croatia, *(d)* Georgia, *(e)* Moldavia, *(f)* Tajikistan and *(g)* Uzbekistan; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The CSCE committee of senior officials (CSO) dispatched fact-finding missions to Azerbaijan in February and March 1992 to report on the situation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. In March 1992, the CSCE council provided for negotiations among the interested parties on a ceasefire and a settlement to the conflict, which have come to be known as the "Minsk Process". The CSCE recently secured agreement from all parties to a ceasefire monitoring mission. Negotiations continue in order to secure its deployment.

In 1991, the CSCE mandated the European Community to lead the search for a solution to the problems in former Yugoslavia. The CSO has also sent rapporteur missions to investigate human rights abuses.

The CSO has had a resident mission in Georgia since December 1992 to promote negotiations between conflicting parties in south Ossetia. A similar mission went to Moldova in April 1993 to assist in negotiations on the status of the Trans-Dniester area and the withdrawal of Russian troops.

In Tajikistan a CSCE representative has been appointed to liaise with the United Nations and to recommend future action by CSCE. No special measures have been taken in respect of Uzbekistan. The chairman-in-office visited it during a tour of the five central Asian states and the CSO is now acting on several recommendations designed to achieve closer integration of these countries in the activities of CSCE.

The CSCE should continue these and other efforts to prevent conflict by monitoring human rights and undertaking preventive diplomacy. The high commissioner on national minorities also plays an important role by identifying and seeking to defuse ethnic tensions which may develop into conflict.

### Yugoslavia

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to appropriate authorities in Belgrade about the treatment of parliamentarians during and after the public demonstrations in Belgrade on 1 and 2 June; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has urged President Milosevic to release Mr. and Mrs. Draskovic and meanwhile to ensure they are given proper medical treatment and access to visitors. Her Majesty's embassy in Belgrade continues to monitor the situation closely. We welcome the intervention with the President of the upper House of the Yugoslav Federal Parliament, Mr. Radulovic, by the hon. Gentleman and my right hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) on 21 June. We shall continue to keep up the pressure both bilaterally and through international organisations.

### Nuclear Non-proliferation

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals his Department has for strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation safeguards regime operated by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We are playing a full and active part in the consideration of recent proposals for the further strengthening of the international safeguards regime administered by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We have agreed with European Community partners to provide the IAEA with information, on a voluntary basis, on imports and exports from the Community of certain nuclear materials and equipment not covered by existing agreements. This offer was referred to in the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy on 24 June to a question from the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), *Official Report*, column *266*.

### Israel

**Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received regarding the shooting of Munir Abu-Nijmeh and Ismail Abu-Nijmeh on the Jerusalem/Ramaldah road on 31 May.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** One member of the Abu Nijmah family was shot dead and another injured, reportedly by an Israeli citizen, following a traffic dispute involving two vehicles on a main road on the outskirts of Jerusalem. It is our understanding that the matter is under investigation by the Israeli police and that there may be criminal charges.

### Mr. Sheik Riaz Ahmed

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his letter to the hon. Member for Bradford, West, dated 5 March, concerning Mr. Sheik Riaz Ahmed, who was refused entry into France in December 1992, when he expects to receive a reply from the French authorities; when he expects to write again to the hon. Member for Bradford, West; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The British embassy at Paris sent a formal note to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 17 March to seek a satisfactory explanation as to why Mr. Ahmed was refused entry to France and raising the question of compensation. I will write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as I have a report.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received about the circumstances in which Mr. Graham Noble, of Brighton, was arrested and detained by Serbs in the Krajina; what charges have been laid against him; what access the British ambassador in Zagreb has been allowed to Mr. Noble; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Mr. Noble was detained near Otocac in Croatia on 6 June and is being held in Knin. The Serbs say they are investigating his activities; we understand that no formal charges have so far been made against him. Her Majesty's ambassador in Zagreb has visited Knin but has not been allowed access to Mr. Noble. The ambassador continues to press for access; Her Majesty's embassy in Belgrade has asked the authorities there to use their influence with the Krajina Serbs to assist in this. The International Committee of the Red Cross is in touch with Her Majesty's embassy in Zagreb about Mr. Noble. Its representative in Knin has reported that Mr. Noble is in good health and is being well treated.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to appropriate authorities about the cases of missing persons arising from the abduction of wounded patients from hospitals in Vukovar in 1991; what progress has been made in securing the names of those abducted; what undertakings have been sought about the return of those abducted and about the return of the bodies of those who have died; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** On 17 to 19 December 1992 an international forensic team, working for the United Nations Commission of Experts, conducted a preliminary site exploration of a mass grave 6 km south-east of Vukovar. The team's findings were consistent with eye-witness testimony which alleges that the grave contains the bodies of patients and medical staff members of Vukovar hospital who disappeared during an evacuation of 20 November 1991. The commission plans to carry out a further investigation of the site but does not intend to attempt identification, exhumation and return of all the bodies. This is a matter for the Croatian authorities.

**Sir Keith Speed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the nationality and description of those vessels reported to the United Nations as attempting to breach the embargo on the former Yugoslavia in the Adriatic and on the Danube.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on 23 April 1993, *Official Report*, columns *244-45*. We now know that the Condor I and Mys Khnistalnyy breached sanctions in early April. Five barges have also been intercepted: Vihac, Kumanovo, Orasac, Velebit and Kaimakalan. All these vessels have been reported to the United Nations Sanctions Committee for investigation. No vessels have been reported to the United Nations for breaching the blockade since April.

## Burma

**Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Burma concerning the imprisonment of opposition leaders; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** With our European Community partners we have repeatedly urged the Burmese authorities, bliaterally and in the relevant international bodies, to release unconditionally all political detainees, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

## Kuwait

**Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Kuwait concerning human rights; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Since the liberation of Kuwait, we have made repeated representations to the Kuwaitis about the need to respect human rights. There have been welcome improvements in Kuwait in this regard.

## Western Sahara

**Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his oral answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column 853, what meetings United Kingdom representatives have held with United Nations officials concerning the proposed referendum in the Western Sahara; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** British representatives are in contact regularly with United Nations officials in Western Sahara. The Secretary-General has just been to Western Sahara and we await his report to the Security Council on his visit.

## Turkey

**Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Turkey concerning the treatment of Kurdish people; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford, (Mr. Garel-Jones), to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on 28 April, *Official Report*, column *440*.

We welcome the new Turkish Prime Minister's commitment to the free expression of different ethnic, cultural and linguistic characteristics.

We frequently make clear to the Turkish Government the importance we attach to combating terrorism within a legal framework and with full respect for human rights.

We regret the decision by the Kurdistan Workers Party to end the ceasefire and condemn the recent upsurge of violence in southeast Turkey, the attacks on hotels in Antalya and the actions against Turkish diplomatic and other premises in Western Europe.

## El Salvador

**Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions are being taken by Her Majesty's Government's representative to monitor the ceasefire and preparations for elections in El Salvador; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Her Majesty's ambassador in San Salvador is in close contact with ONUSAL, the

United Nations observer mission which has been monitoring implemention of all aspects of the peace agreement signed on 16 January 1992. ONUSAL's mandate has now been enlarged to include supervision of preparations for the March 1994 elections.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Overseas Visitors

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his estimate of the numbers and financial value of overseas visitors to the United Kingdom for 1990, 1991 and 1992; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sproat:** Information on this topic is regularly published in *Business Monitor* MQ6 "Overseas Travel and Tourism," which is available in the Library of the House.

### Football Safety

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *460*, what is the relationship between local authorities, police authorities and the Football Licensing Authority in determining the safe capacity of standing terraces in the second and third divisions of the Football League.

**Mr. Sproat:** The vast majority of second and third division football grounds are designated under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975. It is the responsibility of the local authority to issue a safety certificate for such grounds, in consultation with the police and fire authorities. This sets out how many spectators may safely be admitted to each part of the ground. The terms and conditions of safety certificates are for local authorities to determine, although they are expected to take account of the advice contained in the Government's "Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds". The guide covers all aspects of sports ground safety, including the calculation of the safe capacity of terracing.

The Football Licensing Authority was established under the Football Spectators Act 1989. Under section 13 of the 1989 Act, the FLA is charged with keeping under review the discharge by local authorities of their safety certification functions under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 in relation to sports grounds at which designated football matches are played. Specifically, the authority may, after due consultation, require a certifying authority to include in any safety certificate such terms and conditions as the FLA may specify in writing.

Following the review of the Government's all-seater policy last summer, football clubs in the second and third divisions of the Football League were permitted to retain some standing accommodation, provided it was safe. The FLA subsequently commissioned a report on safe terracing by the Football Stadia Advisory Design Council. This document, which was published at the end of March, augments the advice already available to clubs in the "Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds". The FLA will, if necessary, use its powers under the Football Spectators Act to ensure that retained terracing meets the necessary safety standard and that the permitted capacities are set at a safe level.

We are consulting the FLA about the extent to which clubs will be required to upgrade their terracing in line with the recommendations of the Football Stadia Advisory Design Council's report. My right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement shortly.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Construction Industry

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives of the Federation of Master Builders to discuss ways of assisting the construction industry.

**Mr. Nelson:** My right hon. and learned Friend intends to meet regularly representatives from all sectors of industry. He has no plans at present to meet the Federation of Master Builders.

### Contribution Holidays

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total amount of pension fund surplus represented by *(a)* employer/employee contribution holidays, *(b)* improved benefits and *(c)* taxable refunds to the employer in each year since 1986; and what proportion of surplus reduction is represented by each method.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Information is not available in the form requested. The tables below give information on large self-administered pension funds reporting to the Inland Revenue on proposed action to remove surpluses following the provisions in the Finance Act 1986, and on total refunds to employers from occupational pension schemes.

*Large Self Administered Schemes, by method of reduction of Surplus, 1987-88 to 1992-93*[1]

*£ million*

| *Method of reduction* | *Amount of reduction* | *Proportion of surplus reduction Per cent.* |
|---|---|---|
| Contributions holiday (employer) | 7,932 | 38 |
| Contributions holiday (employee) | 155 | 1 |
| Contributions reduction (employer) | 3,169 | 15 |
| Contributions reduction (employee) | 566 | 3 |
| Refund to employer[2] | 1,174 | 6 |
| Increase in benefits | 7,471 | 36 |
| New benefits | 106 | 1 |
| Total | 20,574 | |

[1]The figures shown represent the total to be eliminated by each method. Some of the planned reductions are timed to fall in years subsequent to 1992-93. Amounts are based on the actuary's estimated reduction for each category.

[2]The figures for refunds to employers exclude amounts paid over by schemes reported to be wound up in each year.

*Refunds to the employer from all occupational pension schemes Schemes reporting in refunds*

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| 1987-88 | 85 |
| 1988-89 | 208 |
| 1989-90 | 380 |
| 1990-91 | 578 |
| 1991-92 | 403 |
| 1992-93 | 235 |

### Inland Revenue Special Office 2

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the former head of Inland Revenue special office 2; and on what date he was last performing his official duties.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The officer concerned was suspended from duty on 11 September 1992. Investigations were commenced by the Metropolitan and City police company fraud department and these investigations are continuing.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will identify the functions and purposes of Inland Revenue special office 2, together with its staff establishment and annual cost in 1992-93.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Special office 2 is one of 10 offices in the Inland Revenue which specialise in the investigation of difficult or complex cases which are outside the scope of other parts of the Department, involving mainly avoidance and non-compliance where large amounts of tax are at stake. Special office 2 is based in London.

For 1992-93, there were 15 staff and the cost of running the office was £685,000.

### Value Added Tax

**Ms Lynne:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the rules governing VAT charges when a Government agency bids successfully to provide a commercial service to a Government Department.

**Sir John Cope:** Commercial services supplied by executive agencies to Government Departments are liable to VAT according to the normal rules.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his Departments spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 29 June 1993]:* The Chancellor's Departments have spent approximately £8,000 on such advice in connection with their 1992-93 market-testing programmes.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Mr. Atkins:** The Northern Ireland position was set out in the Secretary of State's policy statement on green housekeeping, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. This has been circulated to all staff in the Northern Ireland civil service and in the Northern Ireland Office.

The policy statement specifically refers to recycled paper, hardwoods and peat. Although not specifically mentioned, the use of low-energy light bulbs has been part of the energy conservation programme managed by the Department of the Environment and the Department of Economic Development. The position on cars is that for some years we have been specifying vehicles which are either diesel-powered or use lead-free petrol. Replacement cars are now specified with catalytic converters.

### Airport Police

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what dates Ministers in his Department held a formal meeting with the Northern Ireland Airports Police Association during the past five years.

**Mr. Atkins:** No such meetings of this nature have taken place during the period in question.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he proposes to meet representatives of the Northern Ireland Airport Police Association to discuss the changes in their force's management, control and duties consequent to the proposed privatisation of Belfast international airport.

**Mr. Atkins:** I plan to meet representatives of the Northern Ireland Airports Police Association to discuss such issues in the near future.

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much the market-testing programme has cost his Department since November 1992.

**Sir John Wheeler:** The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Health and Safety

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to improve health protection and safety conditions in the workplace.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 7 June 1993, *Official Report*, column 98. The Health and Safety Commission's plan of work for 1993-94 and beyond, to which I referred, will be published on 6 July and a copy will be placed in the Library.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth** *[holding answer 29 June 1993]:* Over the period of the market-testing programme announced in the White Paper, "Citizen's Charter: First Report 1992" (Cm 2102), advice on the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 has been sought from in-house legal advisers. It is not possible to identify these costs separately.

### Disabled Employees

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what consideration has been given by his Department to the provision of communication support in the workplace for deaf employees;

(2) what action has been taken by his Department as a follow up to the "Evaluation of Special Schemes to Employment" report in October 1990.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth** *[holding answer 29 June 1993]:* As a follow-up to the evaluation of special schemes report, which was published in October 1990, we have asked the Employment Service to introduce in April 1994 a new major programme called "Access to Work". This will offer people with disabilities a wider range of assistance than is currently available, including communication support for deaf people in the workplace. I believe "Access to Work" will provide more people with disabilities with the help to take up opportunities of employment. In addition, from 5 July 1993, unemployed deaf people will be able to get help towards the cost of communicators at job interviews. Trials of other forms of communicator support will be taking place in four locations in 1993 and lessons learned will be taken into account in "Access to Work". Further details on "Access to Work" were provided in the reply from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) on 22 June, *Official Report*, columns *102-103*.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *583*, how many representations on THORP he has received this year; and what proportion were *(a)* in favour of and *(b)* opposed to the plant.

**The Prime Minister:** I have nothing further to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 16 June, *Official Report*, column *583*.

### Civil List

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Prime Minister what account is taken in drawing up the Civil List of contributions to the cost of the royal household received from *(a)* the Isle of Man, *(b)* the Channel Islands and *(c)* other countries where the Queen is Head of State.

**The Prime Minister:** None, as no such contributions are received for Her Majesty's Civil List.

### Treaties

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister further to his answer of 5 May, *Official Report*, column *922*, how many treaties, since 1 January 1979, have been debated by the House in advance of their ratification by Her Majesty's Government, and what is this figure as a percentage of total treaties ratified.

**The Prime Minister:** Her Majesty's Government have ratified 243 treaties since 1 January 1979. These have been laid before both Houses in the normal way. They cover a wide variety of subjects and fall to the appropriate Government Department to administer. The information sought is not centrally recorded and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Murder Trials

**Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what arrangements are made during the period in which notes, tapes or transcripts of murder trials are held, for their safe storage and preservation.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The Lord Chancellor's Department is responsible for ensuring that a verbatim record is taken of all trials in the Crown court, as required by rule 18 of the Criminal Appeal Rules 1968. The record is taken by shorthand and/or mechanical means. Under open tender contracts with the private sector which came into effect on 1 April 1993, the responsibility for the safe storage and preservation of such records is that of the contractor whose staff took the record. The contractor is bound by the contract to ensure that the record is kept for not less than five years and to provide transcripts requested during that period. Transcripts are not automatically produced for cost reasons in any category of cases, but these may be purchased by the Department or the public from the contractor concerned.

### Child Abduction

**Sir John Stanley:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the number of requests made to each EC country in each of the last three years for the return of British children believed to have been abducted to the EC country in question.

**Mr. John M. Taylor** *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* The figures requested are as follows:

| *Country* | *Requests for return* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *1991* | *1992* | *[1]1993* |
| Belgium | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Denmark | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| France | 7 | 9 | 5 |
| Germany | 8 | 13 | 1 |
| Greece | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ireland | 0 | 13 | 5 |
| Italy | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Luxembourg | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Netherlands | 8 | 7 | 2 |
| Portugal | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Spain | 7 | 12 | 5 |

[1] January-June.

**Sir John Stanley:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the number of British children *(a)* abducted from Britain who are currently believed to be in each EC country and *(b)* abducted from Britain who have been returned from each EC country over the last three years.

**Mr. John M. Taylor** *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* The figures requested are as follows:

*June 1990 to June 1993*

| *Country* | *(a) Number of children abducted* | *(b) Number of children returned* |
|---|---|---|
| Belgium | 3 | 1 |
| Denmark | 1 | 0 |
| France | 35 | 1 |
| Germany | 26 | 4 |
| Greece | [1]— | [1]— |
| Ireland | 26 | 3 |
| Italy | [1]— | [1]— |
| Luxembourg | [1]— | [1]— |
| Netherlands | 26 | 4 |
| Portugal | 7 | 1 |
| Spain | 47 | 7 |

[1] Figures not available.

## EDUCATION

### Grant-maintained Status

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what annual capital sums have been made available to St. Francis Xavier's college in Liverpool since it acquired grant-maintained status; what additional capital allocations have been made in each year; and for what reasons and purpose.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The following capital grants have been made:

| *Year and project description* | *Formula capital allocation* £ | *Named capital allocation* £ |
|---|---|---|
| *1990-91* | | |
| Flat roof repairs | 19,000 | 32,000 |
| Furnish and equip Design and technology block | | 80,427 |
| Removal of asbestos | | [1]88,724 |
| *1991-92* | | |
| Laboratory refurbishments | 28,100 | 201,372 |
| *1992-93* | 30,280 | nil |
| *1993-94* | | |
| New general and technical rooms | Not yet claimed | 750,000 |

[1] Emergency capital grant.

**Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to respond to the application for grant-maintained status for St. Peter's Roman Catholic school, Bournemouth.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** My right hon. Friend expects shortly to announce his decision on this application.

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much the market-testing programme has cost his Department since November 1992.

**Mr. Boswell:** The cost of the programme—in direct staff costs and consultancy costs—has been some £188,000 since November 1992.

### Student Incomes

**Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the annual income available to a student in higher education receiving a full student grant and making full use of the student loan facility in each year since 1990.

**Mr. Boswell:** The following resources have been available through the mandatory award and student loan to students studying away from the parental home:

| *Academic year* | *Grant* £ | *Full-year loan* £ | *Total* £ |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 2,265 | 420 | 2,685 |
| 1991-92 | 2,265 | 580 | 2,845 |
| 1992-93 | 2,265 | 715 | 2,980 |
| 1993-94 | 2,265 | 800 | 3,065 |

Different rates of grant and loan apply to students living in the parental home or studying in London, and different rates of loan apply to the final year of most courses. The grants are means-tested, and additional allowances are available in certain circumstances.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Light Rail Projects

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *405*, when he expects to make an announcement regarding the light rail projects currently being considered by his Department.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The four light rail projects referred to in the reply of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry on 14 June are still being considered by my Department. For commercial reasons, I cannot disclose any information on individual projects supported, or being considered for support, by my Department. It is for the companies concerned to disseminate information as they see fit.

### Steel Imports

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *138*, what inquiries he has made regarding imports into the United Kingdom of allegedly subsidised structural steel from other EC member states.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** We have no evidence at present to suggest that structural steel producers in other EC member states are directly subsidised. Where we have evidence of illegal subsidisation we do not hesitate to press the European Commission to take action against those concerned, as we have done in the case of the Italian steel company, ILVA.

Gathering the necessary evidence is difficult and we rely to a large extent on commercial sources. My officials have discussed this matter with the British Constructional Steelwork Association. If the association, its members or any other party can produce evidence to suggest that illegal subsidies are being paid to structural steel producers we will pursue the matter vigorously with the European Commission.

### Assisted Areas

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take into account the level of public money invested in new and unoccupied industrial estates in current assisted areas when considering any change in status.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The criteria that have been used in the assisted areas map review were set out in the public consultation document issued last year. As we made clear, unemployment levels have been the main determinant, though a number of other relevant factors have also been taken into account. The availability of presently unoccupied, publicly funded industrial or commercial premises is not judged to be relevant in determining areas for inclusion in the assisted areas map.

### Coal Subsidies

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade to what extent the subsidies to be made available to coal producers are available for extra sales to the non-electricity supply industry market.

**Mr. Eggar:** As indicated in the White Paper "The Prospects for Coal", the subsidy is to be made available on genuinely additional sales for electricity generation. It is not available for coal sold into other markets.

### Companies Acts (Inspectors)

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what considerations were taken into account in deciding whether to appoint DTI inspectors under the Companies Acts in the cases of Maxwell Communications Corporation and Polly Peck International.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** Inspectors have not been appointed into either Maxwell Communications Corporation or Polly Peck International. However, inspectors were appointed last June to investigate and report on the affairs and membership of Mirror Group Newspapers plc. The inspectors have been asked to look in particular at the offer for sale of the company shares.

In deciding whether or not to appoint inspectors, consideration is given to the criteria laid down by statute —principally sections 432 and 442 of the Companies Act 1985—and to whether the appointment of inspectors would be in the public interest.

### Sellafield

**Mr. Trimble:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a further statement on nuclear reprocessing at Sellafield.

**Mr. Eggar:** Nuclear reprocessing is a proven and safe technology for which there is a continuing demand. It is a commercial matter for the owners of the spent fuel to decide whether to reprocess or to seek alternative management options.

### Telecommunications Council

**Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Telecommunications Council on 16 June.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The Council reached unanimous agreement on the framework of an action plan to help launch widescreen television services. The four-year plan will be for Community funds, together with funds from othere sources, to be used to partially offset the additional costs to broadcasters and programme producers of broadcasting TV services, including high definition TV services, in the widescreen format. The settlement represents a considerable negotiating success for the United Kingdom. The 850 mecu Community subsidy originally proposed has been reduced to 228 mecu—£160 million; broadcasters and programme makers may use technologies other than the analogue MAC standards, such as PALPlus or fully digital technologies; and the United Kingdom secured a valuable commitment that United Kingdom-based companies contributing to the action plan will be given due recognition of this in future European collaborative research and development and standardisation activities into digital TV.

The Council agreed a resolution on the Commission's review of the Community telecoms market. This states that voice telephony services will be liberalised by 1 January 1998, with an additional derogation period of no more than five years for Spain, Portugal, Greece and Ireland and, if justified, no more than two years for Luxembourg. The Commission will produce, by 1995, a green paper on liberalisation of network infrastructure. The United Kingdom and three other member states urged them also to carry out studies by the end of 1993 on network provision for corporate users. A common position was agreed in principle on the Council directive on the approximation of the laws of the member states concerning satellite earth station equipment modifying the scope of Council directive 91/263/EEC, establishing harmonised procedures for type approval. There was also a short debate on the Green Paper on Postal Services during which the Commission set out a timetable for future work in preparing draft directives. The Commission also briefly reported progress in preparing a Community programme for support of trans-European networks in the tele-communications field.

### Patent Office

**Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the future of the Patent Office.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Since its establishment as an executive agency of the DTI in 1990, and its subsequent move to trading fund status in 1991, the Patent Office has become a more commercially oriented organisation. I am now undertaking a review of its role to consider how best to build on this progress. Such reviews normally take place around three years after an agency has been established.

The review will consider whether other forms of ownership and management might offer better value for money and enable the Patent Office to offer a better service to its customers. I will be asking independent consultants to assess the market in which the office operates; and to identify and consider as wide a range of options for its future as possible, including the possibility of putting some or all of it into the private sector, and of involving the private sector in running the office in ways which fall short of full privatisation. A number of consultancy firms have been invited to submit proposals. The chosen firm will be appointed shortly and will report later this year. I will report to the House on my conclusions.

### Russia

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the arrangements for providing export credit facilities to Russia.

**Mr. Needham:** I have been advised by the Export Credits Guarantee Department's accounting officer that in his view the risks involved in giving guarantees for exports and investment in Russia under sections 1(1) and 2 of the Export and Investment Guarantees Act 1991 do not meet ECGD's normal underwriting criteria. However, in view of the importance which the Government attach to encouraging trade with Russia, I have instructed him to make arrangements for such guarantees to be issued. These guarantees will be excluded from ECGD's break-even objective for new business.

### EUREKA

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on EUREKA and United Kingdom involvement in and support for the initiative.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** EUREKA is a pan-European initiative to encourage industrial collaboration in research and development; membership currently comprises the 12 EC countries, six EFTA countries, Turkey, Hungary and the EC Commission. The EUREKA ministerial conference which I attended in Paris on 24 June 1993 agreed that Russia should be admitted as soon as the last appropriate technical elements have been completed.

Of the 193 new projects announced at the conference, 46 involved United Kingdom participants, a record number for the United Kingdom. In addition there were three new United Kingdom participations in previously announced projects. Thirty-one of the overall United Kingdom total went ahead without Government support demonstrating the awareness by United Kingdom organisations of the wider benefits of EUREKA. I congratulate all those United Kingdom organisations taking part in these and other EUREKA projects which demonstrate that the United Kingdom remains a strongly committed participant in the initiative.

On 26 May 1993, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced a refocusing of the Department's science and technology policy. As part of that refocusing, from 1 September 1993, the DTI will provide support for United Kingdom organisations to enable them to take part in feasibility studies and other consortium building activities to generate new EUREKA projects. From that date, firms' eligibility for support for the implementation phase of EUREKA projects will be confined to small and medium-sized enterprises of under 250 employees in accordance with the EC definition.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 29 June 1993]:* During the period of the market-testing programme identified in the "Citizen's Charter" White Paper last November, the Department's solicitor has advised on this matter in the normal course of his duties. We are not able to distinguish the cost of advice on the particular issue in question from other advice on establishments and market testing issues.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Invalidity Benefit

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what proportion of people in receipt of invalidity benefit receive an additional pension; and if he will publish figures showing *(a)* the average weekly additional pension in payment and *(b)* the distribution of recipients rising in increments of £1, giving figures separately for men and women.

**Mr. Scott:** The latest information available is in the table.

| | *All persons* | *Males* | *Females* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number in receipt of IVB | 1,306,000 | 976,000 | 330,000 |
| Number where AP in payment | 1,085,000 | 817,000 | 268,000 |
| Percentage in receipt of AP | 83·1 | 83·7 | 81·2 |
| Average AP in payment | £11·08 | £12·48 | 6·79 |
| AP up to £1 | 147,000 | 97,000 | 49,000 |
| AP £1·01 to £2 | 108,000 | 71,000 | 38,000 |
| AP £2·01 to £3 | 81,000 | 53,000 | 28,000 |
| AP £3·01 to £4 | 62,000 | 38,000 | 23,000 |
| AP £4·01 to £5 | 44,000 | 30,000 | 14,000 |
| AP £5·01 to £6 | 41,000 | 28,000 | 14,000 |
| AP £6·01 to £7 | 37,000 | 25,000 | 12,000 |
| AP £7·01 to £8 | 35,000 | 25,000 | 10,000 |
| AP £8·01 to £9 | 34,000 | 23,000 | 11,000 |
| AP £9·01 to £10 | 33,000 | 25,000 | 8,000 |
| AP £10·01 to £11 | 29,000 | 21,000 | 7,000 |
| AP £11·01 to £12 | 28,000 | 22,000 | 6,000 |
| AP £12·01 to £13 | 27,000 | 22,000 | 5,000 |
| AP £13·01 to £14 | 29,000 | 23,000 | 6,000 |
| AP £14·01 to £15 | 25,000 | 21,000 | 4,000 |
| AP £15·01 to £16 | 23,000 | 18,000 | 5,000 |
| AP £16·01 to £17 | 22,000 | 20,000 | 2,000 |
| AP £17·01 to £18 | 21,000 | 18,000 | 3,000 |
| AP £18·01 to £19 | 22,000 | 20,000 | 2,000 |
| AP £19·01 to £20 | 20,000 | 18,000 | 2,000 |
| AP £20·01 to £21 | 15,000 | 14,000 | 1,000 |
| AP £21·01 to £22 | 19,000 | 16,000 | 2,000 |
| AP £22·01 to £23 | 17,000 | 15,000 | 1,000 |
| AP £23·01 to £24 | 15,000 | 14,000 | 1,000 |
| AP £24·01 to £25 | 16,000 | 15,000 | 1,000 |
| AP £25·01 to £26 | 12,000 | 11,000 | 1,000 |
| AP £26·01 to £27 | 13,000 | 12,000 | 1,000 |
| AP £27·01 to £28 | 14,000 | 13,000 | 1,000 |
| AP £28·01 to £29 | 12,000 | 11,000 | 1,000 |
| AP £29·01 to £30 | 8,000 | 7,000 | 1,000 |
| AP £30·01 to £31 | 10,000 | 10,000 | 1,000 |
| AP £31·01 to £32 | 9,000 | 8,000 | 1,000 |
| AP £32·01 to £33 | 8,000 | 7,000 | 1,000 |
| AP £33·01 to £34 | 8,000 | 7,000 | 1,000 |
| AP £34·01 to £35 | 4,000 | 3,000 | * |
| AP £35·01 to £36 | 5,000 | 5,000 | * |
| AP £36·01 to £37 | 5,000 | 4,000 | 1,000 |
| AP £37·01 to £38 | 4,000 | 3,000 | * |
| AP £38·01 to £39 | 5,000 | 4,000 | * |
| AP £39·01 to £40 | 2,000 | 2,000 | * |
| AP £40·01 to £41 | 3,000 | 3,000 | * |
| AP £41·01 to £42 | 3,000 | 3,000 | * |
| AP £42·01 to £43 | 3,000 | 2,000 | * |
| AP £43·01 to £44 | 3,000 | 3,000 | * |
| AP £44·01 to £45 | 1,000 | 1,000 | * |
| AP £45·01 to £46 | 2,000 | 1,000 | * |

| | All persons | Males | Females |
|---|---|---|---|
| AP £46·01 to £47 | 1,000 | 1,000 | * |
| AP £47·01 to £48 | 2,000 | 2,000 | * |
| AP £48·01 to £49 | 3,000 | 2,000 | * |
| AP £49·01 to £50 | * | * | * |
| AP £50·01 and over | * | * | * |

*Notes:*
1. Figures based on a 1 per cent. sample of Incapacity Benefit claimants at 30 March 1991.
2. Figures rounded to the nearest thousand.
3. *Indicates less than 500.
4. IVB = Invalidity Benefit.
AP = Additional Pension.

### Independent Living Fund

**Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will discuss with the trustees of the Independent Living (1993) Fund the quality of the data available to them about the circumstances of severely disabled people and projections of their needs in reaching their decision to exclude the terminally ill, and others whose conditions are not stable, from the scope of the fund; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** The decision that the trustees took was on a question of policy and was therefore their sole responsibility.

**Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on how many occasions officials of his Department attended meetings of the board of trustees of the Independent Living (1993) Fund; and what role they played at these meetings.

**Mr. Scott:** Officials of my Department are invited to attend these meetings by the trustees. They attend as observers.

**Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether reviews of individual cases funded by the Independent Living (1993) Fund will take place on a six-monthly basis in line with the trustees' intention to arrange six-monthly packages of care with local authorities; and what assessment he has made of the administrative and financial implications of this.

**Mr. Scott:** Administrative issues, such as the review of cases, are matters for the trustees and director of the Independent Living (1993) Fund.

### Quarry House, Leeds

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the insurance value of art works in Quarry house.

**Mr. Hague:** The Department is self-insuring which means that the art work in Quarry house has not been valued for insurance purposes.

### Housing Benefit (Students)

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what response he has made to the National Housing and Town Planning Council publication, entitled "Making a Difference-Housing Benefit for Students"; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent representations he has received regarding housing benefit for students in relation to the 1993 summer break.

**Mr. Burt:** I have received a number of representations from hon. Members and members of the public. I have seen the National Housing and Town Planning Council publication. In general, it is the educational maintenance system which is designed to provide support for students, not the social security system, and we have no plans to change this. Housing benefit is, however, available to vulnerable students such as lone parents, those who are disabled, and those with dependent children, not just during the summer vacation but throughout their course. In addition, non-student partners can claim on behalf of the couple if they satisfy the normal qualifying conditions.

### Household Income Statistics

**Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the next edition of the households below average income statistics will be published.

**Mr. Lilley:** The new edition of the households below average income—HBAI—statistics covering the years 1979 to 1990-91, has been published today and copies have been placed in the Library.

The figures show that average disposable household incomes have grown in real terms by 35 per cent. between 1979 and 1990-91. Increases were not confined to a few top earners, and there have been appreciable increases in average income for all family types and all economic status groups. Pensioners have done particularly well, with pensioner couples showing an increase in average income of 48 per cent. after housing costs.

A complex picture emerges in the outcomes for the lower income groups. This is because of changes in the composition of the bottom 10 per cent. of income distribution, the particular point in the economic cycle captured by this edition, and the peculiarities in the way the incomes of the increasing number of self-employed are reported in the family expenditure survey from which this analysis is drawn. There are also strong indications that income results for the bottom 10 per cent. of the income distribution do not reflect their true standard of living. There has been a marked increase in their possession of consumer durables and three quarters of those who reported zero incomes spent more than the average for the population as a whole. The results shown in HBAI for the lowest income group cannot, therefore, be interpreted simply and should be treated with some caution.

The new family resources survey, which is due to replace the family expenditure survey as the data source for HBAI, will place special emphasis on gathering information from households on low incomes and so should help to improve the reliability of the data.

### "Paying for Care: Lessons from Europe"

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee entitled "Paying for Care: Lessons from Europe"; and if he will make a statement on the report's findings.

**Mr. Scott:** The report provides interesting information about support provided for carers in other European countries. We will study it carefully as part of our ongoing consideration of provision for carers.

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *8*, how many claims for disability living allowance were received in 1992; what proportion were agreed to; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** A total of 705,000 claims to disability living allowance were received in 1992, these included new and top-up claims and transitional attendance allowance and mobility allowance cases. Virtually all these have since been cleared.

Of the 553,000 claims cleared during the year 1992, 62 per cent. resulted in an award being made at the initial adjudication stage; this does not include transitional cases.

### Pensioners (Housing Benefit)

**Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average level of pensioners' savings when they first apply for housing benefit; and what is the average expenditure of their savings before they qualify for such a benefit.

**Mr. Burt:** Average amount of pensioners' savings at time of successful claim for housing benefit is in the table.

| | *Overall* £ | *In receipt of Income Support* £ | *Not in receipt of Income Support* £ |
|---|---|---|---|
| All pensioners | 880 | 260 | 1,280 |
| Pensioners with any savings | 1,900 | 730 | 2,290 |

*Note:* Figures were derived from the HB and Community Charge Benefit (CCB) Management Information System (HBMIS) annual 1 per cent. sample of HB/CCB cases in Great Britain in May 1991.

Information about savings of pensioners who did not qualify for HB and the average expenditure of pensioners' savings before they qualify for HB is not available.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Standard Spending Assessments

15. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects his review of standard spending assessments to be concluded; and what consultation there will be with local authorities and hon. Members on the outcome of the review.

**Mr. Gummer:** Our review of standard spending assessments will be completed in time for any changes to be incorporated in SSAs for 1994-95.

We have invited local authorities' views and my officials are consulting the local authority associations.

I shall consult in the usual way on my proposals for the rate support grant settlement for 1994-95 including SSAs, in the late autumn.

### Centre for Accessible Environments

16. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will next visit the Centre for Accessible Environments to discuss the built environment and problems facing people with a disability.

**Mr. Baldry:** My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit the centre at present.

### Climate Change Convention

17. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to ratify the climate change convention discussed at the UN Conference on Environment and Development.

**Mr. Yeo:** The United Kingdom has undertaken, along with our G7 and EC partners, to ratify the convention by the end of 1993.

### Audit Commission

18. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce legislation to strengthen the powers of the Audit Commission.

**Mr. Baldry:** The Audit Commission, and the auditors which it appoints, already has a wide range of powers under the Local Government Finance Act 1982 and the Local Government Act 1992. Nevertheless, if specific, soundly based measures to strengthen those powers were proposed, we would be willing to consider further legislation.

### Water Companies (Nitrates)

19. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he is making of the total cost to water companies of removing nitrates and fertilisers from public water supplies in pursuance of the European Community directive; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo:** Assessment of the financial impact of European directives and other obligations on water companies are carried out by the Director General of Water Services. I understand from him that to meet the costs of implementing the nitrate standards in the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations in England and Wales, water companies' capital expenditure programmes have included £74 million to the year 1991-92 and are at present forecast to require a further £120 million to the year 2000—at 1992-93 prices.

### Water Metering

20. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has held with the Director General of the Office of Water Services on the issue of compulsory water metering.

**Mr. Yeo:** I have discussed a range of issues with the director general, including water metering. But it is for each water company to determine its method of charging, subject to the overriding requirement that they do not show undue preference to or unduly discriminate against any class or group of customers.

### River Pollution

22. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with British Coal and the National Rivers Authority regarding pollution of the River Wear arising from pit closures in County Durham.

**Mr. Yeo:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to him by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) on 28 April 1993, *Official Report*, column *429*.

### Opencasting

23. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new measures he is considering to limit the effect of opencasting on communities and their environments; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Baldry:** We have already announced the Government's intention to revise the planning guidelines on opencast coal. Following publication of the White Paper on the Government's coal review, we are proceeding as quickly as possible to public consultation. On 25 March, my right hon. and learned Friend the former Secretary of State issued interim planning guidance which will apply pending that revision.

### Housing Association Homes

24. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he expects the Government's target of 153,000 housing association homes over the years 1992-93 to 1994-95 to be reached.

**Sir George Young:** The Housing Corporation estimates that over the period 1992-93 to 1994-95 its capital programme will provide 170,000 housing association homes. This is considerably more than the 153,000 promised in our election manifesto.

### National Parks

25. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the current administration of the national parks.

**Mr. Gummer:** Our policy statement on the national parks, published in January 1992, promised legislation to create independent authorities to administer the eight national parks in England and Wales currently run as county council committees. We remain fully committed to this proposal; the legislation will be introduced as soon as time permits.

### Council Tax

26. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received proposing elimination of anomalies with band A in the new council tax provisions; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Curry:** My right hon. Friend has received some representations, but we are not persuaded that there is a case for changing the present arrangements.

### Water Disconnections

27. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the levels of disconnection of domestic water supplies to recover debt.

**Mr. Yeo:** My right hon. Friend has received representations from a number of hon. Members and others, expressing concern about the number of domestic water supplies disconnected.

### District Auditors

28. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to review the powers available to district auditors to require the prompt attendance of witnesses and to avoid the destruction of documentary evidence relevant to their investigations.

**Mr. Curry:** Auditors already have extensive powers, set out in section 16 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982, to obtain documents and interview persons to enable them to carry out their audits. Nevertheless, I would be willing to consider specific, soundly based proposals to review those powers.

33. **Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to review the powers available to district auditors to require the prompt attendance of witnesses and presentation of evidence relevant to their investigations.

**Mr. Baldry:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell).

### Water Charges

29. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had this month with the Office of Water Services about the cost and method of charging for water.

**Mr. Yeo:** I met Mr. Byatt on 22 June to discuss a wide variety of topics, including progress on his periodic review of limits on water charges to apply from 1 April 1995 and the Department's consultation document "Using Water Wisely", which addressed methods of charging for water.

### Rented Accommodation

30. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the availability of accommodation for rent in the private sector.

**Sir George Young:** Information from the housing trailer to the 1991 labour force survey indicates that around 1·8 million households were living in privately rented accommodation in England in 1991.

### Shared Ownership

31. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for extending shared ownership in the social housing sector.

**Mr. Gummer:** The Housing Corporation's plans provide for an increase in the resources devoted to shared ownership from £261 million this year to £330 million in 1995-96.

### Local Government

32. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the financial methodology adopted by the Local Government Commission and its implications for decisions on future local government structures.

**Mr. Curry:** We have said that change to local government structure should be worth while and cost-effective over time. This does not mean that the cheapest option should be selected everywhere, or that all changes must be cheaper than the status quo. But costs should be assessed on a consistent basis, as our guidance to the commission makes clear. A methodology for financial appraisals has been developed by the commission's advisers, Ernst and Young, and I understand that they have invited comments on it. We will be examining this methodology to ensure that it is in accordance with our guidance.

### London Docklands (Banquet)

34. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the banquet the London Docklands development corporation held on 7 May.

**Mr. Baldry:** I have received one letter.

### Green House Programme

35. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the cost of the greenhouse programme.

**Mr. Baldry:** A total of £60 million is being spent under the programme between 1991-92 and 1993-94.

### Right to Buy

36. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to encourage more sales under right to buy.

**Sir George Young:** The Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Bill will extend the opportunity of home ownership under the right to buy to a new group of tenants. Those who cannot afford to buy outright will be able to buy on rents-to-mortgage terms, paying no more in mortgage payments than they currently pay in rent.

### Council House Sales

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities have sold off all their council housing stock.

**Mr. Gummer:** Twenty-three local authorities have, with the agreement of their tenants, disposed of the ownership of all or most of their housing stock through large-scale voluntary transfers to housing associations. Of these, the following fifteen have sold all their housing stock:

East Dorset DC
Hambleton DC
Medina BC
Mid Sussex DC
Newbury DC
North Bedfordshire BC
Ryedale DC
Sevenoaks DC
South Buckinghamshire DC
South Wight BC
Suffolk Coastal DC
Swale BC
Tonbridge and Malling BC
Tunbridge Wells BC
West Dorset DC

The following eight local authorities have retained ownership of hostels or part shares in dwellings sold under shared ownership schemes:

Breckland DC
Broadland DC
Bromley BC
Chiltern DC
Christchurch BC
East Cambridgeshire DC
Rochester upon Medway CC
Surrey Heath BC

### Urban Policy

**Mr. Boyce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's current urban policy.

**Sir George Young:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Members for Wallsend (Mr. Byers), for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Godsiff) and for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy).

### Darwin Initiative

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delays in implementation of the Darwin initiative announced at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

**Mr. Yeo:** Following the Prime Minister's initial announcement of the Darwin initiative and the announcement by the then Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), about its funding a major consultation exercise elicited over 200 responses. An independent advisory committee examined the responses and recently reported its recommendations to Ministers. We hope very soon to invite bids for specific projects.

### Environmental Action Fund

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to contract out the management of the environmental action fund for 1993-94.

**Mr. Yeo:** I am considering plans to contract out management of the environmental action fund and hope to announce a decision shortly.

### Low-energy Lamps

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in drawing up an energy labelling scheme for low-energy lamps.

**Mr. Yeo:** All light bulbs, including low-energy bulbs, already show their electricity consumption in watts both on the bulb itself and on the packaging. In the case of low-energy bulbs, most manufacturers also show on the packaging the electricity consumption of an equivalent conventional tungsten bulb. The Energy Efficiency Office (EEO) has recently published a short consumer guide "Energy Saving Lightbulbs—The Facts" which has been widely distributed by the major retailers to shops where the bulbs are sold.

The European Commission is investigating the need for a directive for the mandatory energy labelling of lighting as part of a plan to introduce energy labelling of all major electricity consuming appliances. The Government support these plans.

## Paris Commission

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the decision taken at the Paris Commission meeting in Berlin on 16 June; and if he will set out the reasons for the United Kingdom's position on each of the proposals voted upon.

**Mr. Yeo:** The following list shows the outcome on the proposals for decisions and recommendations considered at the 15th joint meeting of the Oslo and Paris commissions, held in Berlin from 14 to 19 June, and the position adopted by the United Kingdom on them:

a. *Recommendation concerning the limitation of pollution from existing primary iron and steel production installations (PARCOM recommendation 93/1):* adopted by a three-quarters majority—Belgium, Portugal and Spain entered reservations—the United Kingdom accepted this recommendation;

b. *Decision on the phasing-out of the use of hexachloroethane in the non-ferrous metal industry (PARCOM decision 93/1):* adopted by a three-quarters majority—Germany and the United Kingdom entered reservations, as did the Commission of the European Communities—the United Kingdom reservation is because we have not completed the assessment of the cost of complying with the decision;

c. *Recommendation for the reduction of marine pollution originating from the phosphate fertiliser industry:* not adopted; the United Kingdom did not support this recommendation because it was insufficiently developed and would increase pressure to transfer the production concerned to areas discharging into seas outside the Paris Commission area;

d. *Recommendation for further restrictions on the use and discharge of mercury:* not adopted in its original form, because the part dealing with the imposing of a ban on the import of arm and leg shock-absorber bands containing mercury required clarification of the powers of EC member states to impose such a ban in the absence of Community action; a received *Recommendation on further restrictions on the discharge of mercury from dentistry (PARCOM recommendation 93/2)* was adopted by a three-quarters majority—France, Portugal and Spain entered reservations—the United Kingdom accepted this recommendation;

e. *Recommendation on the elaboration of national action plans and best environmental practice for the reduction of inputs to the environment of pesticides from agricultural use (PARCOM recommendation 93/3):* adopted by a three-quarters majority—France and Portugal entered reservations—the United Kingdom supported this recommendation;

f. *Recommendation on the phasing out of cationic detergents DTDMAC, DSDMAC and DHTDMAC in fabric softeners (PARCOM recommendation 93/4):* adopted by a three-quarters majority—the United Kingdom entered a reservation—the United Kingdom reservation was because the evidence that available substitutes are less environmentally hazardous is not available except to the firms that have developed them, and because formal action is unnecessary, given the 90 per cent reduction in usage in recent years;

g. *Recommendation on the reduction of nutrients from agriculture:* not adopted, only two countries supporting it; the United Kingdom did not support it, because it would have required unnecessary action by the United Kingdom;

h. *Decision on the phasing-out of short-chained chlorinated paraffins:* not adopted; the United Kingdom did not support this decision because we have not completed the assessment of the cost of complying with the decision;

i. *Recommendation concerning increases in radioactive discharges from nuclear reprocessing plants:* this proposal, tabled by Denmark, was not presented;

j. *Recommendation on the total level of radioactive discharges into the maritime area:* this proposal, tabled by the Republic of Ireland, was not presented;

k. *Recommendation concerning increases in radioactive discharges from nuclear reprocessing plants:* this joint proposal from Denmark and the Republic of Ireland was not adopted—Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom had reservations, as did the Commission of the European Communities—a revised *Recommendation concerning increases in radioactive discharges from nuclear reprocessing plants (PARCOM recommendation 93/5)* was adopted by a three-quarters majority—Belgium, France and the United Kingdom entered reservations, as did the Commission of the European Communities—the United Kingdom reservation was because the first limb of the recommendation made no progress beyond the commitment in the 1992 action plan, while the second limb both was too vague to provide a proper basis for a PARCOM recommendation and, insofar as it provided for a role for the Paris Commission in the decision process, was inappropriate.

The acceptance by Belgium of decisions and recommendations was *ad referendum*, pending the completion of internal procedures; where the adoption of a measure depending on Belgian acceptance, therefore, that adoption is provisional pending confirmation of the Belgian position. PARCOM decisions bind those contracting parties which vote for them or subsequently accept them; PARCOM recommendations have no binding force.

## Street Cleaning

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in his policy to bring forward proposals for voluntary involvement in street cleaning.

**Mr. Yeo:** Last year, my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State announced two new initiatives concerning voluntary involvement in improving the quality of the local environment. One was for a network of community environment wardens, the other was a study of the United States "adopt-a-road" scheme. Having consulted the voluntary sector on these proposals, we are commissioning a feasibility study by consultants on how best to explore the potential of the community environment warden concept. This work will take account of the study carried out by the Tidy Britain Group of the "adopt-a-road" schemes.

## Radioactive Waste Repository

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what economic assessment his Department has conducted of the implications of delaying the Nirex scheme for a radioactive waste repository.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Department is keeping under continuous review all the consequences of changes in Nirex's plans for a deep disposal facility for low and intermediate-level radioactive waste.

## Energy Management Assistance Scheme

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *619*, how many applications for the energy management assistance scheme have so far been received; how many grants have been paid; what are the expected savings in carbon and financial terms from each scheme; and what proportion of grant scheme is being monitored to assess eventual performance.

**Mr. Yeo:** Since the scheme started on 1 April 1992 there have been 1,828 applications received and 1,331 grants paid.

A review to assess potential carbon savings on each application will be carried out shortly. Currently average savings identified on each application are 13 to 16 per cent. of energy bills.

Arrangements are in hand to monitor applicants' eventual performance under the scheme, but the proportion of cases to be assessed has not yet been decided.

### Business and the Environment

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of his advisory committee on business and the environment.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment was established in May 1991 for a two-year term. The Committee will publish its third progress report shortly. The Government have reviewed the role of the committee and will make an announcement about its future in the near future.

### Carbon Dioxide Emissions

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total volume of carbon dioxide emissions for the United Kingdom in 1990; and what was the contribution made to those emissions by *(a)* power generation, *(b)* transport, *(c)* industrial production, *(d)* agriculture and *(e)* each main sector of manufacturing industry.

**Mr. Yeo:** Estimates of United Kingdom carbon dioxide emissions are published annually in the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics". The 15th digest, published in May this year, shows that in 1990 the United Kingdom emitted 158 million tonnes of carbon (MtC) as carbon dioxide. Of this total, 54 MtC came from power stations, 34 MtC from transport, 40MtC from industry and 1MtC from agriculture. Refinery emissions accounted for 5MtC of the industrial total.

Reallocating power station and refinery emissions to final users increases estimated industrial emissions to about 53 MtC. The discussion document on our national programme for $CO_2$ emissions, published in December 1992 gives 1990 emissions on this basis for the following energy intensive industries:

| *Sector* | *MtC* |
|---|---|
| Iron and Steel | 9 |
| Other metals | 9 |
| Mineral Products | 4 |
| Chemicals | 9 |
| Paper and Board | 3 |

These sectors were responsible for about 65 per cent. of industrial emissions in 1990.

### Environmental Damage

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when Her Majesty's Government received European Commission document ENV 170 COM (93) 47 "Final on Remedying Environmental Damage"; and what response he expects to make to the Green Paper.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Department received the document on 15 June 1993. The Government will submit their comments to the European Commission in due course.

### London Residuary Body

**Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what meetings he has had with the London residuary body; and what was discussed.

**Mr. Baldry:** My right hon. Friend has had no meetings with the London residuary body.

### Architects Registration Acts

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration his Department's deregulation unit is giving to repealing the Architects Registration Acts; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Baldry:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne, (Mr. Waterson) on 2 February 1993, *Official Report*, columns *89-90*.

As part of the Government's deregulation initiatives, we propose to repeal the Architects Registration Acts, at the earliest legislative opportunity.

### London Docklands (Entertainment)

**Mr. Straw:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the expenditure on entertainment and press and public relations from public funds of the London Docklands development corporation for each year since its inception; what is the budget for the current financial year; and what is classed as entertainment and press and public relations for these purposes.

**Sir George Young** *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* The information requested is as follows:

| | *Total £ million* |
|---|---|
| 1981-82 | 1·1 |
| 1982-83 | 2·5 |
| 1983-84 | 1·9 |
| 1984-85 | 2·3 |
| 1985-86 | 1·7 |
| 1986-87 | 1·7 |
| 1987-88 | 1·8 |
| 1988-89 | 1·8 |
| 1989-90 | 3·3 |
| 1990-91 | 3·0 |
| 1991-92 | 3·2 |
| 1992-93 | 3·5 |

The expected expenditure for 1993-94 is £3·5 million. The figures comprise advertising, events and associated expenditure, corporate publications and the cost of the LDDC visitors' centre and press office.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Silverware

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee if he will make a statement on the involvement of Aldous Antique Furniture Restoration in the purchase and sale of House of Commons silverware.

**Mr. Colin Shepherd:** This a matter for the Director of Catering Services and I shall ask her to write to the hon. Member.

## WALES

### Outdoor Centres

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to ensure that outdoor centres in Wales follow safety standards; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** As employers, operators of outdoor activity and education centres have a general duty under section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to have regard to the health and safety of all persons, including non-employees, affected by their activities. In June 1992, the Wales tourist board, in association with the Sports Council for Wales, launched a voluntary accreditation scheme for activity holiday centres which sets down detailed safety guidelines.

The Government will be considering whether further measures are needed in the light of investigations into the recent Lyme Regis incident. Possible changes to the existing statutory framework, the need for a regulatory body and additional guidance will be carefully considered.

### Unemployment

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each travel-to-work area in Wales *(a)* the rate of economic inactivity between ages 16 and 65 years and *(b)* the percentage of the working population dependent on benefits as a primary source of income.

**Mr. Redwood:** Rates of inactivity, from the 1981 population census, are given in the table. 1991 census figures for travel-to-work areas are not yet available and there is no information on sources of income for travel-to-work areas.

The economically inactive population includes housewives, the retired, students and others who make an important contribution to society but fall outside the standard definition of the work force.

*1981 economic inactivity rates for residents aged 16 years or over and under 65*

| *Travel-to-work area* | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| Aberdare | 32·9 |
| Aberystwyth | 30·3 |
| Bangor and Caernarfon | 31·4 |
| Blaenau Gwent and Abergavenny | 31·7 |
| Brecon | 29·1 |
| Bridgend | 30·2 |
| Cardiff | 28·3 |
| Cardigan | 34·5 |
| Carmarthen | 30·8 |
| Conwy and Colwyn | 29·9 |
| Denbigh | 31·2 |
| Dolgellau and Barmouth | 32·1 |
| Fishguard | 33·4 |
| Haverfordwest | 30·7 |
| Holyhead | 33·5 |
| Lampeter and Aberaeron | 34·3 |
| Llandeilo | 31·7 |
| Llandrindod Wells | 29·9 |
| Llanelli | 32·0 |
| Machynlleth | 30·7 |
| Merthyr and Rhymney | 31·7 |
| Monmouth | 29·6 |
| Neath and Port Talbot | 31·3 |
| Newport | 28·5 |
| Newtown | 28·2 |
| Pontypool and Cwmbran | 29·8 |
| Pontypridd and Rhondda | 31·1 |
| Porthmadoc and Ffestiniog | 32·7 |
| Pwllheli | 37·0 |
| Shotton, Flint and Rhyl | 30·0 |
| South Pembrokeshire | 33·1 |
| Swansea | 29·7 |
| Welshpool | 30·8 |
| Wrexham | 30·0 |

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each travel-to-work area in Wales *(a)* the population and *(b)* the latest unemployment rate.

**Mr. Redwood:** Population data from the 1981 census and the latest unemployment rate for each of the travel-to-work areas can be accessed on-line by the staff of the Library of the House. Population data from the 1991 census are currently not available for travel-to-work areas.

### Campylobacter

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of campylobacter-induced illnesses have been recorded in Clwyd in each year since 1987; and what measures are being taken to reduce the risk of exposure to this illness.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The data requested are given in the following table:

| | *Numbers* |
|---|---|
| 1987 | 291 |
| 1988 | 251 |
| 1989 | 330 |
| 1990 | 315 |
| 1991 | 321 |
| 1992 | 356 |

The Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food has been considering what measures could be taken to reduce the incidence of campylobacter infection, and is due to present an interim report to Health and Agriculture Ministers shortly. A further report on campylobacter will be produced when the results of surveillance and research work recommended in the report are available.

General government advice about food hygiene and avoidance of cross-infection is relevant to campylobacter.

*Note:* Figures given are laboratory reports of campylobacter reported to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre of the Public Health Laboratory Service by laboratories in Clwyd.

### Facilities, Dyfed

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the *(a)* abattoirs, *(b)* community hospitals *(c)* NHS dental surgeries, *(d)* fire stations, *(e)* general practitioner surgeries, *(f)* jobcentres and *(g)* local livestock marts located in each local authority area of the county of Dyfed in (i) 1980, (ii) 1985 and (iii) 1988.

**Mr. Redwood:** The information available is given in the tables. Lists of individual general practice medical and

dental surgeries are not maintained centrally. Each family health services authority maintains local directories of doctors and dentists.

*Abattoirs*

| | Operational | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *1980* | *1985* | *1988* |
| *Llanelli district:* | | | |
| Llanelli Wholesale Butchers, Pwllbach Abattoir, Dafen Llanelli | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Tafyciun Slaughterhouse, Llangennech, Llanelli | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| *Carmarthen district:* | | | |
| Teify Parc Slaughterhouse, Lampeter Road, Llanybyther | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| The Abattoir, Fairlane, Carmarthen | Yes | No | No |
| Riverside Slaughterhouse, St. Clears | Yes | Yes | No |
| *South Pembrokeshire district:* | | | |
| Kilvelgy House, Kilgetty | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Lyserry Farm, Stackpole, Pembroke | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| *Preseli district:* | | | |
| Withybush Abattoir, Withybush Road, Haverfordwest | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 10 Kensington Road, Neyland, Milford Haven | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 61 High Street, Neyland, Milford Haven | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Milford Meats, Howath Way, Milford Haven | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| *Ceredigion district:* | | | |
| The Slaughterhouse, Llanfair Road, Lampeter | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Llanwnen Slaughterhouse, Llanwnen, Lampeter | No | Yes | Yes |
| Cardigan Slaughterhouse, Dewi James, Pentood Industrial Estate | Yes | Yes | Yes |

*Hospitals*

| | Operational | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *1980* | *1985* | *1988* |
| *Community hospitals:* | | | |
| Aberaeron | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Amman Valley | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Cardigan and District | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Cilymaenllwyd | Yes | No | No |
| Llandovery Cottage | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Mynydd Mawr | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| South Pembrokeshire | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Tenby Cottage | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Tregaron | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| *Other hospitals:* | | | |
| Allt y Mynydd | Yes | Yes | No |
| Bronglais General | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Bryntirion | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Cartrefle Unit | Yes | Yes | No |
| Llanelli General | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| St. David's | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| West Wales General | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Withybush | Yes | Yes | Yes |

*Fire stations*

Llanelli district:
- Llanelli
- Kidwelly
- Tumble

Carmarthen district:
- Carmarthen
- Llandysul
- Pontyates
- Whitland
- Newcastle Emlyn

South Pembrokeshire district:
- Narberth
- Pembroke Dock
- Tenby

Preseli district:
- Haverfordwest
- Milford Haven
- Fishguard
- St. David's
- Crymych

Ceredigion district:
- Aberystwyth
- Tregaron
- New Quay
- Aberaeron
- Lampeter
- Cardigan

Dinefwr
- Llandeilo
- Llandovery
- Ammanford

There are also two volunteer stations at Borth and Caldy Island. The list above was the same for each year requested.

| *Job centres* | |
|---|---|
| Aberystwyth | Great Darkgate Street |
| Ammanford | Crown Buildings, Hall Street |
| Cardigan | Crown Buildings, Napier Street |
| Carmarthen | Darkgate Buildings, 3 Red Street |
| Fishguard | Crown Buildings, Brodog Lane |
| Garnant | 26 Dynevor Road |
| Haverfordwest | 8 Victoria Place |
| Llanelli | Units 1-9, Market Arcade |
| Kidwelly | Government Buildings, Bridge Street |
| Lampeter | Government Buildings, Pontfaen Road |
| Llandeilo | 1 King Street |
| Llandysul | Bizerta House, Wind Street |
| Milford Haven | 40 Charles Street |
| Pembroke Dock | 91 Queen Street |
| Tenby | Civic Centre, The Norton |
| Tumble | Crown Buildings, Bethesda Road |

*Note:* The list above relates to the position in June 1993. No historical data are readily available.

*Local livestock marts*

| | Operational | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *1980* | *1985* | *1988* |
| Carmarthen district: | | | |
| Station Road Market, Pontyweli, Llandysul | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Whitland Market | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| St. Clears Market | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Carmarthen Market | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Newcastle Emlyn Market | Yes | Yes | Yes |

| | Operational | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *1980* | *1985* | *1988* |
| Llanybyther Market | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| South Pembrokeshire district: | | | |
| Pembroke Market | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Kilgetty | Yes | No | No |
| Preseli district: | | | |
| Crymych Market | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Haverfordwest Market | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Ceredigion district: | | | |
| Ystrad Market, Felinfach, Lampeter | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Lampeter Market, Station Road, Lampeter | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Devils Bridge Market, Aberystwyth | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Tregaron Market | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Cardigan Market | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Aberystwyth Market | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Talybont | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Brynberian Market, Crosswell | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Dinefwr district: | | | |
| Ffairfach, Llandeilo Bridge | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Llandeilo Town | Yes | Yes | No |
| Llangadog Market, Llangadog | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Rhosaman Market, Brynamman | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Llandovery Market | Yes | Yes | Yes |

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the police stations which were located in each local authority area of the county of Dyfed in the years *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1992.

**Mr. Redwood:** The police stations located in each local authority area in Dyfed are listed as follows. The list is the same for both 1985 and 1992. Information for 1980 is not centrally available.

**Carmarthen**
Carmarthen, Newcastle Emlyn and Whitland.
**Ceredigion**
Aberaeron, Aberystwyth, Cardigan, Lampeter and Llandyssul.
**Dinefwr**
Ammanford, Llandeilo and Llandovery
**Llanelli**
Burry Port, Cross Hands, Kidwelly and Llanelli
**Preseli Pembrokeshire**
Fishguard, Haverfordwest, Milford Haven, Neyland and St. Davids.
**South Pembrokshire**
Narberth, Pembroke Dock, Saundersfoot and Tenby.

*Source:* Police and Constabulary Almanac.

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* chemist shops or pharmacies, *(b)* mobile libraries, *(c)* (i) post offices and (ii) post office counters, *(d)* public houses, *(e)* rural schools and *(f)* village halls there were in each local authority area in the county of Dyfed in (1) 1980, (2) 1985 and (3) 1992.

**Mr. Redwood:** Most of the information requested, if available centrally, is only collected on the basis of Dyfed county.

*Chemist shops or pharmacies*
Information on the number of pharmacies in Dyfed is given as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1980 (as at 31 December) | 94 |
| 1985 (as at 31 December) | 92 |
| 1992 (as at 30 September) | 99 |

*Mobile libraries*
Information on the number of mobile libraries, as at 31 March, in Dyfed is given as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1980 | 18 |
| 1985 | 17 |
| 1992 | 15 |

*Post Offices and Post Office Counters*
The information is not readily available centrally.

*Public Houses*
The information is not available centrally.

*Rural Schools*
Information on the number of LEA-maintained schools, as at January, in Dyfed is given as follows:

| | *1980* | *1985* | *1992* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nursery | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Primary | 355 | 335 | 315 |
| Secondary | 35 | 34 | 31 |
| Special | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| Total | 400 | 379 | 354 |

*Village Halls*
The information is not available centrally.

## Radiographers

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the structure and financing of training of radiographers in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Since 1 April 1993 the training of pre-registration radiographers comes within the Towards 2000 arrangements to ensure that NHS has sufficient numbers of adequately trained staff available to meet employers' requirements. Funding for this training is provided centrally while post-registration training is a matter for employers.

## Dental Health

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients of general dental practitioners in Wales have been recorded as having been infected as the result of cross-infection from hand-pieces that have not been autoclaved.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** None.

## Invalidity Benefit

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the change in real terms of invalidity benefit payments in Wales in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Estimates of government expenditure on sickness and invalidity benefits in Wales are given in the table. The figures are expressed in real terms at 1990-91 prices using the retail prices index.

*Sickness and invalidity benefits*
*Estimated expenditure at 1990-91 prices*

| | £ million |
|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 317 |
| 1980-81 | 301 |
| 1981-82 | 308 |
| 1982-83 | 312 |
| 1983-84 | 298 |
| 1984-85 | 325 |
| 1985-86 | 340 |
| 1986-87 | 347 |
| 1987-88 | 372 |
| 1988-89 | 376 |
| 1989-90 | 384 |
| 1990-91 | 404 |

## WALES

### River Pollution

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken in Wales this summer to warn farmers of the environmental dangers of silage effluent entering river systems; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The National Rivers Authority recently issued a press release warning farmers of potential problems this year and urging that caution be exercised in the collection and disposal of silage effluent. The authority also offers advice to farmers by way of programmes of farm visits; by talks to representative organisations and by relevant leaflets which are available free of charge at the authority's offices.

The Government's code of good agricultural practice on the protection of water provides detailed practical advice on avoiding pollution. In addition, under the ADAS free farm visits programme, farmers are offered assistance with farm waste plans, or free pollution advice. The Government's farm waste plan programme launched in a pilot area last year is being extended into two further areas in Wales so that more farmers will have the opportunity of benefiting from these plans.

### Water Disconnections

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by year for the last five years, and by each water authority the number of *(a)* domestic and *(b)* industrial water disconnections made.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The number of domestic water disconnections is set out in the table. Information on the number of industrial water disconnections is not held centrally. Separate figures for domestic only disconnections are not available prior to 1989-90.

*Domestic disconnections by water companies in Wales*

| | *DWR CYMRU* | *Statutory water companies*[1] |
|---|---|---|
| 1989-90 | 1,243 | 113 |
| 1990-91 | 1,305 | 0 |
| 1991-92 | 2,938 | 13 |
| 1992-93 | 2,316 | 132 |

[1] Chester Waterworks Company and Wrexham and East Denbighshire Water Company.

### University of Wales

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of full-time staffed academic posts at each of the constituent colleges of the university of Wales in each of the past five years.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** Information on the total number of full-time academic staff in post at each constituent college of the university of Wales, as collated and published by the "Universities Statistical Record", is shown in the table. The report for 1992-93 is not yet published.

*Full-time academic staff*

| *Colleges of the University of Wales* | *1987-88* | *1988-89* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aberystwyth | 382 | 365 | 388 | 387 | 404 |
| Bangor | 394 | 397 | 414 | 422 | 436 |
| St. Davids, Lampeter | 72 | 72 | 76 | 79 | 74 |
| Swansea | 488 | 499 | 496 | 556 | 592 |
| College of Medicine | 355 | 368 | 360 | 395 | 395 |
| Cardiff | 606 | 868 | 900 | 925 | 952 |
| University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology[1] | 338 | — | — | — | — |

[1] From 1988 the University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology merged with University of Wales College Cardiff.
*Source:* "University Statistics, Volume one—Students and Staff" published annually by Universities' Statistical Record.

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the change in the number of academic staff posts in the university of Wales over the last four years.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** Information on the complement of academic staff posts in the university of Wales is not held centrally.

### Special Needs Housing

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made concerning the number of required housing places needed by people with learning disabilities in Wales in each of the next five years.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Social services departments' own estimates are that a minimum of 90 places will be required in Wales for each year for individuals in the community needed to move into accommodation of their own. In addition, we are intending to resettle 110 individuals from long-stay hospitals in 1993-94 and 1994-95. Resettlement programmes have yet to be finalised for subsequent years.

### GP Fund Holders

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the range of allocations given to all general practitioner fund holders for all hospital care which they purchase, showing the highest and lowest per capita expenditure for the practice population; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for the range.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The per capita allocations to fund holders for the purchase of hospital services in 1993-94 range from £48·13 to £128·09. Individual allocations reflect the nature and extent of these services with which patients in the practice have been provided over previous years.

### Flooding

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the subject of the recent flooding incidents in *(a)* the Meirionnydd area and *(b)* the Aberconwy area; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** There have been numerous representations on a range of issues relating to the recent flooding in the Aberconwy area. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State and I were also able to hear at first hand some of the problems being experienced, when we visited the area in the aftermath of the floods. One representation has been received, in respect of the Meirionnydd area.

### General Practitioners

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average list size for general practitioners in Wales in each year since 1980.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The information is given as follows:

*Average list size for general practitioners in Wales (as at 1 October)*

| | *Average* |
|---|---|
| 1980 | 2,086 |
| 1981 | 2,057 |
| 1982 | 2,013 |
| 1983 | 1,975 |
| 1984 | 1,946 |
| 1985 | 1,914 |
| 1986 | 1,881 |
| 1987 | 1,849 |
| 1988 | 1,851 |
| 1989 | 1,819 |
| 1990 | 1,813 |
| 1991 | 1,794 |
| 1992 | 1,743 |

### Wales Tourist Board

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the budget of the Wales tourist board in each year since 1988-89; and what is the proposed budget for next year.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The Wales tourist board's net budget provision since 1988 is shown as follows:

| | *Net total £ million* |
|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 9·211 |
| 1989-90 | 9·815 |
| 1990-91 | 10·488 |
| 1991-92 | 11·229 |
| 1992-93 | 13·636 |
| 1993-94 | 13·658 |

The board's budget for 1994-95 has not yet been determined.

### Integrated Administration and Control System

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to alleviate the financial and other difficulties which will befall those farmers in Wales who have not submitted fully completed IACS forms to the Welsh office by the deadline set; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** The governing EC regulations stipulate the information which farmers have to provide and the time scale within which they are required to do so. The Commission has indicated that the rules allow some flexibility in analysing the information submitted to avoid imposing unjustified penalties. I will take full advantage of this flexibility when the EC has clarified the extent of it.

### Coastal Radioactivity

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment has been made during the clean-up of homes and other buildings along the north Wales coast, following the recent flooding, of the spread of radioactive contamination from the Irish sea and the sea shore inland.

**Mr. Redwood:** No such assessment was necessary as the recent flooding in north Wales was due to excessive rainfall and no homes or other buildings were affected by seawater.

## SCOTLAND

### Clyde Dredging

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has about reduced levels of dredging being carried out by Clydeport; and what representations he has made to Clydeport about the dredging of the Clyde;

(2) if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation to oblige Clydeport to dredge the Clyde either in whole or in part;

(3) what policy proposals he has to ensure that the River Clyde is adequately dredged in the future;

(4) who is responsible for dredging the Clyde.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Clydeport Ltd., as successor to the former Clyde Port authority, has a permissive power to dredge the Clyde river channel to the extent that it is considered necessary for the maintenance and improvement of the port, but has no statutory duty to dredge.

It remains the Government's policy that port authorities, including Clydeport Ltd., should manage their businesses on a commercial basis and that the costs of dredging should be met by charges to the users of ports, or by other parties who benefit from the dredging. The Government have no plans to introduce legislation to alter this situation.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the consequences of reduced levels of dredging of the Clyde for *(a)* navigation, *(b)* flooding and *(c)* the environment.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I understand that a study to examine the effects of the cessation of dredging of the River Clyde, commissioned by Clydeport Ltd., and Strathclyde regional council, with the aid of European regional development fund grant support, reported in September 1989. Its main conclusions were that

*(a)* Available draught for navigation would be reduced:

*(b)* Extreme high tide levels would not increase significantly. However, low water levels in extreme weather conditions would be considered higher than at present. This could cause some increase in the risk and incidence of indirect flooding in the unlikely event of several extreme rainfall events occurring in short succession; and

*(c)* mudbanks would build at the sides of the channel, particularly at wider parts of the river.

### Local Government

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about community councils in his consultation paper on local government in Scotland.

**Mr. Stewart:** Five hundred and eighty-two responses to the consultation paper "Shaping the New Councils" commented on the future role of community councils, including 475 from community councils themselves. The responses ranged from those in favour of retaining the existing powers for community councils to those in favour of an expanded role.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what specific support local authorities receive from his Department to enable them to contribute to the dredging of the Clyde.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The Government do not support local authorities directly in relation to operations such as dredging. It is the responsibility of each local authority to allocate resources from within the total made available to them as they see fit.

### Community Councils

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards the Association of Scottish Community Councils; and if he will meet representatives of the Association of Scottish Community Councils to discuss the future of community councils.

**Mr. Stewart:** The Association of Scottish Community Councils will provide a welcome focal point for community council activity in Scotland. My officials have already met representatives of the association to discuss their views on the future role of community councils. These are being taken into account in our deliberations on local government reform.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards a continuing role for community councils.

**Mr. Stewart:** I would refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) on 10 June, *Official Report*, columns *275-76*.

### Multiple Occupation Houses

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has on the number of houses in multiple occupation in each local authority area;

(2) how many local authorities have initiated resolutions for the licensing of houses in multiple occupation, under the order made in terms of the Civil Government (Scotland) Act 1981;

(3) how many Scottish local authorities have introduced a registration scheme for houses in multiple occupation; and what provisions are made to ensure that these premises are provided with reasonable means of escape in case of fire;

(4) what proposals he has to encourage local authorities to introduce a licensing or registration scheme for houses in multiple occupation.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Information is not held centrally on the number of houses in multiple occupation or on the number of resolutions for licensing schemes as they do not require the Secretary of State's approval. He has approved registration schemes in eight authorities.

Housing authorities' powers to ensure houses in multiple occupation have reasonable means of escape in case of fire are not dependent on their being registered or licensed. An authority can require a landlord to carry out works to provide a means of escape. If he does not do so, the authority may carry out the works itself and bill the landlord. The fire authority can close all or part of a house in multiple occupation immediately if it considers that there is a serious threat to life.

Guidance notes were issued in August 1991 suggesting how housing authorities might effectively exercise their powers to deal with houses in multiple occupation, including their powers to establish registration and licensing schemes.

### Hospital Building

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his planned capital expenditure on hospital building for the next five years in Greater Glasgow, Lothian and Lanarkshire health boards.

**Mr. Stewart:** It is not possible to provide capital expenditure figures on hospital building for the next five years for Greater Glasgow, Lothian and Lanarkshire health boards. Health boards and trusts have been given provisional capital allocation figures for 1994-95 and 1995-96 only. These reflect only the consequences in those years of the 1993-94 allocations and do not take into account new starts in 1994-95 or 1995-96.

The figures are as follows:

*Provisional Capital Allocations*

| *Health Boards/Trust* | *1994-95 £ million* | *1995-96 £ million* |
|---|---|---|
| Greater Glasgow Health Board | 20·048 | 18·984 |
| Southern General Hospitals NHS Trust | 2·122 | 1·755 |
| Victoria Infirmary NHS Trust | 0·263 | 0·800 |
| Yorkhill NHS Trust | 3·081 | 2·907 |
| Lothian Health Board | 18·580 | 13·485 |
| West Lothian NHS Trust | 0·470 | 1·175 |
| Lanarkshire Health Board | 9·895 | 10·909 |
| Monklands and Bellshill NHS Hospital Trust | 2·579 | 1·887 |

### Nursing Homes

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 18 June, *Official Report*, column *759* if he will describe the steps taken to ensure that health boards carry out their statutory duty to inspect nursing homes at least twice a year, and that the person registered actually does provide or make arrangements for the provision of medical serices for residents; and how many nursing homes have had adverse reports since the statutory requirements came into force.

**Mr. Stewart:** Health boards have a statutory responsibility, under the Nursing Homes Registration (Scotland) Act 1938 as amended, to visit and inspect all nursing homes in their area at least twice a year. If that duty is not carried out, the health board is in contravention of section 4(3) of the Act. Details of registration and inspection visits are contained in health board annual reports.

It is the responsibility of the health board registration and inspection team to ensure that the person registered provides, or makes provision for, medical services for residents. Nursing home residents are entitled to receive the same range of NHS services as they would expect to receive in their own homes.

Information is not collected centrally about nursing homes who receive adverse reports. It is for health boards to take action on homes which require to improve their standards.

## House of Commons

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer from the Secretary of State for Health to the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) of 21 June, *Official Report*, columns *34-39*, if he will publish a list of awards given to voluntary organisations under the equivalent legislation in Scotland in 1992-93.

**Mr. Stewart:** In 1992-93, grants totalling £5·2 million were awarded to 156 voluntary organisations under section 10(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and £956,000 to 49 organisations under section 16B of the National Health Services (Scotland) Act 1978. Taking the two schemes together, this represents a real terms increase of 8 per cent. over 1991-92 and of 132 per cent. over 1978-79. Details are given in the table:

*Grants paid to voluntary organisations in 1992-93 under Section 10(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968*

| *Organisation* | £ |
|---|---|
| Aberdeen and North East Association for Mental Health | 6,473 |
| Aberlour Child Care Trust | 18,059 |
| Action on Phobias Association | 299 |
| Age Concern Scotland | 73,693 |
| All Saints Church/Care Management Project | 14,518 |
| Alternative to Detention Project | 13,401 |
| Association of Local Voluntary Organisations (Lanark) | 26,021 |
| Alzheimers Scotland | 98,128 |
| Angus Association of Voluntary Organisations | 23,583 |
| Annandale and Eskdale Council for Voluntary Service | 27,507 |
| Apex Trust Scotland Ltd. | 179,987 |
| Argyll and Bute Federation of Councils on Alcohol | 44,685 |
| Arran Council for Voluntary Service | 17,520 |
| Assynt Centre | 550 |
| British Association for Adoption and Fostering. | 31,000 |
| Banff and Buchan Resource Information and Development Group Exchange | 26,037 |
| Badenoch and Strathspey Council of Social Service | 28,345 |
| Barnardos-Tayside Young Abusers Project | 42,957 |
| Barony Housing Association | 25,000 |
| Barra and Vatersay Council of Social Service | 27,725 |
| Berwickshire Association of Voluntary Service | 14,809 |
| Borderline | 1,200 |
| Borders Pre-5 Voluntary Forum | 16,699 |
| Brittle Bone Society | 250 |
| Bute Community Links | 22,607 |
| Caithness Mental Health Support Group (Drop In Centre) | 3,995 |
| Caithness Voluntary Group | 27,027 |
| Call Centre | 18,070 |
| Care In Action (Scotland) | 35,506 |
| Carers National Association | 40,229 |
| Carolina House Trust | 6,500 |
| Community and Voluntary Organisations Council | 19,858 |
| Centre for Housing Research | 12,500 |
| Childline Charitable Trust | 10,000 |
| Childline Scotland | 31,854 |
| Children In Scotland | 94,340 |
| Childrens Hospice Association Scotland | 4,000 |
| Church of Scotland Board for Social Responsibility | 117,562 |
| Comhairle Nan Sgoiltean Araich | 16,912 |
| Community Service Volunteers | 850 |
| Crossroads | 37,986 |
| Cruse Bereavement Care | 1,108 |
| Dementia Services Development Centre | 74,072 |
| Dail Scotland | 12,096 |
| Disability Scotland | 229,700 |
| Disablement Income Group | 5,175 |
| Disfigurement Guidance Centre | 150 |
| Dumfries & Galloway Mental Health Association | 3,000 |
| Dundee Association for Mental Health | 1,099 |
| East Lothian Voluntary Organisations Network | 18,398 |
| Edinburgh Association for Mental Health | 3,960 |
| Eric Liddle Centre Appeal | 24,000 |
| Ettrick and Lauderdale Council of Social Service | 13,903 |
| Falkirk District Association for Mental Health | 2,000 |
| Family Care | 28,856 |
| Family Mediation Scotland | 64,031 |
| Glasgow Council for Single Homeless | 15,900 |
| Gordon Rural Area Information Network | 27,864 |
| Hamilton and East Kilbride Befriending | 3,599 |
| Handynet | 32,978 |
| Harris Council of Social Service | 18,982 |
| Headway House Association | 899 |
| Highland Federation of Councils for Voluntary Service | 195 |
| Home-Start Consultancy | 25,000 |
| Huntly Mental Health Association | 1,941 |
| Intermediate Treatment Resource Centre | 29,647 |
| Inverclyde Voluntary Association for Mental Health | 12,748 |
| Islay and Jura Council for Voluntary Service | 30,107 |
| Kincardine and Deeside Council for Social Service | 30,525 |
| Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes Association of Voluntary Organisations | 20,000 |
| Kyle and Carrick Council of Voluntary Organisations | 15,188 |
| Levenmouth Council of Social Service | 1,974 |
| Lewis Council of Social Service | 33,471 |
| Link: Glasgow Association for Mental Health | 2,968 |
| Marriage Counselling Scotland | 91,998 |
| Midlothian Voluntary Action | 12,726 |
| Mobile Projects Association (Scotland) | 17,800 |
| National Schizophrenia Fellowship Scotland | 11,770 |
| National Children's Home (NCH) | 59,185 |
| National Foster Care Association (HQ) | 34,340 |
| Nithsdale Council of Voluntary Service | 20,493 |
| North and West Sutherland Council of Social Service | 13,903 |
| Penumbra | 64,927 |
| Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Service | 16,778 |
| Perth Association of Mental Health | 1,400 |
| Play Matters | 4,500 |
| Plus National | 37,311 |
| Positive Help | 20,000 |
| Quarriers/Scottish Child and Family Alliance Borders Development | 21,875 |
| Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (HQ) | 98,698 |
| Rehab Scotland | 15,000 |
| Ross and Cromarty Council of Social Service | 26,550 |
| Roxburgh Association of Voluntary Service | 14,407 |
| RSSPCC—Overnewton Centre | 77,452 |
| Scottish Association for Mental Health (HQ) | 104,004 |
| Stillbirth and Neo-natal Death Society | 2,600 |
| Scottish Adventure Playground Association for Handicapped Children | 650 |
| Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters | 21,143 |
| Scottish Association for Victim Support Schemes | 642,500 |
| Scottish Child Minders Association | 75,035 |
| Scottish Council for Single Parents | 30,859 |
| Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (Give As You Earn) | 15,000 |
| Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (HQ) | 290,770 |
| Scottish Home Visiting Resource and Training Unit | 1,500 |
| Scottish Society for Mental Health (Homes) | 38,057 |
| Scottish Society for Mental Health (Respite Care) | 25,774 |
| Scottish Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders | 242,204 |
| Scottish Association for the Deaf | 7,628 |
| Scottish Child Law Centre | 20,000 |
| Scottish Community Education Council | 4,700 |
| Scottish Downs Syndrome Association | 300 |
| Scottish Institute of Human Relations | 16,875 |
| Scottish Pre-School Play Association | 101,103 |
| Scottish Refugee Council | 5,957 |
| Scottish Spina Bifida Association | 500 |
| Scottish Spinal Cord Injury Association | 14,699 |
| Scottish Users Network | 1,000 |
| Scottish Womens Aid Ltd. | 95,141 |
| Scottish Council for Single Homeless | 13,921 |

| Organisation | £ |
|---|---|
| Sense In Scotland | 49,550 |
| Shelter | 19,300 |
| Shetland Council of Social Service | 30,532 |
| Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations | 25,060 |
| South Ayrshire Link-Up Consortium | 16,560 |
| Speyside and District Council of Social Service | 21,097 |
| Stepping Stones | 34,038 |
| Stewartry Council for Voluntary Service | 21,068 |
| Stirling and District Association for Mental Health | 11,000 |
| Stirling Council of Social Service | 22,385 |
| Strathclyde Out Of School Care | 5,180 |
| Talbot Association | 14,821 |
| The Corner Group | 660 |
| The Pillar Project | 8,134 |
| The Richmond Fellowship | 26,939 |
| The Rock Trust—Society of St. Francis | 3,300 |
| The Salvation Army | 1,399 |
| The Thistle Foundation | 66,000 |
| Torry/Kincorth Team for Confused Elderly People | 731 |
| Tweeddale Association for Voluntary Service | 13,427 |
| Uist Council of Social Service | 22,347 |
| United Kingdom/United States Exchange Programme | 3,150 |
| Voluntary Organisations North East Fife | 14,200 |
| Voluntary Groups—East Sutherland | 20,567 |
| Voluntary Action—Inverness | 21,333 |
| Voluntary Action Orkney | 34,590 |
| Voluntary Action West Lothian | 21,229 |
| Voluntary Association of Nairn Groups | 14,261 |
| Volunteer Development Scotland | 109,201 |
| West Lothian Voluntary Council for Disabled People | 625 |
| Waverley Care Trust | 20,000 |
| Wellspring | 1,154 |
| Who Cares? Scotland | 5,000 |
| Wigtown Council for Voluntary Service | 23,862 |
| Women's Royal Voluntary Service | 1,000 |
| Women's Support Group | 5,000 |
| Young Families Now | 18,036 |

*Grants paid to voluntary organisations in 1992-93 under section 16B of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978*

| Organisation | £ |
|---|---|
| Action On Smoking And Health Scottish Committee | 102,000 |
| Age Concern Scotland | 8,100 |
| Aids Care Education And Training (Scotland) | 7,000 |
| Alzheimers Scotland | 30,000 |
| Bells Palsy Self Help Group | 4,400 |
| Breast Care And Mastectomy Association | 7,840 |
| British Association Of Immediate Care | 1,800 |
| British Red Cross | 500 |
| Brook Advisory Centre | 7,000 |
| Cancerlink | 6,100 |
| Childrens Hospice Association Scotland | 15,000 |
| Community Service Volunteers | 11,700 |
| Dementia Services Development Centre | 20,600 |
| Disability Scotland | 28,439 |
| Enuresis Resource And Information Centre | 2,000 |
| Epilepsy Association Scotland | 3,300 |
| Family Planning Association | 15,700 |
| Leukaemia And Cancer Childrens Fund | 35,000 |
| Medical Commission On Accident Prevention | 2,400 |
| Muscular Dystrophy Group—Scottish Council | 3,200 |
| National Association For The Welfare Of Children In Hospital | 5,400 |
| National Aids Trust | 35,000 |
| National Association For The Childless | 1,800 |
| National Childbirth Trust | 15,487 |
| National Schizophrenia Fellowship (Scotland) | 4,400 |
| Natural Family Planning Group | 1,400 |
| Play In Scottish Hospitals | 16,800 |
| Play Matters | 1,750 |
| Primary Immunodeficiency Association | 6,270 |
| RSSPCC—Overnewton Centre | 13,120 |
| Scottish Aids Monitor | 102,000 |
| Scottish Association For Mental Health | 23,500 |
| Scottish Association Of Sign Language Interpreters | 2,000 |
| Scottish Catholic Marriage Advisory Council | 2,200 |
| Scottish Child And Family Alliance | 3,400 |
| Scottish Cot Death Trust | 2,500 |
| Scottish Council On Alcohol | 131,250 |
| Scottish Drugs Forum | 85,850 |
| Scottish Heart and Arterial Disease Risk Prevention Group | 72,000 |
| Scottish Huntingtons Association | 15,850 |
| Scottish Motor Neurone Disease Association | 3,500 |
| Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service | 7,500 |
| Scottish Partnership Agency | 46,192 |
| Sense In Scotland—National Deaf Blind & Rubella Association | 12,500 |
| St. Andrews Ambulance Association | 11,407 |
| Stillbirth And Neonatal Death Society | 2,700 |
| The British Fluoridation Society | 5,900 |
| Twins And Multiple Birth Association | 1,000 |
| Volunteer Development Scotland | 10,790 |

## Woodlands

**Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the area of new private planting of commercial coniferous woodland, excluding native pine and broadleaf planting, in each year between 1987-88 and 1991-92 in the United Kingdom;

(2) what is the forecast of private planting of commercial coniferous woodland in the United Kingdom, excluding native pine, for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* The information is given in the table. It shows the areas of conifer planting and restocking—other than native pine—which have been undertaken, or are expected to be undertaken, with the aid of Forestry Commission grants.

*(hectares)*

| Year ended 31 March | New planting | Restocking | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1988 | 21,326 | 2,527 | 23,853 |
| 1989 | 22,347 | 2,659 | 25,006 |
| 1990 | 10,251 | 2,566 | 12,817 |
| 1991 | 8,909 | 2,956 | 11,865 |
| 1992 | 7,460 | 3,811 | 11,271 |
| 1993[1] | 5,671 | 3,475 | 9,146 |
| 1994[2] | 8,500 | 3,000 | 11,500 |
| 1995[2] | 9,100 | 3,000 | 12,100 |

[1] Provisional.
[2] Estimate.

# DEFENCE

## Equipment Exhibition

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *590*, from which countries buyers have been invited to attend the Royal Navy and British Army equipment exhibition in September.

**Mr. Aitken:** it has been the consistent practice of successive Administrations not to release details of invitations to attend British forces equipment exhibitions. Invitations are issued on a confidential basis and it would be a breach of trust to disclose details.

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for

Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) of 30 June, *Official Report*, column *591*, if he is yet in a position to announce the projected cost of mounting the Royal Navy and British Army equipment exhibition to be held in September; and what was spent on such events *(a)* in 1991 and *(b)* in 1992.

**Mr. Aitken:** I have little to add to my reply of 30 April. As was the case in 1991, all direct costs will be recovered from participating companies. There was no British military equipment exhibition in 1992.

### Environmental Policy

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy on the purchase and use of *(a)* recycled paper, *(b)* low-energy light bulbs, *(c)* tropical hardwoods, *(d)* peat and *(e)* cars with catalytic converters.

**Mr. Aitken:** It is MOD policy that all procurement decisions take account of the environmental implications of the available options. Accordingly, recycled paper is purchased for all types of paper stationery applications wherever it can be obtained at a reasonable cost and is adequate to the task. Low-energy light bulbs are fitted as replacements wherever suitable light fittings are available and energy-efficient lighting systems are installed during building refurbishment programmes. Softwoods and other materials are used in preference to tropical hardwoods whenever possible; where the use of hardwoods is considered essential, our contracts specify that only hardwoods obtained from sustainably managed sources are to be used. Existing guidelines permit the use of peat based soil improvers on the defence estate. These are currently being reviewed and will take into account the outcome of current DOE work on peat extraction and use. Most types of vehicles purchased by my Department run on diesel fuel, with petrol engines being restricted to certain specialised vehicles. When the latter are purchased, we stipulate that they should be fitted with catalytic converters.

### Low Flying

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about the crash between a low-flying Tornado and helicopter near Kendal and the near-miss between another low-flying Tornado north of Skipton; if he will set up and publish the result of inquiries into both incidents; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** The mid-air collision between a RAF Tornado GR1, on a routine training sortie and a civilian Bell 206 JetRanger helicopter, carrying out a pipeline inspection, occurred on 23 June 1993. Tragically, the two people in the helicopter were both killed in the accident. The Tornado aircraft landed safely at BAe Warton with no injuries to the service personnel. An RAF board of inquiry has been convened and in addition an investigation will be carried out by the air accident investigation branch. A summary of the findings will be published.

A Logan Air Shorts 360 aircraft has filed an airmiss report, involving a Tornado aircraft, with the Civil Aviation Authority. The incident occurred at 1924 hours on 22 June 1993 and will be fully investigated by the independent joint airmiss working group (JAWG). The JAWG's report will be published.

### HMS Repulse

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the release of coolant from HMS Repulse on 20 June; what quantity of radioactivity was released; how many personnel were contaminated in the accident; and what is the estimated cost of the clean-up operation.

**Mr. Hanley:** The quantity of coolant spilt was about one pint and its radioactive content was barely detectable above background levels. No contamination was detected on the three personnel involved. The cost of the clean-up operation was negligible.

### Budget and Personnel

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the April 1990, April 1993 and projected April 1996 figures for *(a)* the budget of, *(b)* the number of civilian personnel employed at and *(c)* the number of military personnel employed at (i) RNAD Trecwn, (ii) RNAD Milford Haven, (iii) RAF Brawdy, (iv) P & EE Pendine, (v) Merrion camp, Castlemartin, (vi) Penally camp, (vii) Manorbier range and (viii) HM mooring and marine salvage depot, Pembroke dock.

**Mr. Hanley:** On current plans, the details requested are as follows:

| | *Budget £ million* | *Personnel Civilian* | *Personnel Military* |
|---|---|---|---|
| (i) RNAD Trecwn[1] | | | |
| April 1990 | 12·1 | 381 | 0 |
| April 1993 | 8·6 | 378 | 0 |

(ii) RNAD Milford Haven closed in March 1991. It operated as a sub-depot of RNAD Trecwn and its budget was contained within the overall Trecwn budget—figures given under (i) above. In April 1990, it employed 161 civilians.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| (iii) RAF Brawdy[2] | | | |
| April 1990 | n.a. | 147 | 799 |
| April 1993 | 5·9 | 82 | 143 |
| April 1996 | n.y.d. | 77 | 88 |
| (iv) P & EE Pendine[3] | | | |
| April 1990 | n.a. | 59 | 11 |
| April 1993 | 9·6 | 58 | 12 |
| April 1996 | n.y.d. | 58 | 12 |
| (v) Merrion camp, Castlemartin[4] | | | |
| April 1990 | 2·9 | 51 | 4 |
| April 1993 | 3·2 | 51 | 4 |
| April 1996 | n.y.d. | 51 | 4 |
| (vi) Penally camp | | | |
| April 1990 | n.a. | 11 | 0 |
| April 1993 | 0·6 | 14 | 0 |
| April 1996 | n.y.d. | 15 | 0 |
| (vii) Manorbier range | | | |
| April 1990 | 0·4 | 8 | 2 |
| April 1993 | 0·4 | 7 | 3 |
| April 1996 | n.y.d. | 7 | 3 |
| (viii) HM Mooring and Marine Salvage Depot, Pembroke dock[5] | | | |
| April 1990 | 2·2 | 148 | 1 |

| | Budget £ million | Personnel Civilian | Military |
|---|---|---|---|
| April 1993 | 3·2 | 127 | 0 |
| April 1996 | n.y.d. | [6]— | [6]— |

[1] RNAD Trecwn is scheduled to close in March 1996.
[2] RAF stations did not have individual budgets prior to the introduction of the new management strategy in 1991.
[3] Budget figures for 1990 are not available on the same basis as those for 1993 and 1996 because of changes introduced under the new management strategy. Strength numbers refer only to Ministry of Defence personnel and do not include Property Services Agency staff or contractor staff.
[4] Budget figures include contributions from the federal German Army of £1,700,000 for 1990 and £2,000,000 for 1993 and 1996. An additional 50 season civilian casuals were or will be employed for each year.
[5] Budget and personnel figures include marine services and the shore establishment project office.
[6] Subject to review.

### Personnel Overseas

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) of 19 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *162*, on the number of British military personnel in the United States of America, how many British service personnel are stationed in *(a)* Ascension Island, *(b)* Belize, *(c)* Brunei, *(d)* Cambodia, *(e)* Canada, *(f)* Cyprus, *(g)* Diego Garcia, *(h)* the Falkland Islands, *(i)* Gibraltar, *(j)* Hong Kong, *(k)* Turkey, *(l)* Western Sahara, *(m)* Western Samoa and *(n)* Yugoslavia; and what is the estimated cost to public funds for each of these countries.

**Mr. Hanley:** I will write to the hon. Member.

### Rapid Reaction Corps

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, columns *477-78*, what are the types of divisions that Germany, Italy, Turkey, Greece, the United States of America and Spain will be providing for the rapid reaction corps; and what details he has concerning the personnel and equipment that will be provided by these countries to the rapid reaction corps.

**Mr. Hanley:** The types of divisions to be provided to the ACE rapid reaction corps if required are as follows:

Germany: one armoured division
Italy: one mechanised division and elements of corps troops (including a reconnaissance brigade)
Turkey: one mechanised division
Greece: one mechanised division
United States: one mechanised division
Spain: one light infantry division

Each division will be manned and equipped in accordance with national establishments and inventories.

### Defence Industry

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *475-76*, if he will publish a detailed and declassified analysis of the factors that have influenced his consideration of the need to retain a viable and effective defence industry when making procurement decisions; what information sources he uses when considering the need to retain a viable and effective defence industry; and what staff in his Department are involved in his considerations of the need to retain a viable and effective defence industry.

**Mr. Aitken:** The importance of retaining a viable and effective defence industry is self-evident. It is in the United Kingdom's defence interest that there should be a commercially strong supplier base, able to compete effectively to provide good value for money in meeting the requirements of the armed forces for equipment and services. The success of the United Kingdom defence industry in overseas markets also has direct and indirect benefits for my Department; and the industry is a major employer.

We gather information on the defence industry from many sources. These include industrialists themselves in their frequent contacts with all levels of my Department; representations made on their behalf, including those from hon. Members; the trade associations, with which there are regular contacts; and our dealings with other Government Departments.

Advising on the implications for industry of individual procurement decisions is one of the tasks of project staff throughout my Department's procurement executive. In addition, it is one of the responsibilities of the central staff of the procurement executive to provide advice on matters affecting the defence industry.

### Maralinga

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning his recent meeting with Mr. Gareth Evans, Foreign Minister of the Australian federal Government, regarding the clean-up of the Maralinga site.

**Mr. Hanley:** Following a meeting of Australian and United Kingdom Ministers and officials on 17 and 18 June, and consideration by the Australian Cabinet, it has been agreed in principle that Her Majesty's Government will pay £20 million to the Government of Australia in full and final settlement of Australia's claims against the United Kingdom regarding the rehabilitation of the former British nuclear weapon test sites at Maralinga and Emu in South Australia. The precise terms of the settlement will be the subject of a written agreement between the two Governments, the details of which are expected to be finalised soon. Her Majesty's Government remain of the view that our legal responsibilities for rehabilitation have already been fully discharged and the payment is therefore being made on a strictly ex-gratia basis. Nevertheless, we believe that this represents a satisfactory solution to a long-running dispute between the United Kingdom and Australia.

## HEALTH

### Health Care Costs

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost per head of providing health care in *(a)* inner London and *(b)* the rest of England; and what is *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

**Mr. Sackville:** Figures of total expenditure derived from the 1991-92 annual accounts of district health

authorities and family health services authorities in England indicate that total expenditure per head was £655 in inner London and £460—representing 70 per cent. of the inner London figure—in the rest of England.

These figures exclude expenditure by regional health authorities and special health authorities.

### Trent Regional Health Authority

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the latest statistics on the number of deaths in surgery for each of the hospitals in the Trent regional health authority.

**Mr. Sackville:** The health service indicators graphical package for 1990-91 contains information on the standardised number of deaths by district health authorities occurring in national health service hospitals. This is available in the Library. 1991-92 figures will be published shortly.

### Health Care (Form AG3)

**Mr. Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many successful claims were made for health care costs using form AG3 in the last year for which figures are available.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The available information is shown in the table.

*Number of courses of adult dental treatment and sight tests obtained at reduced cost by people covered by AG3 certificates and numbers of optical vouchers used by people covered by AG2 or AG3 certificates issued under the national health service low-income scheme in England in 1991-92*

| *Courses of adult dental treatment* | *Sight tests* | *Optical vouchers* |
|---|---|---|
| [1]125,000 | 54,000 | [2]289,550 |

[1] Figure derived from a 5·5 per cent. sample produced by the Dental Practice Board.
[2] Figure derived from 2 per cent. sample of all vouchers reimbursed by family health services authorities.

### European Year of the Elderly

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the actions taken by her Department in support of the European Year of the Elderly within the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Bowis:** The Department, in co-operation with the Department of Social Security, has overall co-ordinating responsibility in the United Kingdom for the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations. Officials from the Department participate in an advisory committee on the year at European level.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State launched the year in the United Kingdom at the age resource awards, which were presented in London on 17 December 1992 by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. Following consultation with a wide range of national voluntary and professional bodies, statutory authorities and other relevant Government Departments, we have set up a group to advise on the conduct, promotion and evaluation of the programme of events to celebrate the year. The group involves representatives of organisations reflecting the interests of older people, and will take direct account wherever possible of the views and preferences of older people themselves. The programme in the United Kingdom is focusing on four major themes:

- Combating 'ageism' and promoting positive images of aging;
- Volunteering;
- Health promotion and active leisure, including remaining mentally active;
- Social integration, including problems of isolation and loneliness, information needs, housing, transport and community care issues.

Task groups have been set up to examine each of these themes and put forward specific proposals.

There are two elements to the year in the United Kingdom: a core programme involving national events focusing on the four themes, including cultural and sporting events, exhibitions and conferences; and a general programme, consisting of local and regional activities. A number of high-profile initiatives have already taken place and several important forthcoming events are planned, including a major European symposium in Birmingham in October on the theme "Promoting Health in Europe: Investing in Older People at Work."

The Department is also funding a secretariat—based at Age Concern England headquarters—to co-ordinate the core programme and to disseminate news and information.

### Drugs (Use-by Dates)

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance she has issued to hospitals as to the use of drugs after their use-by date.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The Department has issued guidelines on the safe and secure handling of medicines which contains guidance requiring hospital staff to return all out of date drugs or medicines to the pharmacy for disposal. Copies of the guidance will be placed in the Library.

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has of hospitals using drugs which are past their use-by date; and if she will make a statement.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** None.

### Countess of Chester Hospital

**Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions have taken place between her Department and Merseyside regional health authority in respect of planned reductions in provision for the Countess of Chester hospital; and what estimates have been made of the effects of these cuts on patient care.

**Mr. Sackville:** Provision of services at the Countess of Chester hospital national health service trust is a matter for the trust in consultation with local purchasers. I understand that the hon. Member is to meet the chairman and chief executive of the trust to discuss this matter.

### Patient Care

**Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what instructions she has given to health authorities to require hospital trusts to publish decisions made by the board which have an effect on patient care.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** None.

### GP Fund Holders

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the general practitioners in the area served by Doncaster health authority, and their location, according to those who are fund holders and those who are not.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** This information is not available centrally but may be obtained from Doncaster family health services authority (FHSA). The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. K Jones, the chairman of Doncaster FHSA, for details.

### Neo-natal Care

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 21 June, *Official Report*, column *28*, on the number of neo-natal cots and nurses, if she will specify the definition of particular local circumstances.

**Mr. Sackville:** The organisation of neo-natal care services varies from region to region and is dependent on a number of different factors: the number of births, the case mix—the balance between special care and the different levels of neonatal intensive care—the local geography and variations in demand. None of this can be prescribed centrally and must therefore be for local decision, taking into account any guidance from professional and other bodies.

### Grading Appeals

**Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 27 May, *Official Report*, column *672*, how many *(a)* clinical and *(b)* NHS staff grading appeals were outstanding in (i) the West Midlands regional health authority and (ii) South Birmingham Health District in (1) June 1991, (2) June 1992, (3) December 1992, (4) March 1993 and (5) June 1993; and how many of the appeals in each category outstanding in June 1993 had been outstanding for (A) up to six months, (B) between six months and one year, (C) between one and two years and (D) over two years.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information available centrally is shown in the table:

*Outstanding Grading Appeals as at 31 May 1993*

| | *West Midlands Regional Health Authority* | *South Birmingham Health Authority* |
|---|---|---|
| Nurse clinical grading appeals: | | |
| Local level | 1,526 | 719 |
| Regional level | 1,424 | 47 |
| Other NHS staff grading appeals: | | |
| Regional level | 58 | 0 |

### General Practitioner Services

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average number of general practitioner consultations per head in each family health service authority in 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what was the average number of general practitioner consultations per head of those aged over 65 years.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** This information is not available centrally.

### Euro-constituency Boundaries

**Mrs. Browning:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the 1993 electorates for United Kingdom parliamentary constituencies to be used in drawing up proposals for the revised European parliamentary constituencies will be published.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) is today publishing the required information in OPCS Monitor EL 93/2. Copies are available in the Library. Further details will appear in the usual OPCS annual reference volume which will be published in August.

### Housing for the Elderly

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions have taken place with social services departments of local authorities to ensure that sufficient priority is given to housing needs for the elderly.

**Mr. Bowis:** Under arrangements introduced on 1 April, it is for individual local social services departments to assess the community care needs of people in need of social services. They will consider, with other agencies, including housing authorities, how these needs can be met within local priorities. The community care support force visited a number of local authorities to offer advice and guidance as part of its overall work in helping authorities implement the community care reforms. Further advice on housing and community care issues is contained in the joint Departments of Health and the Environment circular (LAC(92)12) issued last September, a copy of which is available in the Library.

### Appointments

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of individuals appointed to the chairs of district health authorities and chairs and non-executive directorships of NHS trusts within the Northern region, listing their occupation and sex.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** This information is shown in the table:

*District health authority chairmen*

| *District health authority* | *Name* | *Occupation* |
|---|---|---|
| Northumberland | Mr. J. Baker | Managing director |
| South Tees | Mr. P. A. Marsden | Managing director |
| North Durham | Prof. John Clarke | University professor |
| East Cumbria | Mr. I. Carr | Company chairman |
| Gateshead | *Vacancy* | — |
| South Cumbria | Mrs. A. Graham | Retired civil servant |
| Hartlepool | Mr. B. Hanson | Development engineer |

| District health authority | Name | Occupation |
|---|---|---|
| North Tees | Mr. D. Otter | Chartered accountant |
| North Tyneside | Mrs. S. Murray | Housewife |
| Newcastle | Mr. A. Crute | Solicitor |
| Sunderland | Mr. G. Bedell | Lecturer |
| South Durham | Dr. John Marshall | Business school director |
| South Tyneside | Mr. W. Darling | Pharmacist |
| West Cumbria | *Vacancy* | — |

*NHS trusts*

| Name | | Occupation |
|---|---|---|
| *Newcastle Mental Health Services NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Rev. Bryan Vernon | Anglican Chaplain |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Mrs. I. Cheyne | Lecturer |
| | Mr. D. Wilson | Management consultant |
| | Prof. Ian Ferrier | Lecturer |
| | Mr. B. Roycroft | Social services director |
| | Mr. N. Price | Housing officer |
| *Northumbria Ambulance Service NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mr. R. Stewart | Chartered accountant |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Mr. P. Moth | Public affairs controller |
| | Dr. Jacqueline Higson | Company director |
| | Mr. A. Ferguson | Company director |
| | Mr. A. Knight | Company director |
| | Mr. D. Smith | Chartered accountant |
| *Freeman Group of Hospitals NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mr. F. Hoult | Company chairman |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Mrs. M. Border | Teacher |
| | Mr. R. Middleton | Financial adviser |
| | Mr. J. Ward | Company director |
| | Miss H. Goodworth | Nurse |
| | Dr. Roger Freeman | Lecturer |
| *Royal Victorial Infirmary and Associated Hospitals NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mrs. A. Galbraith | Lecturer |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Prof. John Davison | Medical consultant |
| | Mrs. S. Wilson | Personnel director |
| | Miss A. Willis | Retired nursing officer |
| | Mr. P. Stoddart | General manager |
| | Mrs. K. Brunton | Public relations manager |
| *Cleveland Ambulance NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Dr. Alistair Thomson | Retired medical officer |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Mr. T. Weastell | Chartered accountant |
| | Ms S. Bush | Personnel director |
| | Mr. K. Flethcher | Solicitor |
| | Mr. K. Hellawell | Chief constable |
| | Mrs. P. Campbell | Voluntary worker |
| *North Tees Health NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mrs. J. Graham-Bowman | Magistrate |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Ms J. Slater | Job centre manager |
| | Mr. P. Jackson | Chartered accountant |
| | Miss J. Brown | Lecturer |
| | Mr. R. Stewart | General manager |
| | Mr. C. Porter | Management consultant |
| *Northgate NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mr. P. Hutchinson | Retired chartered surveyor |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Mrs. J. Stephenson | Citizens Advice Bureau manager |
| | Ms S. Adams | Personnel consultant |
| | Mr. G. Rutherford | Managing director |
| | Mr. J. Handley | Retired company director |
| | Prof. John Rear | Barrister/Polytechnic director |
| *South Tees Acute Hospitals NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mrs. A. Collins | Housewife |

| Name | | Occupation |
|---|---|---|
| *Non-executive directors:* | Mr. D. Collier | Solicitor |
| | Mr. J. Webster | Personnel manager |
| | Mrs. H. Thompson | Company secretary |
| | Mr. R. Kingdon | Retired chief executive |
| | Mr. S. Still | Business consultant |
| *Gateshead Community Health NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mr. P. Smith | Retired county treasurer |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Ms P. Remfry | Development officer |
| | Mr. M. Scott | Auctioneer |
| | Mr. D. Mitford | Solicitor |
| | Dr. Raymond Jackson | Retired GP |
| | Mr. R. Dixon | Managing director |
| *Cumbria Ambulance Service NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mrs. A. Graham | Television/radio production consultant |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Mr. P. Simpson | Retired managing director |
| | Mrs. F. Cartmell | Part-time school secretary |
| | Mr. D. Dickinson | Retired Royal Mail executive |
| | Mr. I. Pirnie | Retired naval officer |
| | Mr. J. Clayton | Company director |
| *Durham County Ambulance Service NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mrs. P. Wynne | Community worker |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Prof. Charles Baker | University professor |
| | Mr. M. Hemingway | Company secretary |
| | Mr. D. D'Arcy | Company director |
| | Mrs. E. Wallis | Voluntary worker |
| | Mr. N. Martin | Part-time business consultant |
| *Gateshead Hospitals NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mr. C. Morton | Personnel director |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Mrs. N. Cookson | College deputy principal |
| | Mrs. A. Cooper | Managing director |
| | Mr. D. Irwin | Project manager |
| | Dr. James Dalgleish | Retired GP |
| | Miss M. Davies | Company chairman |
| *South West Durham Mental Health NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mrs. J. Pease | Company director |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Mr. D. Bright | Lecturer |
| | Mr. J. Scally | Director, development corporation |
| | Mrs. C. Hillery | Part-time editor |
| | Mr. N. Hart | Solicitor |
| | Mr. P. Briggs | Managing director |
| *Northumberland Mental Health NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mr. D. Reay | Retired chief executive |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Mr. D. Davison | Retired social services director |
| | Prof. Mary Bromley | Lecturer |
| | Mr. S. Gibson | Solicitor |
| | Mrs. J. Turner | Retired nursing officer |
| | Mr. H. Herron | Chartered accountant |
| *South Cumbria Community and Mental Health NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mr. E. Holmes | Retired general manager |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Mrs. S. Godfrey | Personnel manager |
| | Mrs. M. Davies | Retired head teacher |
| | Mr. L. Davies | Retired quantity surveyor |
| | Mr. J. Davies | Company director |
| | Dr. Rodney Leach | Chief executive |
| *South Tees Community and Mental Health NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mr. R. Murray | Retired chief executive |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Mrs. H. Sillars | Company director |
| | Dr. Susan Miller | Lecturer |
| | Mr. J. Wilson | Company director |
| | Mr. G. Bowles | Managing director |
| | Mr. G. Crispin | Dean, Teeside Polytechnic |
| *South Tyneside Health Care NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Miss D. Blenkinsop | Retired nursing officer |

| Name | | Occupation |
|---|---|---|
| *Non-executive directors:* | Mr. R. Graham | Director/company secretary |
| | Mrs. M. Mills | Retired nurse |
| | Mrs. F. Walker | Solicitor |
| | Mr. M. Wright | Company chairman |
| | Mr. E. Russell | Finance manager |
| *West Cumbria Health Care NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mr. E. Urquhart | Insurance inspector |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Dr. Peter Inglis | Chemical consultant |
| | Mr. G. Lamont | Chartered accountant |
| | Mrs. C. Madden | Solicitor |
| | Mrs. R. Porter | Head teacher |
| | Mr. D. Gill | Managing director |
| *Westmorland Hospitals NHS Trust* | | |
| *Chairman:* | Mr. P. Reay | Retired personnel director |
| *Non-executive directors:* | Mr. D. Hawkes | Retired company director |
| | Mr. G. Turnbull | Retired consultant gynaecologist |
| | Mrs. C. Hensman | Housewife |
| | Mrs. S. Evans | Solicitor |
| | Mr. M. Lund | Management consultant |

### Vaccination

**Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost to the NHS of vaccines provided on prescription solely for the purpose of foreign travel.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** This information is not available centrally.

### NHS Employees

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, column *182*, if she will provide comparable information in respect of *(a)* a district general manager/chief executive, *(b)* a chief finance officer and *(c)* a unit general manager.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** This information is not available centrally.

## TRANSPORT

### European Transport Council

**Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) of 21 June, *Official Report*, columns *59-60*, what were the voting figures for each decision taken at the European Community's Transport Council held on 7 and 8 June; and if he will make it his policy to include in further statements on council meetings information on whether formal votes were taken.

**Mr. Macgregor:** The Transport Council resumed on 19 June the meeting that it had held on 7 and 8 June. No formal votes were taken.

### Traffic Regulation Conditions (Buses)

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 21 June, *Official Report*, columns *58-59*, where each of the traffic regulation conditions were imposed and for what reason in each case; and which conditions were subject to appeal and on what grounds appeals were allowed.

**Mr. Freeman:** Information on each traffic regulation condition imposed since 1986 and details of those that were subject to appeal is given in the table.

*Traffic regulations conditions imposed since 1986*

| TAO | Location | Reason | Appeal |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1986* | | | |
| 1. NWTA | Barrow<br>Angle Meadow Lane<br>Sowerby Avenue<br>Whinsfield Avenue<br>Head Meadow<br>Margate Street<br>Oak Head Road<br>Orion Terrace<br>Long Bank<br>Chester Street<br>Keswick Avenue<br>Glenridding Drive<br>Park Lane<br>Hastings Street<br>Southampton Street<br>Amphitrite Street | Danger | No |
| 2. SCOT TA | Livingstone<br>Whole of New Town | Danger and congestion | No |

| TAO | Location | Reason | Appeal |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1987* | | | |
| 3. NWTA | Carlisle<br>Mallyclose Drive (part)<br>Hopeshill Drive (part)<br>Forest Hill (part) | Danger | No |
| 4. NWTA | Trafford<br>Buckfast Road<br>Redcroft Road<br>Hawthorn Lane<br>Totnes Road<br>Brayton Avenue<br>Walton Road | Danger and congestion | No |
| 5. NWTA | Stockport<br>Princes Street | Danger and congestion | No |
| 6. NWTA | Trafford<br>Grove Lane,<br>Timperley | Danger and congestion | No |
| 7. NETA | Hartlepool<br>Area not specified | Danger | No |
| 8. NETA | Kelloe<br>Area not specified | Danger | No |
| 9. SEMTA | Oxford<br>Queens Road<br>Cornmarket | Danger | [1]Yes |
| 10. SCOT TA | Dalkeith<br>Eskbank Road | Danger and congestion | No |
| 11. SCOT TA | Currie<br>Currievale | Danger | No |
| *1988* | | | |
| 12. NETA | Hemsworth<br>Woodlands Crescent and<br>Springvale Rise | Danger | No |
| 13. NWTA | Blackburn<br>Ainsworth Street<br>Penny Street<br>Railway Road<br>Church Street (part)<br>Salford (part)<br>Starkie Street | Congestion | No |
| 14. NWTA | Wigan<br>Stow Road | Danger<br>(Revoked later at request of local authority) | No |
| 15. NWTA | Blackburn<br>Penny Street | Congestion<br>(Revoked later at request of local authority) | No |
| 16. NWTA | Carlisle<br>Green Lane<br>Kirkstead Road<br>Acredale Road (part)<br>Buchanan Road (part)<br>Lediard Avenue<br>Lund Crescent (part) | Danger | No |
| *1989* | | | |
| 17. NWTA | Sefton<br>Albert Schweitzer Avenue<br>Howard Florey Avenue<br>Louis Pasteur Avenue<br>Alexander Fleming Avenue | Danger | No |
| *1990* | | | |
| 18. NWTA | Oldham<br>Several roads in Shaw | Danger | No |
| *1991* | | | |
| 19. NWTA | Trafford<br>Ayres Road and Henrietta Street | Congestion and danger | No |

| TAO | Location | Reason | Appeal |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1992* | | | |
| 20. NWTA | Bolton<br>Glengarth Drive | Congestion and danger | No |
| 21. NETA | Sheffield<br>Various central streets and part of Ecclesall Road | Congestion | [1]Yes |
| 22. NETA | Barnsley<br>Kendray Street and Pontefract Road | Danger | No |
| *1993* | | | |
| 23. SCOT TA | Edinburgh<br>St. Andrew's Square | Congestion | [1]Not yet |

[1]*Notes:*

1. TRC No. 9 (Oxford). An appeal was lodged on the ground that there was no danger to other road users. The TRC was confirmed on the ground that though there was no danger to other road users there was evidence of severe congestion. It was varied slightly with regard to hours when the restrictions applied.
2. TRC No. 21 (Sheffield). An appeal was lodged on the ground that the deputy traffic commissioner acted ultra vires in that he banned new bus registrations and did not specify any times when the TRC should operate. The appeal was allowed in part: the ban on new registrations was lifted and the TRC was varied making it operational from 7 am to 7 pm on Mondays to Saturdays only.
3. TRC No. 23 (Edinburgh). The TRC has just been determined and no appeal has been lodged but the 28-day period in which an appeal may be made has not yet expired.
4. There have been three appeals by local authorities against the decision by the traffic commissioner not to impose the TRCs requested. These appeals were all dismissed.

### Traffic Director, London

**Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total staff complement of the Traffic Director for London's office; what is its annual budget; what reports it makes to the Minister; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** The Office of the Traffic Director for London has a staff of 12 and a budget for 1993-94 of £10 million. Under schedule 5 to the Road Traffic Act 1991, the traffic director is required to submit an annual report to the Secretary of State on the discharge of his functions together with a statement of accounts.

### Red Route

**Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to ensure relief from red route-related traffic in respect of Windsor road N7, Fairbridge road N19, Stanhope road N6 and Cressida road N.19; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** The traffic director intends to carry out a review of the pilot red route to ensure that it is operating within the framework set out in his network plan. If traffic problems on the roads mentioned are related to the red route, the traffic director will consider what measures can be taken. Otherwise, any action would be a matter for the appropriate highway authority.

### Channel Ports

**Mr. Gale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action his Department is taking to ensure that the port of Ramsgate, serving Dunkirk, is restored to the same trans-Europe network map that features Dunkirk serving Ramsgate.

**Mr. Key:** We do not propose at present to press for any additions to the trans-European road network map. The current network proposals reflect key routes of greatest interest to intra-Community road traffic.

The importance of good road access to Ramsgate has been recognised already by the Government's substantial support, through transport supplementary grant, to Kent county council's programme of road improvements between Ramsgate and the M2.

### Channel Tunnel (Signposts)

**Mr. Gale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what proposals his Department has for the improvement of the signposting of the channel ports in general and of Port Ramsgate in particular;

(2) what proposals his Department has to ensure that destinations in east Kent in general and the Isle of Thanet in particular are clearly signposted for the benefit of travellers emerging from the channel tunnel.

**Mr. Key:** The M20/A20 will be the principal route to the channel tunnel and the ports of Folkestone and Dover. The A2/M2 route will continue to serve Sheerness, Ramsgate and other east Kent towns. Although our signing will reflect this generally, in the case of either route the signing will not be restricted to the towns and ports which that route primarily serves.

We are now reviewing the signing of east Kent towns. Our plans include signing both Canterbury and Ramsgate, along with Folkestone and Dover, eastwards on M20 from the channel tunnel exits.

The details of the signing arrangements are necessarily complex and I have written to my hon. Friend about them.

### Newcastle Western Bypass

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is *(a)* the design capacity of the road, *(b)* the maximum daily and hourly use of the bypass after its complete opening and *(c)* the maximum daily and hourly use of the road currently for the Denton Burn, Ponteland road and Great North road interchanges of the Newcastle western bypass.

**Mr. Key:** The Department does not use the concept of design capacity. It uses a range of flows to provide starting

points for the economic, environmental and operational assessment of carriageway width options. In the case of this road the range of flows is 30,000 to 46,000 vehicles per day. This range of flows does not provide any indication of the ultimate traffic flows which the carriageway can carry.

The Newcastle western bypass was fully opened to traffic in December 1990. No hourly traffic flows are available. The 1991 annual average daily traffic flows are as follows:

| | *Traffic flow* |
|---|---|
| Great North Road to Kingston Park | 44,000 |
| Kingston Park to Ponteland Road | 44,000 |
| Ponteland Road to Stamfordham Road | 55,300 |
| Stamfordham Road to Denton Burn | 55,300 |

The 1992 annual average daily traffic flows are as follows:

| | *Traffic flow* |
|---|---|
| Great North Road to Kingston Park | 44,400 |
| Kingston Park to Ponteland Road | 47,800 |
| Ponteland Road to Stamfordham Road | 55,700 |
| Stamfordham Road to Denton Burn | 61,000 |

### Road Signposts

**Mr. Gale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he intends to implement to improve road and destination signing and to clarify the regulations that relate to such signs; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Key:** Destination signing reflects the relative importance of different destinations for traffic management purposes, taking account of distance; it is kept under review in the light of changing traffic patterns in any given area. New designs for the layout of signs, with a clear format relating closely to road status, have been developed following comprehensive consultation and a subsequent trial. These signs will be incorporated in the new traffic signs regulations which I expect to lay before the House around the end of the year.

### Gatwick Express

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that a competitive market should be allowed to operate in the event of the Gatwick express being privatised on the route between Gatwick and Central London; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** The promotion of competition in the provision of railway services is a key objective of our privatisation proposals. We have made it clear that on-track competition will be moderated for the first generation of franchises to the extent necessary to ensure the successful transfer of British Rail's passenger services to the private sector, and to ensure that the taxpayer receives value for money for subsidising services. These concerns will determine the degree of competition to apply between the Gatwick express and other services on the route between Gatwick and central London; and that will be decided before the Gatwick express is offered for franchise.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Set-aside

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many EC member state farmers have completed their set-aside forms on time; and in which states a lower proportion of forms has been received than in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Jack:** The Commission has asked member states in general terms to report on the implementation of the integrated administration and control system. We understand that, as yet, the information it has received is not complete and no complete Community picture on this matter is currently available.

### Tuberculosis (Badgers)

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received regarding the need for carcases of dead badgers to be checked for tuberculosis; and what is her assessment of the dangers to cattle of unchecked tuberculosis in the badger population.

**Mr. Soames** *[pursuant to his reply, 25 June 1993, c. 328-29]:* I would like to make it clear that the statement that badgers infected with tuberculosis do not pose a significant threat to the national cattle herd was based on scientific evidence that the disease in badgers has been associated with breakdowns in cattle herds only in south-west England and in a limited number of other areas.

### Waterside Habitats

**Sir Cranley Onslow:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received about the possibility of applying set-aside payments to the creation of riverside buffer zones, in conformity with option 2 on the recreation of waterside habitats set out in her Department's consultation document on the habitat improvement scheme; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Jack:** We received a large number of comments from many organisations on our consultation document on the proposed habitat improvement scheme. The option for water fringe habitats was widely welcomed. We are currently finalising our proposals for the scheme which we will be submitting to the Commission as part of the agri-environmental programme for England.

### Cormorants and Goosanders

**Sir Cranley Onslow:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will place in the Library a copy of her Department's new application form for licences to control cormorants and goosanders.

**Mr. Soames:** Yes. The new form is designed to assist applicants in providing the sort of information the Ministry requires to make licensing decisions. It will result in a more streamlined and therefore speedier decision-making process.

## Vitamins

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations have been made by her Department to the European Commission concerning its directive on vitamins.

**Mr. Soames:** In early 1992, there was an exploratory discussion in Brussels on the possibility of a directive on dietary supplements, including vitamins. However, there have been no subsequent developments.

## Public Appointments

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

**Mr. Jack** *[holding answer 25 June 1993]:* No changes have yet taken place in the remuneration for members of the MAFF advisory bodies listed in "Public Bodies 1991" —a copy of which is available in the Library of the House —nor for the agricultural wages board or agricultural wages committees. For the executive bodies, tribunals and public corporations the new rates payable for 1 April 1993 are as follows—all figures are sterling:

| *Executive bodies* | *Chairman* £/per annum | *Deputy chairman* £/per annum | *Members* £/per annum |
|---|---|---|---|
| Agricultural Training Board | [1]15,600 | 7,147 | — |
| Apple and Pear Research Council | 16,676 | 40 per day | 40 per day |
| Food From Britain | 32,100 | — | 1,930 |
| Home-grown Cereals Authority | 18,270 | 6,313 | [2]3,145/3,263 |
| Horticultural Development Council | 25,011 | — | 40 per day |
| Horticulture Research International | 20,624 | 4,098 | — |
| Meat and Livestock Commission | 53,789 | 26,584 | [2]6,313/12,829 |
| Regional Flood Defence Committees | [2]8,988/11,235 | — | — |
| Sea Fish Industry Authority | 29,612 | 13,835 | 6, 313 |
| Wine Standards Board of the Vintners Company | 3,231 | — | 813 |

[1] Now based on two days per week instead of 1.
[2] Depending on how many days worked.

| *Tribunals* | *Chairman/deputy* £ per annum | *Members* £ per annum |
|---|---|---|
| Agricultural Land Tribunals (England) | 221 | — |
| Dairy Produce Quota Tribunal | 300 | 177 |
| Milk and Dairies Tribunal (England) | 91 | — |
| Plant Varieties and Seeds Tribunal | 246 (Junior) | — |
| Plant Varieties and Seeds Tribunal | 300 (Silk) | 113 |
| *Public Corporation* | | |
| Covent Garden Market Authority | 32,411 | 6,313 |

Members of public bodies receive the same rates of travel allowances as civil servants, but subsistence is paid according to actual costs. There have been no changes to this agreement since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

The biographical information on appointees is not held centrally in the form requested. However, appointments are made on the basis of suitability, merit and personal expertise and announced in Ministry news releases, copies of which are placed in the Library of the House.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Thursday 1 July 1993*

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Buckingham Palace (Police)

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment has been made of the numbers of additional Metropolitan police officers who will have to be deployed and the number of officers who will have to be redeployed consequent on the opening of Buckingham palace to the public; and what assessment he has made of the implications.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The Metropolitan police have reviewed the policing of the palace in consultation with the royal household and other agencies. I understand that there will be no additional cost to the Metropolitan police.

### Non-attendance of Witnesses

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he will take to change the law to ensure that when a court case is withdrawn due to non-attendance of witnesses and it is subsequently shown that they were deliberately prevented from attending the court the case can be resubmitted.

**Mr. Maclean:** Although there are no current plans to amend the law in this area, we continue to keep the matter under close review. We shall wish to consider in particular any recommendations the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice may make that have bearing on the law in this area.

### Inner-city Estates

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to ensure that adequate police resources are applied to countering intimidation on inner-city housing estates.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The deployment of resources is the responsibility of chief officers of police.

### Homosexuality

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review and revise the law regarding the age of consent for homosexual adults.

**Mr. Maclean:** The criminal law is kept continually under review, but there are no current plans to amend it in this area.

### Yugoslavia

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest number of *(a)* ex-detainees and *(b)* dependants from the former Yugoslavia who have arrived in the United Kingdom under the arrangements announced last November; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** A total of 238 ex-detainees and 404 dependants from the former Yugoslavia have so far arrived under the arrangements which I announced on 30 November 1992.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for the United Kingdom to receive refugees from the former Yugoslavia other than ex-detainees or their dependants; what is the estimate of such persons now in *(a)* Bosnia, *(b)* Croatia and *(c)* Slovenia; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Our programme to receive 1,000 vulnerable individuals plus their dependants has concentrated on former detainees since the humanitarian organisations have given priority to this group. Outside the programme, refugees from former Yugoslavia—like individuals of other nationalities—may seek entry clearance to come to the United Kingdom if they feel that this would be a more appropriate country of refuge. I understand that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees latest estimates of refugees and displaced people in the region are: Bosnia 2,280,000; Croatia 572,000; Slovenia 35,000.

### Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to restrict access through the criminal injuries compensation scheme to recompense for loss of earnings;

(2) whether he intends to apply his proposed tariff-based system for criminal injuries compensation to children who are victims of abuse;

(3) which organisations and individuals he has consulted about proposals to reform the criminal injuries compensation scheme;

(4) when he plans to publish his White Paper for the future of the criminal injuries compensation scheme;

(5) what account his proposed new criminal injuries compensation scheme will take of loss of wages;

(6) what plans he has to exclude nurses, fire fighters and police officers from eligibility to compensation for criminal injuries;

(7) who will determine awards under his Department's proposed tariff-based scheme for criminal injuries compensation;

(8) if he will make it his policy to ensure that victims of criminal violence continue to receive recompense under the criminal injuries compensation scheme for post-traumatic stress and similar distress.

**Mr. Maclean:** I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 30 June 1993 at column *498* in which I explained that we would be setting out our proposals for the new tariff scheme in a White Paper later this year. The issues raised by the hon. Member will be dealt with in that document. As I also indicated in my reply, while we are not conducting a formal consultation exercise we have already received observations from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Victim Support and others.

### Crime Clear-up Rates

**Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the proportion of the clear-up rate for each police force in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1991 accounted for by offences taken into consideration.

**Mr. Maclean:** The information requested is contained in the table.

*Notifiable offences[1] cleared up by the police: percentage of offences cleared up by being taken into consideration England and Wales*

| Police force area | 1990 Per cent. | 1991 Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| Avon and Somerset | 18 | 15 |
| Bedfordshire | 24 | 16 |
| Cambridgeshire | 19 | 28 |
| Cheshire | 16 | 15 |
| Cleveland | 19 | 33 |
| Cumbria | 17 | 18 |
| Derbyshire | 17 | 20 |
| Devon and Cornwall | 16 | 16 |
| Dorset | 15 | 14 |
| Durham | 7 | 12 |
| Essex | 19 | 34 |
| Gloucestershire | 23 | 18 |
| Greater Manchester | 16 | 26 |
| Hampshire | 21 | 18 |
| Hertfordshire | 20 | 27 |
| Humberside | 26 | 21 |
| Kent | 15 | 20 |
| Lancashire | 27 | 21 |
| Leicestershire | 33 | 28 |
| Lincolnshire | 26 | 21 |
| City of London | 6 | 12 |
| Merseyside | 9 | 15 |
| Metropolitan police district | 6 | 7 |
| Norfolk | 18 | 22 |
| Northamptonshire | 15 | 18 |
| Northumbria | 13 | 20 |
| North Yorkshire | 19 | 25 |
| Nottinghamshire | 28 | 24 |
| South Yorkshire | 11 | 6 |
| Staffordshire | 14 | 16 |
| Suffolk | 6 | 1 |
| Surrey | 14 | 16 |
| Sussex | 20 | 22 |
| Thames Valley | 22 | 26 |
| Warwickshire | 16 | 21 |
| West Mercia | 14 | 13 |
| West Midlands | 11 | 16 |
| West Yorkshire | 14 | 18 |
| Wiltshire | 18 | 14 |
| Dyfed-Powys | 2 | 4 |
| Gwent | 10 | 10 |
| North Wales | 16 | 17 |
| South Wales | 6 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 15 | 18 |

[1] Excluding offences of "other criminal damage" of value £20 and under.

### Prison Service (Disciplinary Arrangements)

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for revising disciplinary arrangements in the Prison Service; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Howard:** Following a review of disciplinary procedures in the prison service, I have now approved revised arrangements, which include a new code of discipline for the service. Under the revised arrangements, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House, all prison service staff are now brought together under a single code of discipline, which replaces the different procedures which previously applied to various grades of staff. The primary aim of the revised arrangements, which are consistent with employment law and with guidance from the advisory, conciliation and arbitration service, and which will be implemented with effect from 1 July 1993, is to ensure that standards of conduct are maintained and to encourage improvement in individual conduct. The new code details the procedures for taking disciplinary action when conduct falls below those standards.

In keeping with moves across the prison service to ensure that decisions are taken at the appropriate level, responsibility for taking disciplinary action up to and including dismissal is being devolved to prison governors and to heads of division at prison service headquarters.

The new code lays down timescales for completing each stage of the disciplinary process, and introduces a new system of progressive disciplinary warnings and penalties. Governors and heads of division will award penalties and will undertake all the administrative work connected with each case. There are rights of appeal built in to various stages of the disciplinary process.

Any disciplinary offences which are alleged to have been committed before 1 July 1993 will be dealt with under the disciplinary arrangements which were then in force.

I believe that the revised arrangements are a considerable improvement on the disparate arrangements previously in force, and that they represent a significant step forward for all concerned.

## EDUCATION

### EC Education Council

**Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *600*, what were the voting figures for each decision taken at the European Community's Education Council held on 11 June; and if he will make it his policy to include in future statements on Council meetings information on whether formal votes were taken.

**Mr. Boswell:** No formal votes were taken at this Council meeting. I can confirm that it will be our policy to make this information available in future reports on Council meetings.

### Smoking

**Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance he has issued to school governors and local education authorities on the introduction of no-smoking policies; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** We believe that all schools should develop clear policies on smoking, and are currently considering what guidance we might offer to help them in this process.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Sheep Quotas

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to introduce legislation to implement the quota transfer and leasing of sheep reference quantities.

**Mr. Jack:** The Sheep Annual Premium and Suckler Cow Premium Quotas Regulations 1993 were laid before

Parliament on 30 June. These regulations implement the transfer and lease arrangements for both sheep and suckler cow quotas.

### Folic Acid

**Mr. Peter Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made since the publication by the Chief Medical Officer of his report on folic acid and the prevention of neural tube defects, in ensuring an increased range of breads and cereals fortified with folic acid.

**Mr. Soames:** My Department wrote to the relevant trade organisations commending the report to their members and encouraging them to follow the recommendation to increase the range of breads and breakfast cereals fortified with folic acid. The response has been positive and we are aware of some new fortified products already.

### Diversification

**Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what initiatives she is taking to help farmers to diversify and maintain rural employment.

**Mr. Jack:** In the negotiations that resulted in reform of the common agricultural policy the United Kingdom was successful in protecting many of the support mechanisms that are of benefit to United Kingdom farmers. This success will help maintain employment in an increasingly diversified rural economy.

### Days at Sea

**Mr. Harris:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fishing vessels have been allocated the basic 80 days provisional days at sea allocations in *(a)* England, *(b)* Cornwall and *(c)* Devon; and how many owners in each category have lodged claims.

**Mr. Jack:** The minimum 160 half-days allocation was issued provisionally in respect of 801 fishing vessels administered by fisheries offices in England. Of these, 148 —including 60 Channel Islands vessels—are administered by the south western fisheries district—Devon, Somerset and Avon—and 80 by the western fisheries district—Cornwall.

By 25 June 1993, applications for additional days at sea had been received in respect of 577 fishing vessels, administered in England, which had been provisionally issued with the minimum allocation. Of these, 110—including 40 Channel Islands vessels—are administered by the south western fisheries district and 54 by the western district.

### Fur Farming

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on fur farming.

**Mr. Soames:** The Mink (Keeping) Order 1992, which was adopted following a debate in the House on 8 December 1992, requires that establishments keeping mink for fur must be licensed by Agriculture Departments. In order to obtain a licence specific standards of security must be met to prevent the escape of mink. There are currently 19 licensed establishments in England and two in Scotland. Welfare conditions on fur farms are monitored regularly by the state veterinary service on the basis of recommendations adopted by the Council of Europe.

### Intervention Board

**Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what key performance targets have been set for the Intervention Board; and if she will make a statement.

**Mrs. Shephard:** In agreement with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland I have set the following targets:

to process 98 per cent. of claims within ministerial deadlines and all claims within regulatory deadlines or, in their absence, 60 days;
to process at least 98 per cent. of claims correctly;
to achieve 2 per cent. running cost efficiency gains;
to achieve 5 per cent. improvement in productivity;
to keep disallowance to within 0·4 per cent. of EC funds handled;
to keep expenditure within vote provision and running cost and cash limits; and
to achieve 5 per cent. new value for money savings in the procurement of goods and services.

### Fisheries Council

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Fisheries Council held in Luxembourg on 24 July.

**Mr. Jack** *[pursuant to his reply, 28 June, cols. 383-84]:* No votes were taken on any matter before the Council.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Radiation

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy in relation to the 1991 recommendation from the National Radiation Protection Board relating to a dose constraint of 0·3 mSv of radiation per year for members of the public.

**Mr. Yeo:** Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, acting jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the case of nuclear licensed sites, have taken account of the dose constraint of 0·3 mSv in developing authorisations under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 for disposals of radioactive waste since this was first recommended by the International Commission for Radiological Protection in 1990.

### THORP

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations were held between his Department and the European Commission in its preparation of the reply to written question No. 2486/92 to the Commission by Anita Pollock MEP on the matter of the requirement of an environmental impact assessment on the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield, as published in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities, 7 June, C155 volume 36, page 12.

**Mr. Yeo:** None.

### Radioactive Waste (Advisory Committee)

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who have been nominated by Her Majesty's Government to represent the United Kingdom on the Advisory Committee for the community plan for action in the field of radioactive waste management under council resolution of 29 June 1984; what criteria are used in choosing United Kingdom nominations; and if he will set out the qualifications of the current United Kingdom representatives.

**Mr. Yeo:** The United Kingdom representatives on the committee are the head of the Department's radioactive substances division and his counterpart in the Scottish Office. The occupants of these posts are well placed to provide appropriate advice to the Commission.

### Water Charges

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what system exists for persons wishing to appeal against the level of water rates or water charges in respect of a property to do so to an independent tribunal or court.

**Mr. Yeo:** Water charges are in respect of most properties based on rateable value and there has never been a specific right of appeal against their level—though there was a right of appeal against domestic rateable values and a time limited right still remains in the case of non-domestic rateable values. The independent Director General of Water Services has a duty to protect customers' interests and to ensure that there is no discrimination in setting charges. Complaints about the application of charges in individual cases, which customers are unable to resolve with their local water company, can be taken up with the appropriate local customer service committee (CSC) of the Office of Water Services. These committees are not appellate bodies but were established specifically to represent customers' interests and to investigate complaints.

Where a customer receives a metered supply of water, and disputes the accuracy of the meter reading, he may, under the Water (Meters) Regulations 1988, request the water company to test the meter. Any dispute arising under the regulations may be referred to the arbitration of a single arbitrator appointed by agreement between the parties or, in default of agreement, by the Secretary of State.

### Noise Abatement Zones

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations his Department has received on noise abatement zones; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo:** I have received no recent representations, apart from those from the hon. Member.

The report of the Noise Review Working Pary 1990, copies of which are in the Library, found that the application of NAZs was limited by their complexity and the demands on local authority resources. Subsequent research by the Building Research Establishment considered this further and demonstrated that the principal problems are the complexity of the regulations for setting up NAZs and the intensive use of manpower in monitoring the statutorily required noise level registers. My Department is considering these findings.

### Specialist Advisers

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the specialist advisers appointed to each Minister in his Department.

**Mr. Gummer:** I have appointed Keith Adams as my political adviser and have reappointed James Gray as a political adviser working primarily with my Department's Ministers of State. I have reappointed Tom Burke as an expert adviser on environmental affairs and Professor Peter Hall as an expert adviser on planning affairs.

### Housing

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total specific capital grant and credit approvals for housing purposes to each local authority in England for 1992-93 and 1993-94 and the receipts taken into account for the 1993-94 figures.

**Mr. Baldry:** A table setting out information on allocations of specified capital grant, which forms part of the annual housing investment programme (HIP) allocations, for each local authority in England has been placed in the Library of the House.

There are two types of credit approval—basic credit approvals and supplementary credit approvals.

Basic credit approvals can be used to support capital expenditure in any local authority service, and are not allocated to individual services. I refer the hon. Member to the documents "Basic Credit Approvals 1992-93" and "Basic Credit Approvals 1993-94" for information on basic credit approvals and receipts taken into account. Both documents are available in the Library.

Supplementary credit approvals provide additional authority for local authority borrowing. As indicated in the answer by the then Secretary of State for the Environment to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Shaw) on 5 March, *Official Report*, column *333*, information on supplementary credit approvals issued by the Department in the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93, including those relating to housing capital expenditure, will be placed in the Library of the House shortly.

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for each year since 1978 the number of local authority housing units built by each authority *(a)* in total, *(b)* for sheltered housing and *(c)* for general need; and what he forecasts the situation to be for the current year and each of the next five years.

**Sir George Young:** Estimates of the total numbers of local authority house-building completions within each local authority area in England are in the following publications:

Year and Publication title and issues:
1978
"Local Housing Statistics" Issue No. 49.
1979
"Local Housing Statistics" Issue No. 59.
1980-84
"Housebuilding in England by Local Authority Areas 1980 to 1989".
1985-1990
"Local Housing Statistics" Issue No. 103.
1991-1992
"Local Housing Statistics" Issue No. 105.

The Department collects information about special types of housing for the elderly, including sheltered dwellings—referred to as "dwellings with a warden" before 1986—and about dwellings for chronically sick and disabled people.

Figures for individual local authorities are shown in certain issues of "Local Housing Statistics". Annual data for each year from 1982 to 1991 are in issues Nos. 66, 70, 74, 78, 82, 86, 90, 94, 99 and 102 respectively. Combined figures for July 1980 to December 1981 for dwellings built for the elderly and also for August 1970 to December 1981 for dwellings built for the chronically sick and disabled are in issue No. 66. Data were not collected before July 1980 on dwellings specially built for the elderly.

The Department does not prepare forecasts of housebuilding activity.

### Entry on Land (Local Government Officials)

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the powers local government officials have to enter land without prior notification.

**Mr. Baldry:** This question cannot be answered without disproportionate cost. Such powers of entry are, however, conferred only in cases where it may be necessary for officials to enter land to deal with an emergency in a situation in which it is not possible to contact the owner or his agent in advance.

### Home Improvement Grants

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number and percentage of housing improvement grant applications refused in *(a)* full and *(b)* part due to means testing since means testing was introduced for grant purposes.

**Sir George Young:** This information is not collected by the Department.

### Solent Wetlands

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his plans for the wetlands of the Solent under the Ramsar convention; and if he will make a statement on the timing of the publication.

**Mr. Yeo:** English Nature is preparing a detailed case for submission to my Department but is unlikely to be in a position to make a formal recommendation before the end of this year. Good progress continues to be made in listing sites under the Ramsar convention. The United Kingdom has now listed 66 such sites, the largest number of any contracting party to the convention.

### Smoking

**Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has issued to local authorities on the introduction of no-smoking policies in their workplaces and in places they own which are entered by members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Government's "Code of Practice on Smoking in Public Places", which provides practical guidance to owners and managers on implementing suitable policies on smoking, was brought to the attention of local authorities in DOE circular 7/92, issued on 28 February 1992. The circular also drew attention to advice on passive smoking at work available from the Health and Safety Executive and the health education and promotion agencies.

**Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how progress towards the "The Health of the Nation" goal of 80 per cent. of public places being smoke-free by 1994, is being monitored; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo:** My Department has commissioned market research into smoking policies operating in various types of public place. It is planned to follow this with a further survey in 1994.

### Commission on Sustainable Development

**Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the outcome of the first meeting of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development held in New York from 14 to 25 June.

**Mr. Gummer:** The commission was established following the Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. Its task is to monitor progress in following up the Rio agreements, focusing in particular on the implementation of agenda 21.

The commission has made a highly satisfactory start. Countries represented at the first session in New York adopted a positive and constructive attitude towards the work of the commission.

Agreements were reached on the commission's work programme and on guideline for national reporting of progress in implementing agenda 21. Agreement was also reached on a number of intersessional meetings on substantive issues which would prepare the ground for the commission's second session next year.

The 1994 session will focus on health, human settlements and fresh water, and toxic chemicals and toxic waste; 1995 on land, desertification, forests and biodiversity; and 1996 on atmosphere, oceans and all kinds of seas. A number of issues, including finance, technology transfer, co-operation and capacity building, will be considered each year. In 1997 the commission will review overall progress in implementing agenda 21.

All countries have been encouraged to contribute to the process by making national reports on progress towards sustainable development in a common format and covering issues identified by the commission.

The United Kingdom Government are members of the Commission and are playing a full part in its work with wide participation from non-governmental organisations. We aim to produce the United Kingdom's own sustainable development plan by the end of 1993, and report on this to the commission's 1994 session.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department spent on legal advice regarding the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Gummer** *[holding answer 29 June 1993]:* It is not possible to identify separately the cost of legal advice on these regulations which has been provided specifically in relation to my Department's market-testing programme.

### Building Management Businesses

**Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made in selling the building management businesses.

**Mr. Curry** *[pursuant to his reply, 24 June 1993, c. 247]:* I am pleased to be able to announce the exchange of contracts for the sale of the PSA building management businesses BM South East and BM South and West. The businesses have been sold to a joint venture between Pell Frischmann Consulting Engineers Ltd. and Matthew Hall Ltd., a subsidiary of AMEC plc.

This sale will benefit taxpayers, staff and customers. The next step is for staff to choose individually whether to transfer to the privatised business. The future of the businesses now lies in the private sector and I hope many staff will choose to transfer with it. Completion of the sale is expected during the next three months.

The joint venture will pay the Government a net £11·4 million for the two businesses over the next four years. Government will in addition meet the costs of redundancies, should they be necessary, up to a agreed figure in the first five years following completion of the sale. The redundancy entitlement of transferring staff will be guaranteed by Government for five years after the sale. Further details cannot be released until all the sales have been completed.

The joint venture brings together a major contractor and an established engineering consultancy. I am confident that the combination of their commercial skills with the strengths of the BMSE and BMS&W work forces will give the businesses a sound future in the private sector.

I hope to make further announcements soon about the sales of the other three BM businesses.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Paternity Cases

**Mr. Butcher:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will bring forward proposals to amend the law to compel fathers or alleged fathers, in cases of contested paternity, to take blood tests, or to allow the court to take refusal to take a blood test into account in deciding paternity cases and to provide that repeated refusal to take a blood test will be construed as evidence supporting the case of the opposing litigant.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** I have no plans to amend the law to make blood tests compulsory in cases of disputed paternity. Under the provisions of section 23 of the Family Law Reform Act 1969, as amended, courts may already draw what inferences seem appropriate in any particular case from a refusal to undertake a blood test.

### Magistrates' Clerks

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what arrangements are made for the payment of magistrates court clerks; and to what extent local authorities are concerned with those arrangements.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The salaries and other expenses of magistrates' court clerks are met by the local paying authorities who are reimbursed up to 80 per cent. of those costs by specific grant from my Department. However, court clerks are actually employed by the local magistrates' courts committee which must agree its overall budget with its paying authority. Additionally, the joint negotiating committee for magistrates' courts staff, the national body which negotiates the salaries and conditions of service for court clerks, includes local authority representatives on the management side.

### Care Centres

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will set out the arrangements and the timetable for the national review of the designation of care centres for the hearing of care cases brought under the Children Act 1989; and if he will list those organisations which are to be consulted at local level.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The national review of care centres, which has always been a part of the Lord Chancellor's arrangements for monitoring the Children Act, will begin in the late summer. The precise arrangements and timetable have yet to be finalised. Consideration is also being given to who should be consulted locally, in order that there should be a full and effective consultation.

### Intestacy

**Mr. Stephen:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to implement the recommendations in the Law Commission's report No. 187 on distribution on intestacy.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** This report contains a number of recommendations. The Government have not accepted the first recommendation, namely that a surviving spouse should in all circumstances receive the whole of the intestate's estate. The Government have, however, decided to accept the Commission's other recommendations, which concern the "hotchpot" rule, survivorship clauses and provision for cohabitants, and will introduce legislation to implement them when a suitable legislative opportunity occurs.

The Government are concerned to provide additional protection for a surviving spouse in order to enable him or her in the great majority of cases, where the size of the intestate's estate permits it, to remain in the former matrimonial home and to have a sufficient surplus on which to live. To this end the Lord Chancellor will make an order as soon as practicable to increase the statutory legacy payable to a surviving spouse on intestacy from £75,000 to £125,000 in the case of the lower legacy, and from £125,000 to £200,000 in the case of the higher legacy.

### Long Criminal Trials

**Mr. Bates:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what progress has been made since the publication of the consultation paper on long criminal trials.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The consultation paper was published in December 1992 to seek the views of

practitioners and the general public on ways of reducing the length of long trials and particularly those involving serious and complex fraud.

A total of 84 contributions were received from members of the judiciary, legal practitioners and their professional bodies, Government Departments, organisations with an interest in the subject-matter, academics and other interested individuals. These responses have been considered by the inter-departmental working group. It is clear that many of the issues raised touch on areas covered by the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, whose report is expected shortly.

The Home Secretary, the Attorney-General and the Lord Chancellor will therefore consider the responses received and the views of the working group as they take forward their consideration of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Sunday Trading

7. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to allow Sunday trading by supermarkets in the Province.

**Mr. Ancram:** None, but as has been made clear in the House on several occasions, we shall in due course review the law in the light of developments in England and Wales.

### Banbridge-Newcastle Road

8. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to improve the Banbridge-Newcastle road.

**Mr. Atkins:** At present improvements to the value of £100,000 are planned over the next three years.

### Community Relations

9. **Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current situation regarding community relations in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Ancram:** The most recent social attitudes survey indicated that perceptions of relations between Protestants and Catholics continue to improve.

This is encouraging, but the healing of community divisions will require goodwill on all sides, at political, community and individual levels. Government will continue to encourage and support those involved in community relations work.

### Building Regulations (Fire)

10. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress in the review of Building Regulations (Fire) which his Department is conducting.

**Mr. Atkins:** Revised draft regulations will, in compliance with European Community requirements, be notified to the Commission later this year. It is anticipated that the revised regulations, which include amendments to the fire safety requirements, will be made in early 1994 and come into operation later that year.

### Casement Park

11. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning referral of the Casement Park case to the Court of Appeal.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I have received a range of representations, from hon. Members and others, to the effect that the cases of Mr. Patrick Kane, Mr. Michael Timmons and Mr. Sean Kelly should be referred again to the Court of Appeal.

### Tourism

12. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the Government's initiatives to help boost the tourist trade in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Atkins:** New powers, provided in 1992, are being used by the Northern Ireland tourist board to promote, market and develop Northern Ireland's tourist potential. A range of new initiatives are being put into operation with the objective of attracting tourists and developing a high quality, professional, international tourist product.

### Pensioners (Fuel Bills)

13. **Ms Estelle Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met officers of Age Concern in Northern Ireland to discuss matters involving winter fuel cost for old people; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ancram:** No such meeting has been held recently. Extra help will be given from April 1994 to less well off pensioners and others on low incomes. Details of the precise way in which this extra help is to be provided will be announced in the autumn.

28. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has had from officers of Age Concern in Northern Ireland on winter fuel cost for old people; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ancram:** My noble Friend the Lord Arran recently received a letter from officers of Age Concern that included an inquiry about fuel costs for old people. The representations made in that letter are currently being considered.

### University Applications

14. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons in Northern Ireland are applying to go to university in October.

**Mr. Ancram:** The application process has not yet been completed for the 1993-94 academic year. However, a provisional figure for those from Northern Ireland applying to go to university in October is 12,647. Numbers of applicants for part-time places are not yet available.

### Law and Order

15. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has for reviewing law and order policies as they relate to Northern Ireland.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The emergency provisions are regularly considered by the House in the light of reports by

an independent reviewer. Proposals which flowed from a wide-ranging review of other aspects of criminal justice policy were published in the discussion paper "Crime and the Community" in March; we shall consider carefully the public response to the paper. We shall also want to consider the implications for Northern Ireland of the recommendations that are to be made for England and Wales by the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.

### Bank of Credit and Commerce International

16. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from local authorities and depositors in the province who have lost money in BCCI.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** Any such representations would have been passed on to either my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer or my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, who have responsibility for this matter. No records are kept of correspondence transferred in this way.

### Drainage Services

17. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to bring land and road drainage services under the control of one overall authority.

**Mr. Atkins:** None.

### Homelessness

18. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were registered as homeless in Northern Ireland for the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Atkins:** This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I am advised by its chairman that the Executive does not maintain a register of homeless persons. However, the number of applicants accepted as being either homeless or threatened with homelessness since 1 April 1989 when the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order came into effect is as follows:

| *Year* | *Number of applicants* |
|---|---|
| 1989-90 | 5,166 |
| 1990-91 | 6,983 |
| 1991-92 | 7,494 |
| 1992-93 | 7,549 |

### Property Damage (Terrorism)

19. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has made of the cost of damage to property by terrorist groups in the most recent year for which figures are available and over the past 10 years, respectively.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Compensation Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. Robinson. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from J. Robinson to Sir Teddy Taylor, dated 1 July 1993.*

I refer to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning the amount of criminal damage to property caused by terrorist groups. The Secretary of State has asked me to respond.

I regret that the information is not available in the form you requested. However the following are details of the total amount of compensation paid for terrorist related criminal damage claims which were settled in each year since 1982-83:

| *Year of settlement* | *Total amount paid £ million* |
|---|---|
| 1982-83 | 25·5 |
| 1983-84 | 22·3 |
| 1984-85 | 22·9 |
| 1985-86 | 16·7 |
| 1986-87 | 18·9 |
| 1987-88 | 10·6 |
| 1988-89 | 16·9 |
| 1989-90 | 18·4 |
| 1990-91 | 18·9 |
| 1991-92 | 19·7 |
| 1992-93 | 40·2 |

These amounts include the costs and expenses incurred by applicants in making out and verifying their claims.

I hope this is helpful.

### Constitutional Arrangements

20. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest talks with Ministers from the Government of Ireland on future constitutional arrangements for the Province.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I met the Taoiseach and Tanaiste in London on 16 June. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and other Ministers of the Irish Government were also present. The two Governments considered the prospects for a resumption of political dialogue in Northern Ireland. They agreed on the need to address adequately all of the key relationships involved and to work towards an outcome which would accommodate the rights and identities of the two major traditions in Ireland. The two Governments confirmed that their aim is to achieve a new beginning for relationships within Northern Ireland, within the island of Ireland and between the peoples of the two islands. The two Governments also called on the political parties in Northern Ireland to help in the search for political progress and agreed that contacts would continue actively with the Northern Ireland parties.

### Emergency Services

21. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the performance of the emergency services in dealing with incidents of terrorist violence.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The emergency services continue to provide an outstanding service in responding to incidents involving terrorist violence, as they do to all incidents requiring their expertise. The men and women serving in the fire brigade, ambulance service and police, as well as those in other organisations, including the Housing

Executive, social services and Compensation Agency, who are called upon to react to terrorist incidents, deserve great credit for their work and I have nothing but praise for them.

### Cross-border Security

22. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the cross-border security situation between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith).

### Unemployment

23. **Ms Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to reduce unemployment in west Belfast.

**Mr. Atkins:** West Belfast benefits from the wide range of economic development programmes aimed at helping to generate economic growth and durable employment throughout Northern Ireland. Within these programmes, disadvantaged areas, including west Belfast, receive special treatment; for example, inward investors can receive more generous assistance if they locate in such areas.

West Belfast is covered by the Making Belfast Work initiative which continues to play an important role in tackling material deprivation. This year a further £24 million has been allocated to the initiative which aims to increase jobs and investment, improve community participation and enhance the skills and improve the quality of life of residents in the area.

There are also five Belfast action teams operating in west Belfast and urban regeneration work such as the planned development of the former Mackies factory site at Springvale will also contribute to the economic prospects of the area.

27. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he is taking to reduce unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Atkins:** The trend in unemployment in Northern Ireland is now firmly downwards with an average fall of 1,000 per month over the last three months. Further reductions in unemployment in Northern Ireland depend on the achievement of higher levels of economic growth which will lead to an increased number of employment opportunities and on Northern Ireland industry becoming more internationally competitive.

The main features of the Government's strategy to achieve this growth include helping companies to identify and remove obstacles to growth; encouraging inward investment; building up management and workforce skills; developing an enterprise culture; and supporting innovation and research and development. Help is available in each of these areas for activities which will improve business performance.

### Security

24. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) earlier today.

### Security Forces (Manpower)

25. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on current manpower levels for the security forces in Northern Ireland.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** As at 30 April there were 13,104 police officers and 18,679 members of the armed forces in their support in Northern Ireland. The Government continue to devote all the resources necessary to security. Force levels are kept under constant review.

### Criminal Injury Compensation

26. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what changes he intends to make in the system of compensation for criminal injury and criminal damage.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary proposes to issue a White Paper shortly outlining proposals for a new tariff-based criminal injuries compensation scheme in Great Britain. I will study the White Paper carefully before considering whether there are lessons to be learnt for Northern Ireland.

I have no current plans to reform the criminal damage compensation scheme in Northern Ireland.

### National Curriculum

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to review the national curriculum in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ancram:** The Northern Ireland curriculum has now completed its third year of phased implementation, and programmes of study in all the compulsory subjects are now statutory and working their way through primary and secondary schools. The programmes of study have been well received and teachers have commented on their high quality.

There have been concerns, however, particularly from primary schools teachers, about the volume and level of content in the curriculum. There are particular fears that the depth of volume of what will be required when all the programmes are in place could affect standards in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

I take these concerns seriously, and I have therefore written to the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council commissioning a fundamental review of the primary curriculum. I have asked the council to provide advice on the underlying causes of the problems, how these should be addressed, and the nature, shape and content of an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum for the primary sector. I have asked the council to consult widely with teachers and to submit its advice by the end of April 1994.

The council already has plans for a review of the totality of the secondary curriculum, being in 1994, and I see no need to accelerate its timetable.

To allow time for these new developments, I will not be introducing any new programmes of study into the primary sector in September 1993.

### Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights

**Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has received the 18th report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The report, for the period 1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993, has been published today and copies have been laid before Parliament.

The commission has considered a wide range of matters during the period under review. These include the possibility of incorporating the European convention on human rights into domestic law, and a review of legislative procedures for Northern Ireland. The report also deals with emergency legislation and security policy, criminal justice issues, the RUC charter, race relations, disability, education, abortion law, and family and social matters.

I value the advice that the commission gives me on a wide range of human rights matters and I very much appreciate the commitment that the members have shown in undertaking such an extensive programme of work.

Copies of my response to the commission's 18th report and of the report itself have been placed in the Library.

### House Condition Survey

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the results of the Northern Ireland house condition survey; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Atkins:** I understand from the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that the results of the 1991 Northern Ireland house condition survey which was conducted by the Executive have been published today. I have made arrangements to place copies in the Library.

The survey shows that further significant progress has been made in improving housing conditions in Northern Ireland. The Executive and Department of the Environment will now be considering the implications of the survey results for housing policies and strategies.

### Intimidation Complaints

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints have been received in each of the past three years at the RUC stations in Newtownards, Comber and Dundonald from Roman Catholics alleging intimidation on grounds of religion; and if he will make a statement about alleged forcible removal of Roman Catholics from these three areas.

**Sir John Wheeler** *[holding reply 28 June 1993]:* There were four complaints of this nature received at the above-named police stations in each of the years 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Such complaints included reports of criminal conduct, including criminal damage, and allegations of sectarian behaviour such as abusive or threatening telephone calls at home or at place of work. In six of the 12 cases families are known to have moved from their homes. The Government strongly condemn all acts of intimidation and the Royal Ulster Constabulary will continue to take action against those involved in criminal behaviour.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Cyprus

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Cyprus regarding the political and social arrangements for the forthcoming Commonwealth conference to take place in Cyprus later this year; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** President Clerides called on my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister in March and reassured him that the arrangements for the forthcoming commonwealth heads of government meeting in Cyprus later this year were progressing well.

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much the market-testing programme has cost his Department since November 1992.

**Mr. Goodlad:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 7 June at column *93*.

### United Nations Security Council Reform

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *87*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the United Kingdom submission to the United Nations Secretary General on United Nations Security Council reform.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Yes, I am arranging for our reply to the United Nations Secretary-General's invitation to submit written comments on a possible review of membership of the Security Council to be placed in the Library of the House.

### Regional and Minority Languages

**Mr. Hume:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to sign the European charter on regional and minority languages; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The implications of the European charter on regional or minority languages are still being considered by Government Departments with an interest in its provisions. The United Kingdom decision on ratification will take into account the situation of each of the indigenous minority languages spoken within the United Kingdom. We have not yet come to a final view on whether to sign the convention which opened for signature in November of last year.

### Bosnia

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to which countries the 400 ex-detainees, currently in the Karlovac transit camp, have been allocated; what main criteria are taken into account when country allocation is determined; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** There are currently 303 ex-detainees in Karlovac awaiting transfer. Twenty-two

countries have offered places for ex-detainees under the joint United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees-International Committee of the Red Cross scheme. Except for those with close links—eg family ties—with a particular country, UNHCR allocates places according to availability.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 15 June, *Official Report*, column *493*, how many of the 2,400 detainees in Bosnia have now been visited by the International Committee of the Red Cross; how many, to date, have been released; how many are expected to be re-settled in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* other EC countries and *(c)* non-EC countries; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The International Committee of the Red Cross has successfully secured the release of approximately 6,840 detainees in Bosnia-Herzegovina and they are visiting a further 3,550 still held in detention. Of the 4,571 ex-detainees who had left Karlovac transit centre by 16 June, 238 went to the United Kingdom, 2,007 to other EC countries and 2,326 to non-EC countries.

### Croatia

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to how many refugees in Croatia are accommodated *(a)* with families, *(b)* in hotels and similar accommodation, *(c)* in transit camps, *(d)* in temporary settlements consisting of pre-fabricated buildings and *(e)* in other types of accommodation; how many of this total, to date, have applied for registration as (i) ex-detainees and (ii) dependents of ex-detainees; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—UNHCR—estimates that there are some 270,000 refugees in Croatia but has no detailed breakdown of how they are accommodated.

Apart from 303 ex-detainees accommodated at Karlovac transit centre, UNHCR is investigating the cases of approximately 2,100 other individuals in Croatia claiming to be ex-detainees or their family members.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultation there has been between Her Majesty's Government and EC Governments and UNHCR on the building of settlements in Croatia to accommodate refugees transferred from hotels on the Croatian coast; whether such transfers are made on a voluntary basis; what rights refugees have to refuse such transfers; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The Government of Croatia have informed the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees of their intention to remove some refugees currently in hotels to other state-run accommodation. Overall, UNHCR is funding some 70 shelter projects in Croatia with a planned capacity for approximately 44,000 people. UNHCR plans to monitor any non-voluntary transfers of refugees from their present accommodation.

### Slovenia

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent Slovenia's borders are open to refugees; what is the current estimate of refugees in Slovenia; and what representations have been made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to Her Majesty's Government and EC Governments for additional funds and other assistance to support refugees in Slovenia.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—UNHCR—estimates that there are approximately 60,000 refugees in Slovenia. UNHCR's 1993 appeal includes provision for refugees in Slovenia. The United Kingdom has given £27·8 million in cash and kind to UNHCR since the beginning of 1993. Slovenia is not accepting new arrivals.

### Mr. Vuk Draskovic

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will urge the appropriate authorities in Belgrade to allow the British and other EC ambassadors in Belgrade to be granted access to meet Mr. Vuk Draskovic, the Leader of the Serbian Opposition, and his wife; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has urged President Milosevic to release Mr. and Mrs. Draskovic and to ensure meanwhile that they have access to proper medical treatment and visitors. We have supported the efforts of the European Comunity presidency to secure agreement for visits by EC representatives. We and our European partners will continue to press the authorities in Belgrade on this issue.

### India

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will call upon the Indian Government to publish information about *(a)* the names and *(b)* the number of persons detained in India without trial and details of the capacity of prisons in *(a)* the Punjab, *(b)* Kashmir and *(c)* Assam with details of payments made in each of the last five years to members of the security forces in respect of causing the death of a person deemed a militant and/or a terrorist; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The Government of India regularly publish information regarding the number of detentions under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, most recently in response to a parliamentary question in the Indian upper house on 10 March. Names of detainees are not released. Details of prisons are available for each state from the inspector general of prisons for individual states. We are aware that rewards have been paid to members of the public and police, but not the Army, for the capture of named individuals. We are not aware that there is a general system of payments for the capture of alleged militants or terrorists.

### Falkland Islands

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the applicability of EC rules to abattoirs in the Falkland Islands and its consequences for the supplying of meat for consumption by British service men.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The Falkland Islands are not within the territorial scope of the European Community

treaties, and EC hygiene rules do not apply there. It is Ministry of Defence policy to supply service personnel overseas with food of an equivalent standard to that which they could expect in the United Kingdom. Where it is possible to purchase food locally, the Ministry of Defence will do so, provided that this food offers quality, a varied diet and value for money. Where it is not possible to meet these requirements locally, food is supplied from other sources.

### Nigeria

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Nigeria following General Babangida's decision to overrule the results of the presidential election on 12 June.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The Nigerian High Commissioner was summoned to meet my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development on 24 June. She informed him that we deplored the decision to annul the 12 June presidential election, and had decided to take a number of immediate measures to curtail military co-operation and the issue of visas to the Nigerian armed forces, and to review our aid programme. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary also met the Nigerian Secretary for External Affairs on 30 June. He informed him of the United Kingdom's current policy in respect of Nigeria and restated the great importance we attach to the commitment to return to democratic civilian rule by 27 August.

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on United Kingdom policy in respect of Nigeria following the presidential election of 12 June and subsequent developments.

**Mr. Hurd:** We greatly regret that the outcome of the democratic elections on 12 June has not been respected and that conditions have been imposed which would bar candidates who ran in those elections from participating in a fresh electoral system. We note that President Babangida has promised that the return to democratic civilian rule will take place on 27 August.

The United Kingdom will not lift the measures announced on 24 June until a democratic civilian regime has been installed and is working unhindered. Meanwhile no new aid commitments for Nigeria will be made.

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contacts he has had, or proposes to have, with Moshood Abiola following his success in the presidential election in Nigeria on 12 June.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The British high commissioner in Nigeria, and his staff, have been in contact with a wide range of political leaders in Nigeria, including Chief Abiola.

**Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Nigerian military regime about the annulment of the presidential elections; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd** *[holding answer 28 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in the House on 24 June at column 442, and a statement issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 24 June, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. The Nigerian high commissioner in London was summoned to meet my right hon. and noble Friend, the Minister for Overseas Development, on 24 June.

Baroness Chalker made it clear that we deplored the suspension of the programme for a transition to civilian rule and that we had, as a consequence, decided to announce a series of measures curtailing our bilateral co-operation, particularly in the defence field.

### Video Equipment

**Mr Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy that video equipment in the United Kingdom should not be rendered obsolete by any agreement with the United States regarding specifications for such equipment; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I have been asked to reply.

In areas of rapid technological development, such as video products, existing technology is always being superseded by more advanced technology as a matter of course. The Government have no ability to stop technological progress, including video equipment, even if they wanted to.

Although world-wide standardisation of video systems would bring the benefits of a larger, more competitive marketplace, the United Kingdom Government have no plans at present for any bilateral agreement with the United States on specifications for such equipment.

## TRANSPORT

### Traffic Volume

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the traffic growth forecasts for England used by his Department for the periods 1963 to 1970, 1970 to 1980 and 1980 to 1990; and if he will give the actual traffic growth for those periods.

**Mr. Key:** Since it started to use national forecasts of road traffic in about 1970 the Department of Transport has used or made six principal forecasts. They are given for selected years in the table in index number form, with a base of 1968 = 100 for the earliest forecast, and with a base of the index of actual traffic compared with 1968 for the subsequent forecasts. The table also includes an index of actual traffic growth since 1968.

The index numbers are of the total of all motor vehicle traffic except two-wheelers, for Great Britain. After 1975 the forecasts were made in a range of low and high growth, and the two figures for each year reflect that range.

| Year | Actual traffic | Forecasts | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1968 base | 1971 base | 1975 base | 1978 base | 1982 base | 1988 base |
| 1968 | 100 | 100 | — | — | — | — | — |
| 1970 | 107 | 112 | — | — | — | — | — |
| 1971 | 114 | — | 114 | — | — | — | — |
| 1975 | 124 | 141 | 133 | 124 | — | — | — |
| 1978 | 137 | — | — | — | 137 | — | — |
| 1980 | 144 | 173 | 160 | 145–160 | — | — | — |
| 1982 | 150 | — | — | — | — | 150 | — |
| 1985 | 165 | 194 | 179 | 165–186 | 147–162 | 159–165 | — |
| 1988 | 202 | — | — | — | — | — | 202 |
| 1990 | 221 | 212 | 198 | 184–208 | 158–182 | 171–189 | 212–220 |
| 1992 | [1]218 | 218 | 203 | 190–215 | 160–189 | 174–197 | 222–236 |

[1] Provisional.

### Taxis (Smoking)

**Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to introduce legislation to allow drivers of licensed hackney carriages to ban smoking in their cabs; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** As soon as a suitable legislative opportunity presents itself, the Government will bring forward legislation allowing taxi operators to ban smoking in their cabs.

### Stationary Traffic (Engines)

**Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make recommendations in the highway code and other publications issued by his Department concerning the environmental, social and financial benefits of switching off engines while in stationary traffic.

**Mr. Key:** Guidance has already been given in leaflets issued by the Department of Transport on motoring and the environment and by the Department of the Environment on how to help prevent smog. I have placed copies in the Library.

### British Rail (Safety Plan)

**Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received British Rail's 1993 safety plan; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. MacGregor:** The British Railways Board has now submitted its 1993 safety plan. Copies have been placed in the Library.

I welcome the board's plan, which sets out BR's strategic safety objectives for 1993, reviews safety performance in 1992, and describes the board's safety policy and organisation. The plan demonstrates the wide range of initiatives underway, and the considerable resources BR is devoting to maintaining and improving its good safety record.

The plan should both reassure rail users and give BR staff confidence that safety remains a high priority. The board has the full support of the Government in keeping up the momentum on safety as our privatisation proposals are implemented.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### No. 1 Parliament Street

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what is the present programme of preventative maintenance that is now being followed at No. 1 Parliament street; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ray Powell:** In common with other buildings on the parliamentary estate the No. 1 Parliament street building is covered by service contracts for the care and planned maintenance of its mechanical and electrical plant. Building and engineering inspections of the building are carried out on a regular basis by staff of the parliamentary works directorate.

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission (1) what was the total cost of the refurbishment of No. 1 Parliament street;

(2) if he will give a breakdown of the amounts of money which were paid to the main contractors or sub-contractors who were involved in the refurbishment and modernisation work at No. 1 Parliament street.

**Mr. Beith:** The total cost of the new parliamentary building phase I was some £45 million. This includes not only No. 1 Parliament street but also Nos. 2 and 3 Parliament street, No. 1 Derby gate and No. 2 Canon row.

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee, pursuant to his answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, column *186*, what obligations Fairclough still has for the work undertaken as one of the principal contractors involved in the refurbishment work at No. 1, Parliament street; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ray Powell:** None, apart from the work on the circle lock doors and the cooling system mentioned in my answer on 23 June at column *186;* and any residual liability for latent defects in the building.

### Craftspeople

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission if he will list the building craftsmen and craftswomen who are permanently employed within the House of Commons.

**Mr. Beith:** The following building craftsmen are permanently employed: three carpenters, three plumbers, two painters, a locksmith and a glazier.

In addition, the number of contractors' employees fluctuates according to the workload.

### Parliamentary Questions

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the proportion of questions tabled for written reply that Ministers of Her Majesty's Government have declined to answer substantively over the past year on the grounds that to do so would incur a disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Newton:** The table shows the number of entries in the POLIS database for answers in the current session—up to and including 7 May 1993—for each Department, with the number of entries in each case including the word "disporportionate". References are also given to recent answers to questions from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) relating to the number of questions which were not given substantive answers on the ground of disproportionate cost. The figures, if any, given in those answers may not have been compiled on the same principles as the POLIS database.

*Session 1992-93*
*(up to and including 7 May 1993)*

| *Department* | *Number of POLIS entries for written answers* | *Number of POLIS entries including reference to "disproportionate"* | *Answer to Mr. G. Allen* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Food | 1,713 | 10 | 17 May 1993 c. 25w |
| Defence | 2,381 | 50 | 17 May 1993 c. 85-6w |
| Education | 1,654 | 6 | 17 May 1993 c. 23-4w |
| Employment | 1,697 | 38 | 18 May 1993 c. 132-3w |
| Environment | 3,701 | 17 | 17 May 1993 c. 61w |
| Foreign and Commonwealth Office (including Overseas Development Administration) | 2,625 | 20 | 17 May 1993 c. 48w |
| Health | 3,849 | 26 | 17 May 1993 c. 30-1w |
| Home Office | 3,095 | 45 | 17 May 1993 c. 64-5w |
| National Heritage | 666 | 0 | 18 May 1993 c. 125-6w |
| Northern Ireland | 1,237 | 33 | ——— |
| Prime Minister | 949 | 11 | 17 May 1993 c. 34w |
| Scotland | 2,241 | 9 | ——— |
| Social Security | 2,081 | 79 | 17 May 1993 c. 79-80w |
| Trade and Industry | 3,151 | 19 | 21 May 1993 c. 346w |
| Transport | 2,609 | 18 | 17 May 1993 c. 5w |
| Treasury | 2,044 | 13 | 17 May 1993 c. 14w |
| Wales | 2,919 | 20 | ——— |
| Attorney-General | 172 | 2 | ——— |
| Lord Chancellor | 627 | 22 | ——— |
| Duchy of Lancaster | 403 | 4 | ——— |
| Lord President of the Council | 99 (as leader) | 4 | ——— |
| | 32 | 0 | ——— |

## PRIME MINISTER

### Commonwealth Conference

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with the Government of Cyprus regarding the political and social arrangements for the forthcoming commonwealth conference to take place in Cyprus later this year; and if he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** I discussed arrangements for the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting with President Clerides, when he called on me in March. I understand that the planning for these arrangements is progressing well.

### Parliamentary Private Secretaries

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 24 November, Official Report, column *577-8*, if he will publish the current list of parliamentary private secretaries and the Ministers to whom each is attached.

**The Prime Minister:** The current list of parliamentary private secretaries and the Ministers to whom each is attached is as follows:

| *Ministry* | *Parliamentary Private Secretary* |
|---|---|
| *Agriculture, Fisheries and Food* | |
| Minister for Agriculture (Mrs. G. Shephard) | Mr. J. Brazier |
| Minister of State (Mr. M. Jack) | Miss E. Nicholson |
| *Defence* | |
| Secretary of State (Mr. M. Rifkind) | Mr. H. Bellingham |
| Minister of State (Mr. J. Aitken) | Mr. S. Milligan |
| Minister of State (Mr. J. Hanley) | Mr. R. Gale |
| *Duchy of Lancaster* | |
| Chancellor of the Duchy (Mr. W. Waldegrave) | Mr. I. Taylor |
| *Education* | |
| Secretary of State (Mr. J. Patten) | Mr. M. Carrington |
| Minister of State (Lady Blatch) | Mr. D. Evennett |

| Ministry | Parliamentary Private Secretary |
|---|---|
| *Employment* | |
| Secretary of State (Mr. D. Hunt) | Mr. N. Evans |
| Minister of State (Mr. M. Forsyth) | Mrs. A. Browning |
| *Environment* | |
| Secretary of State (Mr. J. Gummer) | Mr. J. Paice |
| Minister of State (Sir G. Young) | Dr. C. Goodson-Wickes |
| Minister of State (Mr. D. Curry) | Mr. D. French |
| Minister of State (Mr. T. Yeo) | Mr. M. Trend |
| *Foreign Office* | |
| Secretary of State (Mr. D. Hurd) | Mr. D. Martin |
| Minister of State (Mr. A. Goodlad) | Mr. G. Kynoch |
| Minister of State (Mr. D. Hogg) | Mr. H. Booth |
| Minister of State (Mr. D. Heathcoat-Amory) | Mr. R. Richards |
| Minister for Overseas Development (Lady Chalker) | Mr. M. Robinson |
| PUSS (Mr. M. Lennox-Boyd) | Mr. M. Robinson |
| *Health* | |
| Secretary of State (Mrs. V. Bottomley) | Mr. K. Mans |
| Minister of State (Dr. B. Mawhinney) | Mr. P. Thompson |
| *Home Office* | |
| Secretary of State (Mr. M. Howard) | Dr. L. Fox |
| Minister of State (Mr. P. Lloyd) | Mr. D. Wilshire |
| Minister of State (Mr. D. MacLean) | Mr. J. Arnold |
| *Law Officers Department* | |
| Attorney-General (Sir N. Lyell) | Mr. T. Devlin |
| Solicitor-General (Sir D. Spencer) | Mr. G. Streeter |
| *National Heritage* | |
| Secretary of State (Mr. P. Brooke) | Mr. A. Steen |
| *Northern Ireland Office* | |
| Secretary of State (Sir P. Mayhew) | Mr. M. Moss |
| Minister of State (Mr. R. Atkins) | Mr. J. Hayes |
| Minister of State (Sir J. Wheeler) | Mr. J. Evans |
| *Prime Minister* | Mr. G. Bright |
| *Privy Council Office* | |
| Lord President and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. T. Newton) | Mr. J. Marshall |
| *Scottish Office* | |
| Secretary of State (Mr. I. Lang) | Mr. S. Coombs |
| *Social Security* | |
| Secretary of State (Mr. P. Lilley) | Mr. P. Merchant |
| Minister of State (Mr. N. Scott) | Mr. M. Bates |
| PUSS (Mr. A. Burt/Lord Henley/Mr. W. Hague) | Mr. I. Bruce |
| *Trade and Industry* | |
| President of the Board (Mr. M. Heseltine) | Mr. R. Ottaway |
| Minister of State (Mr. T. Sainsbury) | Mrs. A. Knight |
| Minister of State (Mr. R. Needham) | Mr. A. Rowe |
| Minister of State (Mr. T. Eggar) | Mr. S. Burns |
| *Transport* | |
| Secretary of State (Mr. J. MacGregor) | Mr. G. Riddick |
| Minister of State (Mr. R. Freeman) | Mr. B. Wells |
| *Treasury* | |
| Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. K. Clarke) | Mr. P. Oppenheim |
| Chief Secretary (Mr. M. Portillo) | Mr. D. Amess |
| Financial Secretary (Mr. S. Dorrell) | Mr. G. Brandreth |
| Paymaster General (Sir J. Cope) | Dr. I. Twinn |
| *Welsh Office* | |
| Secretary of State (Mr. J. Redwood) | Mr. D. Evans |
| Minister of State (Sir W. Roberts) | Mr. D. Tredinnick |

### Engagements

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 July.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 July.

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

### Iraq and Somalia

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has had from UNICEF on the effects on children and infants of United Nations high-tech military action in Iraq and Somalia.

**The Prime Minister:** UNICEF has not made such representations to me. We remain in close touch with United Nations agencies providing humanitarian relief to Iraq and Somalia.

### Legislative Drafting

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister what percentage of Government legislative drafting is carried out by lawyers not permanently employed as parliamentary counsel; and what plans there are for change.

**The Prime Minister:** In terms of primary legislation, all Government Bills, except those relating exclusively to Scotland and the Appropriation and Consolidated Fund Bills, are drafted by members of the parliamentary counsel office. From time to time some consolidation Bills have been drafted by lawyers who have been members of the parliamentary counsel office but who are no longer employed in the public service. The proportion of work undertaken in this way is not significant and it is not practicable to specify it as a percentage of the total drafting work undertaken by the members of the parliamentary counsel office. There are no plans for change at the moment.

### "Questions of Procedure for Ministers"

**Mr. Denham:** To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions in the last 12 months he has been consulted by the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), under paragraphs 126 and 127 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers"; on what subjects; and on what dates.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* Consultations between the Prime Minister and other Ministers are private.

### Morgan Rogerson (Car Loan)

**Mr. Denham:** To ask the Prime Minister on which date he was first aware that the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) had received the loan of a car from the Morgan Rogerson company or from individuals associated with that company.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* My hon. Friend issued a statement to the press explaining the circumstances in which a temporary loan of a car to his wife had been made. He informed my office at the time he issued the statement.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Environmentally Sustainable Projects

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) of 21 June, *Official Report*, columns *24-5*, how often the Overseas Development Administration updates its "Manual of Environmental Appraisal"; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the manual.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The manual was first produced in March 1989. A revised version was produced in April 1992 and a copy placed in the Library of the House. The contents of the manual are kept continually under review.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Gross Domestic Product

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total gross domestic product at 1993 prices terms in each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Nelson:** Figures for gross domestic product are not available at 1993 prices. Figures at constant 1985 prices are available on the Central Statistical Office database which can be accessed by the House Library.

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much the market-testing programme has cost his Department since November 1992.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Since November 1992, an estimated £100,000 has been spent on market testing. This includes the cost of support for the in-house teams and other consultancy work, but not the costs of the in-house teams themselves. The majority of this expenditure is in respect of the 1992-93 market-testing programme which covers some £4 million of in-house provided services.

### Private Medical Insurance (Tax Relief)

**Ms Harman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an estimate of the expected cost to the Exchequer in 1993-94 of providing tax relief on private medical insurance.

**Mr. Dorrell:** It is estimated that the cost in 1993-94 will be about £70 million.

### Inheritance Tax

**Ms Harman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an estimate of the cost to the Exchequer in 1992-93 of granting relief against inheritance tax for chattels declared to be open to inspection by members of the public.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The estimated cost to the Exchequer of granting conditional exemption from inheritance tax for

chattels in 1992-93 is about £40 million. There are sometimes significant fluctuations in the estimated cost from year to year. Most of the chattels are on dislay in historic houses open to the public or on loan to museums or galleries.

**Ms Harman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an estimate of the cost to the Exchequer in 1992-93 of granting relief against inheritance tax for *(a)* business property within section 104 of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984 and *(b)* agricultural property within section 116 of the same Act.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The estimated cost of granting relief against inheritance tax for transfers in 1992-93 are *(a)* for business property within section 104 of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984, £45 million in a full year and *(b)* for agricultural property within section 116 of the same Act, £65 million in a full year.

**Ms Harman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will provide an estimate for *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* 1992-93 of the number of estates on which no inheritance tax was paid in each of the brackets (i) £250,000 to £500,000, (ii) £500,000 to £1 million, (iii) £1 million to £2 million and (iv) over £2 million.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Estimates of the numbers of estates applying for grants of representation and of estates paying no inheritance tax, where death occurred in the financial years 1988-89 and 1989-90, for the two most recent years available are given in the table.

| *Range of Net Estate* | *1988-89 Number of estates applying for grants of representation* | *1988-89 Number of estates not taxed* | *1989-90 Number of estates applying for grants of representation* | *1989-90 Number of estates not taxed* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| £250,000 and under £500,000 | 7,051 | 2,795 | 7,992 | 3,100 |
| £500,000 and under £1,000,000 | 1,728 | 501 | 2,322 | 694 |
| £1,000,000 and under £2,000,000 | 420 | 110 | 628 | 182 |
| £2,000,000 and over | 153 | 46 | 231 | 63 |

### British Rail (Capital Allowances)

**Ms Harman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an estimate of the value of unused capital allowances held by British Rail and its associated companies as at 31 March or the most recent date for which information is available.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Providing the figure requested would be a breach of taxpayers' confidentiality.

### Share Option Schemes

**Ms Harman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an estimate of the expected cost to the Exchequer in 1993-94 of tax relief on *(a)* approved discretionary share option schemes and *(b)* approved all-employee savings-related share option schemes.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Provisional estimates are as follows:

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| | *1993-94* |
| Approved discretionary share option schemes | 55 |
| Approved savings-related share option schemes | 95 |

### Customs and Excise

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to create new executive units in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

**Sir John Cope:** I am pleased to announce that the Customs and Excise internal management consultancy service has today become a next steps executive unit with the title "Management and Consultancy Services". Copies of the framework document describing its responsibilities and accountability are being placed in the House of Commons Library.

### Income Tax

**Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) of 5 March, *Official Report*, column *336*, on the introduction of an upper limit for income tax allowances and reliefs for the years 1992-93 and 1993-94.

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 29 June 1993]:* Estimates of the direct revenue yield in a full year at 1992-93 and 1993-94 levels of income from imposition of the specified limits for allowances and reliefs within the tax system for these years are given in the table. These are based on information compiled from a number of statistical surveys and are subject to more than the usual margin of uncertainty, and incorporate the conventional assumption of no changes in mortgage interest rates in 1993-94.

| *Limit for total allowances and reliefs* | *1992-93 Yield £ million* | *1993-94 Yield £ million* |
|---|---|---|
| £10,000 | 690 | 650 |
| £15,000 | 380 | 380 |
| £20,000 | 270 | 280 |

After restriction of the relevant allowances and reliefs to the basic rate the estimated further yield from imposing the specified limits would be as follows:

| After restriction to the basic rate of | Full year yield at 1992-93 income levels, £ million Limit for total allowances and reliefs £10,000 | £15,000 | £20,000 | Full year yield at 1993-94 income levels, £ million Limit for total allowances and reliefs £10,000 | £15,000 | £20,000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) all personal allowances except the basic personal allowance | 610 | 360 | 270 | 590 | 360 | 270 |
| (b) relief for personal pension contribution | 560 | 310 | 230 | 530 | 310 | 240 |
| (c) relief for employees' contribution to occupational pension schemes | 630 | 370 | 270 | 610 | 370 | 280 |
| (d) allowances and reliefs in (a) and (b) | 510 | 300 | 220 | 490 | 300 | 230 |
| (e) allowances and reliefs in (a) and (c) | 580 | 350 | 260 | 570 | 360 | 270 |
| (f) reliefs in (b) and (c) | 500 | 300 | 220 | 490 | 300 | 230 |
| (g) allowances and reliefs in (a), (b) and (c) | 480 | 290 | 220 | 470 | 300 | 230 |

The number of people with total allowances and reliefs in excess of these limits is as follows:

| Limit £ | 1992-93 thousands | 1993-94 thousands |
|---|---|---|
| 10,000 | 610 | 420 |
| 15,000 | 85 | 85 |
| 20,000 | 45 | 45 |

The estimates of revenue yield do not take account of any behavioural effects which might result from the introduction of the changes.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### EC Trade Policy

**Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to establish the right to consumer organisations to be involved in EC trade and anti-dumping policy.

**Mr. Needham:** European Community trade policy, including policy on anti-dumping questions, is settled by the Council of Ministers, and implemented by the Commission in consultation with the member states. The Government take careful account of the views of consumer organisations in formulating the United Kingdom position on trade policy and anti-dumping questions.

**Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to ensure detailed reports of discussions and votes concerning trade policy at Council of Ministers meetings are made available to the House.

**Mr. Needham:** A ministerial statement is made to the House after each Council of Ministers meeting. These reports on the meetings will normally include whether any formal votes were taken, and, if so, voting details will be provided.

**Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many Commission proposals made under EC trade policy instruments put to the Council of Ministers in the last three years have included an assessment of the impact on consumers and the economy; and what proportion of such Commission proposals this represents.

**Mr. Needham:** During the period January 1990 to June 1993, the number of Commission proposals made to the Council under the relevant articles of the treaties were as follows:

| Treaty Base | Number of proposals |
|---|---|
| Article 113 | 161 |
| A. 113 (Anti-dumping) | 84 |
| A. 113 (Countervailing) | 1 |
| Article 28 | 47 |
| Article 100a | 12 |
| Other | 25 |
| Total | 330 |

Proposals with a treaty base of 100a have been included where it is judged that the proposal would have had a significant impact on external trade policy. The category "other" includes proposals with an unspecified treaty base, and European Coal and Steel Community proposals. Proposals amending existing proposals have been counted separately.

Where the proposal is for an anti-dumping action, both consumer and economic factors are taken into account by the Commission according to the circumstances of the case. For the other proposals, an assessment of the impact on consumers and the economy has not been carried out.

### Asil Nadir

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the companies registered in Great Britain of which Mr. Asil Nadir is a director; and which of these companies have offices in northern Cyprus.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** This is a matter for Companies House. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from David Durham to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 29 June 1993:*

As this matter concerns information held at Companies House, I have been asked to reply to you.

According to the records at Companies House, Mr. Nadir does not currently hold any directorships of companies registered in Great Britain.

### Consumer Law

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, what representations have been made by his Department to the European Commission concerning the draft directives on consumer law.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The Government of the United Kingdom play a full part in the deliberations of the Council on all draft directives, including those concerning consumer law.

### Small Firms

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many small firms have started business in the last year and over the past decade.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Estimates of numbers of small business start-ups in Great Britain are produced by Barclays Bank. Estimates for the past five years are given in the table. Figures for earlier years are not available.

Estimates of business start-ups produced by Barclays Bank plc:

| Year | Starts |
|---|---|
| 1988 | 452,000 |
| 1989 | 464,000 |
| 1990 | 459,000 |
| 1991 | 484,000 |
| 1992 | 456,000 |

### Konver Programme

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Barrow in Furness (Mr. Hutton) of 14 June, *Official Report*, columns *409-10*, if he will list those interested bodies on the EC Konver programme to which he refers; and when he expects to invite applications for Konver projects.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The interested bodies which my Department will consult will include representatives of the training and enterprise councils and the local enterprise companies, and the local authority associations.

Information for potential applicants, including a closing date for applications, will be made available by the end of July.

### EC Regional Development Fund

**Mr. French:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the south west of England's eligibility for assistance from the European regional development fund.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Eligibility will depend on the revision of the regulations, currently under negotiation in the Council of Ministers.

### Internationally Mobile Investment

**Mr. Evennett:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's performance in attracting internationally mobile investment projects in 1992-93.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** My Department's Invest in Britain Bureau—IBB—announced in its annual report published today that 1992-93 was another successful year for inward investment—and jobs—coming to the United Kingdom.

Between 1 April 1992 and 31 March 1993, the IBB recorded 303 direct investment projects by foreign owned companies in the United Kingdom. Based on information supplied by the companies at the time of their announcements it is estimated that these projects will in due course create 16,718 jobs; in addition, a significant number of jobs were safeguarded.

These results demonstrate how attractive this country continues to be to overseas investors. It is very pleasing that the United Kingdom remains the preferred location in the European Community for inward investors.

The results also provide evidence of the successful partnership the Invest in Britain Bureau has with many public and private sector organisations involved in the promotion of inward investment both at home and abroad.

I am arranging for a copy of the report to be placed in the House of Commons Library.

### Export Finance

**Mr. John Townend:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the remuneration paid to banks under the Export Credits Guarantee Department's fixed rate export finance scheme.

**Mr. Needham:** The British Bankers Association, representing the banking community, and the Government have reached agreement on revised arrangements for remunerating banks providing fixed rate export finance under guarantees given by the Export Credits Guarantee Department. The new agreement, which will last for five years, will come into effect on 5 July. The agreement will provide significant savings for the Government, but the greater part of these will not represent an increased burden on the banks since they will be achieved by mutually advantageous changes in the settlement mechanism which will in particular match the timing of interest payments with the funding arrangements of the banks. This measure has been welcomed by the banks, many of whom were concerned that the previous global arrangements exposed them to mis-matches between remuneration and funding costs at a time of highly volatile commercial interest rates. The Government and the BBA are confident that the new arrangements, which are the result of several months of constructive discussions, will enable banks to continue to provide the financial support our exporters need and they are an excellent example of the way in which banks and the Government can work together in support of the Government's export strategy. The changes will apply also to the Home Shipbuilding credit guarantee scheme.

### Matrix Churchill

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will refer to the Scott inquiry the matter of compensation for those employees of Matrix Churchill who have lost their jobs.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 30 June 1993]:* The hon. Member has written to me about this; I shall be replying to him shortly.

### EC Procurement Directive

**Sir Cranley Onslow:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the adequacy of guidance on the European procurement directive which is available to British industry and commerce.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 30 June 1993]:* The Government have kept both the United States and individual trade associations informed about the European Community public purchasing directives; and

my own Department's guidance booklet on the subject has been distributed to more than 135,000 companies and individuals. While there have been surveys of the general effectiveness of my Department's single market publicity, there has been no formal assessment specific to the public purchasing directives. The recent appointment to my Department of an export promoter responsible for helping companies win public sector contracts throughout the EC and EFTA should help identify any gaps in the present guidance. The Treasury, which led the United Kingdom negotiation of the directives, is also considering whether there is a need to provide additional general guidance.

### Cable Television

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current number of cable television franchises; how many cable television companies have commenced operations; how many have failed to meet the commencement dates required by their licences; and what action he has taken in cases of failure.

**Mr. McLoughlin** *[holding answer 30 June 1993]:* (a) There are currently 127 broad band cable television franchises; (b) 58 broad band cable franchises have commenced operations; (c) There is no requirement within a licence granted under the Telecommunications Act 1984 for a licensee to adhere to a commencement date. However, licences do contain build obligations by which licensees should build past specified numbers of homes within set periods, and operators' compliance with these obligations is the responsibility of the Director General of Telecommunications; (d) In the first instance, any action taken against operators for failure to comply with their build obligations is a matter for the Director General of Telecommunications.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Labour Statistics

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each standard occupational and industrial classification *(a)* the numbers employed, *(b)* the numbers of unemployed and *(c)* long-term unemployed under the International Labour Organisation definition, where previous occupation or employment fell within each classification for (1) Great Britain and (2) the west midlands region, broken down by gender, at the latest available date.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The available information from the winter 1992-93 labour force survey is given in the tables:

*Great Britain.*
*Persons by economic activity, sex and occupations.*

*thousands*

| SOC (major) | In Employment[2] | | ILO Unemployed | | ILO Unemployed Over 1 Year[4] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Males | Females | Males | Females | Males | Females |
| Total[3] | 13,560 | 11,095 | 1,981 | 939 | 880 | 288 |
| 1 Managers and Administrators | 2,559 | 1,251 | 145 | 54 | 49 | 12 |
| 2 Professional | 1,510 | 950 | 63 | 28 | 17 | — |
| 3 Associate Professional and Technical | 1,126 | 1,080 | 86 | 35 | 33 | — |
| 4 Clerical and Secretarial | 918 | 2,891 | 128 | 179 | 55 | 51 |
| 5 Craft and Related | 2,941 | 357 | 532 | 43 | 227 | 15 |
| 6 Personal and Protective | 822 | 1,641 | 99 | 110 | 42 | 29 |
| 7 Sales | 695 | 1,274 | 87 | 108 | 33 | 30 |
| 8 Plant and Machine Operatives | 1,855 | 482 | 286 | 82 | 126 | 24 |
| 9 Other occupations | 1,033 | 1,116 | 284 | 97 | 135 | 29 |

— Estimate below 10,000.
[2] Includes employees, self employed, those on Government employment and training schemes and unpaid family workers.
[3] Includes those who did not state their occupation.
[4] Duration of the unemployed excludes those who did not state the length of time unemployed.

*Persons by economic activity, sex and industry*

*thousands*

| Industry | In Employment | | ILO Unemployed | | ILO Unemployed Over 1 Year[4] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Males | Females | Males | Females | Males | Females |
| Total[3] | 13,560 | 11,095 | 1,981 | 939 | 880 | 288 |
| 0 Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing | 377 | 118 | 39 | — | 13 | — |
| 1 Energy and Water | 387 | 88 | 35 | — | 14 | — |
| 2 Minerals, Ores etc. | 515 | 180 | 58 | 14 | 25 | — |
| 3 Metal goods, Engineering etc. | 1,900 | 518 | 230 | 54 | 102 | 19 |
| 4 Other Manufacturing | 1,297 | 758 | 203 | 93 | 89 | 27 |
| 5 Construction | 1,445 | 179 | 400 | 13 | 175 | — |
| 6 Distribution, Hotels and Catering | 2,302 | 2,632 | 296 | 233 | 118 | 64 |
| 7 Transport and Communication | 1,191 | 363 | 128 | 30 | 55 | — |
| 8 Banking and Finance | 1,499 | 1,370 | 116 | 78 | 39 | 16 |
| 9 Other services | 2,564 | 4,844 | 204 | 210 | 87 | 61 |

— Estimate below 10,000.
[2] Includes employees, self employed, those on Government employment and training schemes and unpaid family workers.
[3] Includes those who did not state their industry.
[4] Duration of the unemployed excludes those who did not state the length of time unemployed.
*Source:* Labour Force Survey—Winter (December-February) 1992-93 (not seasonally adjusted)

*West Midlands Region.*
*Persons by economic activity, sex and occupations.*

*thousands*

| *SOC (major)* | *In Employment*[2] | | *ILO Unemployed* | | *ILO Unemployed Over 1 Year*[4] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Males* | *Females* | *Males* | *Females* | *Males* | *Females* |
| Total[3] | 1,259 | 993 | 215 | 100 | 104 | 31 |
| 1 Managers and Administrators | 231 | 112 | 11 | — | — | — |
| 2 Professional | 133 | 72 | — | — | — | — |
| 3 Associate Professional and Technical | 84 | 85 | — | — | — | — |
| 4 Clerical and Secretarial | 74 | 244 | 14 | 16 | — | — |
| 5 Craft and Related | 301 | 43 | 65 | — | 30 | — |
| 6 Personal and Protective | 59 | 144 | 11 | 10 | — | — |
| 7 Sales | 62 | 118 | — | 12 | — | — |
| 8 Plant and Machine Operatives | 230 | 60 | 38 | 15 | 21 | — |
| 9 Other occupations | 79 | 112 | 24 | 11 | 10 | — |

— Estimate below 10,000.
[2] Includes employees, self employed, those on Government employment and training schemes and unpaid family workers.
[3] Includes those who did not state their occupation.
[4] Duration of the unemployed excludes those who did not state the length of time unemployed.

*Persons by economic activity, sex and industry.*

*thousands*

| *Industry* | *In Employment*[2] | | *ILO Unemployed* | | *ILO Unemployed Over 1 year*[4] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Males* | *Fmales* | *Males* | *Females* | *Males* | *Females* |
| Total[3] | 1,259 | 993 | 215 | 100 | 104 | 31 |
| 0 Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing | 28 | — | — | — | — | — |
| 1 Energy and Water | 31 | — | — | — | — | — |
| 2 Minerals, Ores etc | 76 | 27 | — | — | — | — |
| 3 Metal goods, Engineering etc | 292 | 80 | 40 | 10 | 17 | — |
| 4 Other Manufacturing | 118 | 65 | 23 | 11 | 13 | — |
| 5 Construction | 130 | 19 | 39 | — | 17 | — |
| 6 Distribution, Hotels and Catering | 213 | 253 | 28 | 21 | 13 | — |
| 7 Transport and Communication | 86 | 30 | — | — | — | — |
| 8 Banking and Finance | 101 | 102 | 11 | — | — | — |
| 9 Other services | 180 | 402 | 19 | 22 | — | — |

— Estimate below 10,000.
[2] Includes employees, self employed, those on Government employment and training schemes and unpaid family workers.
[3] Includes those who did not state their industry.
[4] Duration of the unemployed excludes those who did not state the length of time unemployed.
*Source:* Labour Force Survey—Winter (December-February) 1992-93 (not seasonally adjusted).

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the current level of unemployment in the north-west region.

**Miss Widdecombe:** On the seasonally adjusted basis, the number of unemployed claimants in the north-west region in May was 324,300. This is 10,000 lower than in January this year and the fourth consecutive month that unemployment has fallen.

### Wood-based Products

**Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are employed in merchanting, manufacturing and retailing of wood-based products.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The available information for manufacturing is for the manufacture of timber and wooden furniture. In April 1993, the number of employees in employment in this industry in Great Britain stood at 179,000. Merchanting and retailing of wood based products are included within wholesale and retail distribution and cannot be separately identified.

### Work Injuries

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to introduce legislation to ensure that employers make adequate payments to those who are injured at work.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969 already requires employers to take out insurance to cover claims for compensation from employees who are injured as a result of their employer's negligence. We have no plans to extend this legislation.

## SCOTLAND

### Industrial Water Disconnections

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by year for the past five years, and by each water authority, the number of industrial water disconnections made.

**Sir Hector Monro:** This information is not held centrally.

### Community Forests

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration is being given to the future of community forests in the work of the interdepartmental review group on the Forestry Commission.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* One of the tasks of the forestry review group, announced by my right hon. Friend on 30 March 1993, is to make proposals for changes which would improve the effectiveness of the delivery of the Government's forestry policy objectives, including community forests.

### Drug Addicts

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of drug addicts notified in each year since 1980.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 24 June 1993]:* Information on the number of drug addicts notified to the Home Office from Scotland since 1982 is published in "Statistics of drug addicts notified to the Home Office, United Kingdom, 1992—Area tables", a copy of which is in the Library. Details for 1980 and 1981 are contained in the corresponding publications for 1990 and 1991.

### Pine Beauty Caterpillars

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names and areas of the forests which have been sprayed against infestation with pine beauty moth caterpillars in each of the last 10 years; which areas have had to be sprayed more than once; and what areas of forest have been destroyed by this insect.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 30 June 1993]:* The forests that have been treated against pine beauty moth in the past 10 years are listed in the table; full information for 1993 is not yet available. Lodgepole pine was the only species of tree infested, and there have been no instances of the pine being attacked by the moth where it has been planted in mixture with other species.

Parts of North Dalchork, South Dalchork, Inveroykel, Truderscaig and Rimsdale have been sprayed more than once, as shown in the table.

About 750 hectares of woodland have been killed by the pest over the period, of which about 600 hectares were on the isle of Lewis.

| *Woodland* | *Area (ha)* |
|---|---|
| *1984* | 0 |
| *1985* | |
| Strathrannoch | 132 |
| Garbat | 707 |
| North Dalchork | 2,264 |
| Inveroykel | 481 |
| Truderscaig | 784 |
| Badenoch | 66 |
| Achentoul Estate | 252 |
| Ben Armine Estate | 98 |
| *1986* | |
| Creag Dubh | 27 |
| Badenoch | 39 |
| Braemore | 50 |
| South Dalchork | 269 |
| Truderscaig | 447 |
| Achentoul | 196 |
| Ben Armine | 98 |
| Strath Rannoch | 34 |
| Inveroykel | 570 |
| North Dalchork | 338 |
| Creag Dubh | 20 |
| Fiag | 45 |
| Strath Cuilleanach | 93 |
| Suisgill | 320 |
| Fiag | 45 |
| North Dalchork | 12 |
| Strathrannoch | 155 |
| *1987* | |
| Braemore | 180 |
| Caplich | 122 |
| Dalnessie | 27 |
| Rimsdale | 448 |
| South Dalchork | 65 |
| Poulary | 473 |
| Inveroykel | 573 |
| Syre | 136 |
| North Dalchork | 130 |
| South Dalchork | 111 |
| *1988* | |
| Copaig | 371 |
| Cnoc a' Moid | 184 |
| Truderscaig | 229 |
| *1989* | 0 |
| *1990* | 0 |
| *1991* | |
| Truderscaig | 85 |
| *1992* | |
| Isle of Lewis | 109 |
| *1993* | |
| Isle of Lewis | |
| North Dalchork | |
| Achrugan | |
| Rimsdale | |
| Badenoch | |
| Suisgill | |
| Total area about | 3,500 |

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what chemicals have been used to spray forestry plantations against infestation with pine beauty moth caterpillars; what studies have been made of the effects of these chemicals on birds; and with what results.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 30 June 1993]:* Two chemicals have been used: Fenitrothion and Dimilin. A biological control agent, Nuclear Polyhedrosis Virus, which is specific to the pine beauty moth, has also been used.

Fenitrothion is an organophosphate insecticide which affects arthropods. Dimilin prevents arthropods from moulting successfully between different development stages; it has no effect on other organisms, including birds. Both chemicals were comprehensively tested by the manufacturers for their effects on other wildlife, including birds, before they were approved for use by the pesticides safety directorate.

Futher studies on the possible effects of Fenitrothion on birds were carried out by staff of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These

studies concluded that there was no evidence that use of the chemical against pine beauty moth caterpillars had caused any reduction in the numbers of the common breeding birds in pine plantations in Scotland, nor had there been any statistically significant changes in the numbers of birds in the area immediately after spraying.

### Common Land

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many acres of common land in England and Wales are owned by the Forest Commission.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 30 June 1993]:* This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Lodgepole Pine

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what areas have been planted with Lodgepole pine *(a)* by the Forestry Commission itself in each of the last 10 years and *(b)* by private owners with grant aid from the Commission over the same period.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 30 June 1993]:* The areas planted with Lodgepole pine by the Forestry Commission are given in the table. Lodgepole pine comprises about half the trees on the areas shown as planted in mixture. Details of areas planted with Lodgepole pine by private owners are not available.

*Areas planted by the Forestry Commission with Lodgepole Pine*

| *Year* | *Lodgepole pine planted alone (hectares)* | *Lodgepole pine planted in mixture (hectares)* |
|---|---|---|
| 1984 | 390 | 1 550 |
| 1985 | 170 | 1 350 |
| 1986 | 200 | 1 340 |
| 1987 | 110 | 1 770 |
| 1988 | 130 | 1 600 |
| 1989 | 100 | 920 |
| 1990 | 80 | 1 040 |
| 1991 | 30 | 1 150 |
| 1992 | 30 | 800 |
| 1993 | 30 | 400 |

### Forestry Commission

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) who decided what options the Forestry Commission review group is considering; and how it was decided which options *(a)* should and *(b)* should not be considered;

(2) if he will list the options currently being considered by the Forestry Commission review group.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 30 June 1993]:* The remit of the forestry review group is to review the effectiveness of the current incentives for forestry investment, in accordance with the manifesto commitment, and options for the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands, and to make proposals for changes which would improve the effectiveness of the delivery of the Government's forestry policy objectives, having regard to the Government's other economic and environmental policies.

The range of options examined is for the group to determine, within this remit, and Ministers do not expect to be informed about specific options until the group delivers its final report.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Serious Fraud Office

**Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on his correspondence with the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) relating to the Serious Fraud Office.

**The Attorney-General:** Further to my statement, these documents are being published today under the Parliamentary Papers Act 1840 pursuant to a motion of the House. They include letters and meeting notes together with material enclosed with those letters or left with me at meetings. One small deletion falling outside the two categories which I explained to the House yesterday would have to be edited has been made to a meeting note. The reason is the need to avoid prejudicing any criminal proceedings flowing from an investigation unrelated to the Polly Peck case. In addition I have omitted transcripts of a hearing at the Central Criminal Court left with me by Mr. Mates.

Whilst the matters covered in those transcripts do not fall within either of the categories referred to by me yesterday, the transcripts relate to proceedings in chambers and thus should not be published without the leave of the judge.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Market Testing

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to market test Government legal services or the office of Parliamentary Counsel; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I have no plans to market test the office of the parliamentary counsel. My Department is not responsible for other parts of the Government legal service.

## HEALTH

### Children's Drinks (Sugar)

**Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she proposes to take over the sale of sugar-rich drinks for babies and toddlers in connection with the threat to the dental health of very young children; and if she will make a statement.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** It is not the Department's policy to intervene in the sale of such drinks unless a specific false health claim is being made.

### Quarry House

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the estimated costs for the relocation expenses of her Department's move to Quarry house.

**Mr. Sackville:** The estimated costs of relocation expenses for the move to Leeds are £13·3 million.

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of people provided with relocation expenses for the move to Quarry house.

**Mr. Sackville:** A total of 438 people working for the Department have received relocation expenses. A further 75 staff unwilling to relocate, but willing to work in Leeds for periods of up to three years, may claim the reimbursement of reasonable travel and subsistence expenses.

### Local Government Finance

**Sir Rhodes Boyson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the total amount of expenditure on services within the responsibility of her Department in *(a)* England, *(b)* Greater London and *(c)* the south East, excluding Greater London, for each year from 1982-83 to 1992-93, estimated, distinguishing between current and capital expenditure, though excluding local authority credit approvals/capital allocations.

**Mr. Sackville:** This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Waiting Times

**Ms Estelle Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the waiting time for those suffering with eye conditions to see a consultant ophthalmologist at the Birmingham Heartlands hospital; and what action she will take to reduce delays in treatment for those with eye conditions.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** We are committed to driving down all waiting times. Information on waiting times for first out-patient appointments is not available centrally. In 1993-94 regions have set targets, for time to first out-patient appointment, and will reduce waiting times in specialties where they are unacceptably high.

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make available figures on the number of people waiting for an out-patient appointment in the area served by Doncaster health authority;

(2) what are the target waiting times for each specialty in the Doncaster district health authority.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Information on the number of people waiting for out-patient appointments is not available centrally. As purchasers of health care, all district health authorities will shortly be publishing their first annual report on performance achieved by their providers against each of the patients charter standards.

### Medicines Committees (Advice)

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provisions apply to the licensing authority in respect of the acceptance of the advice of either the Committee on Safety of Medicines or the Medicines Commission where the advice of the two bodies is at variance.

**Mr. Sackville:** The licensing authority must take into account the reports of the Committee on Safety of Medicines and the Medicines Commission on licensing matters referred to these bodies under the procedures laid down in section 21 and 29 of, and schedule 2 to, the Medicines Act 1968, but is not bound to accept the advice of either body.

### Product Licensing

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances an appeal in respect of a product licensing decision may be held before a panel of persons appointed; and on what grounds a licensing authority may reasonably reject the findings of that panel.

**Mr. Sackville:** A product licence holder or an applicant for a product licence, may be heard by a person appointed for the purpose if, after consulting the appropriate Medicines Act committee or the Medicines Commission, the licensing authority proposes to give a decision which is at variance with the advice received.

Licence holders and applicants may also be heard by a person appointed where the licensing authority proposes, on grounds not relating to safety, quality or efficacy, to suspend, revoke or vary an existing product licence or refuse to grant a new product licence, or propose to grant a new licence otherwise than in accordance with the application.

The licensing authority takes into account the report of the person appointed but is not bound to accept the report's findings.

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of the appeal procedures under the Medicines Act 1968 that are available to pharmaceutical companies whose product licences may be suspended or revoked by the United Kingdom Licensing Authority.

**Mr. Sackville:** The procedures are laid down in schedule 2 to the Medicines Act. In summary, they provide for a product licence holder to be heard by, or make written representations to, the appropriate committee. If the committee's findings and advice are adverse to the licence holder, he may be heard by, or make written representations to the Medicines Commission. There is also provision for the matter to heard by a person appointed for the purpose.

When the licensing authority has reached a decision following these procedures, section 107 of the Medicines Act provides that its validity may not be questioned in any legal proceedings, except that it may be challenged in the High Court on the grounds that the decision is not within the powers of the Act, or that relevant requirements of the Act or regulations made under the Act, have not been complied with.

### NHS Job Applicants

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *261*, if she will issue guidance as to the need for the issue of a job description to job applicants prior to the interviewing and appointment of a person to work in the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** While it may be helpful in some instances for a national health service employer to provide more detail about a job on request, we see no need to require this in every case.

### Consultants

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the mean age of consultants appointed in each year since 1979.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The available information is shown in the table.

*Mean age of all consultants appointed each year in England*

| | *Mean age* |
|---|---|
| 1987 | 38 |
| 1988 | 38 |
| 1989 | 38 |
| 1990 | 39 |
| 1991 | 39 |

### Appointments

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the register of business and political interests of non-executive directors of regional health authorities, district health authorities and trust boards.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** There is no such register. Members of health authorities and non-executive directors of national health service trusts, are required to declare pecuniary interests that could influence, or be thought to influence, their judgment of any decisions to be taken by the authority or trust of which they are a member.

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of individuals appointed to non-executive posts in the Doncaster health authority and on the Trent regional health authority.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The names of the non-executive members of Trent regional health authority together with the most recent information on their occupations are shown in the table.

The appointment of the non-executive members of the Doncaster health authority is a matter for Trent regional health authority.

*Trent regional health authority*

| *Non-executive members* | *Occupation* |
|---|---|
| Mr. M. Dessau | Retired manufacturer |
| Dr. K. Edwards | University vice-chancellor |
| Mrs. P. Wildgoose | Former teacher |
| Mr. G. Clemons | Chartered accountant |
| Mr. D. Bertram | Quality management director |

### Students

**Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many students have applied on the grounds of low income for automatic entitlement to free prescriptions and dental and optical treatment in each year since 1990; and what was the cost in each year of the administration of these entitlement claims;

(2) what proportion of full-time students in higher education applied for automatic entitlement of free prescriptions, dental and optical treatment in each year since 1990.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Not all of the requested information is available. In 1992-93, an estimated 153,000 claims from students under the national health service low income scheme resulted in full charge remission for prescriptions and dental treatment, and full help with optical costs. The cost of handling these claims was about £900,000.

### Road Traffic Act 1988

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the cost of administering section 158 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 in relation to the sums received by the NHS under that section.

**Mr. Sackville:** None.

### Mental Illness

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost to the NHS of paying for the provision of acute psychiatric services in the private sector for NHS patients in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Bowis:** Under the national health service reforms, it is the responsibility of health authorities to purchase appropriate care from cost-effective sources including the private sector. The extent to which health authorities commission care from the private sector is not available centrally.

**Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made to improve significantly the health and social functioning of mentally ill people.

**Mr. Bowis:** There has been considerable progress over the years. In line with the three strategies set out in "The Health of the Nation" we have taken a number of steps towards improving information and understanding; developing comprehensive local services; and continuing the development of good practice. This includes funding the first national survey of psychiatric illness; issuing the "Mental Illness Key Area Handbook"; and distributing good practice guidance in the "Care Programme Approach"—a copy of which will be placed in the Library —and much more.

### Casualty Consultants

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the total number of casualty consultants and casualties in the latest available year; and what is her Department's guidance on the number of casualty consultants needed nationally or per casualty.

**Mr. Sackville:** The total number of consultants in accident and emergency—A and E—departments in England at 30 September 1991 was 219 (216·4 whole-time equivalents). During the year ended 31 March 1992 there were 10,978,000 new attendances in A and E departments. Not all A and E departments are led by A and E consultants; some are led by consultants in orthopaedics, others by consultants in surgery.

We do not issue guidance on the number of consultants in A and E needed nationally or per casualty. It is a matter for each employing authority to determine the number of consultants needed in its A and E departments in the light of local needs.

### Nurses

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many vacancies there were for nurses in areas served by *(a)* the Trent regional health authority and *(b)* the Doncaster health authority for the years 1991-92 and 1992-93.

**Mr. Sackville:** This information is not available centrally.

## Drugs

**Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many drugs, normally prescribed and dispensed, cost less than £4·25; and what percentage of the total drugs bill this represents in numbers of drugs and in value.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The available information is shown in the table.

*Individual preparations and prescribed items dispensed by community pharmacists, appliance contractors, dispensing doctors or personally administered by prescribing doctors in England in 1992*

| | *All items* | *Items with a Net Ingredient Cost of less than £4·25* | *Percentage with a Net Ingredient Cost of less than £4·25* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of individual[1] preparations | 16,678 | 5,595 | 34 |
| Number of prescribed items (million) | 425·1 | 241·7 | 57 |
| Total Net Ingredient Cost (£ million) | 2,858 | 427 | 15 |

[1] The information is provided on the basis of individual preparations and not the drug chemical name.

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the total national health service drugs bill for each year since 1982-83, with an estimate for 1993-94.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on 22 March at column *470*, for information from 1982-83 to 1991-92.

The final outturn for 1992-93 is not yet available. The cost of drugs in the hospital and community health services—HCHS—is met from the total HCHS cash limited allocation and a separate estimate for 1993-94 is not available. Main estimate provision of £2,834 million has been made for the family health service drugs bill in the current year.

## Health Authority Guidelines

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines there are governing the availability of information on the activities of regional health authorities and district health authorities.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 11 February at column *765*.

## Heart Disease

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made by *(a)* Trent regional health authority and *(b)* Doncaster health authority towards achieving the targets set by "The Health of the Nation" on coronary heart disease.

**Mr. Sackville:** "The Health of the Nation" is a long term strategy and the national health service management executive is working closely with regional health aurthorities—RHAs—on setting and monitoring robust and achievable "Health of the Nation" targets.

Trent RHA have undertaken a health lifestyles survey which provided baseline data on risk factors in local communities and this will assist in targeting management action. The region has started to address coronary heart disease by issuing guidance identifying the potential for investment in improving health and this will help to target resources.

Health promotion programmes in Doncaster in 1993-94 will concentrate on the risk factors of cigarette smoking, nutrition and physical activity in collaboration with schools, workplaces and the voluntary sector, and with general practitioners. Clinical protocols are being developed for the prevention and management of coronary disease.

## NHS Trusts

**Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are taken to enforce the contractual obligations of the chairs of national health service trusts.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Chairmen of national health service trusts are appointed as statutory office holders and are not engaged under contracts of service.

## Health Service Commissioners

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to receive the annual report of the Health Service Commissioner for 1992-93.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** The Health Service Commissioner has made his annual report on the performance of his functions in England, Scotland and Wales. My right hon. Friends, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Wales and I presented the report to the House on 30 June. It was published today—HC 764—and copies have been placed in the Library. Copies are also available from the Vote Office.

## Dementia

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will meet representatives of the Alzheimer's Disease Society to discuss the policy of her Department in relation to people with dementia and their carers; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Bowis:** I have arranged to meet representatives of the Alzheimer's Disease Society on Tuesday 27 July.

## NHS Premises (Tobacco Sales)

**Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether all sales of tobacco in NHS premises have now ceased.

**Mr. Sackville:** "The Health of the Nation" White Paper gave a commitment that all sales of tobacco on national health service premises would be stopped, except to long-stay patients who are smokers. This has largely been achieved.

The Department is ensuring that the handful of sites still to meet this commitment do so as soon as possible.

## Dentists

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average gross income of dentists in the year 1992-93.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The average gross fee earnings of dentists in the dental rates study group (DRSG) population in 1992-93 in Great Britain was £86,020. In addition it is estimated that DRSG principals received on average some £2,000 by way of other "top-sliced" payments.

### Traffic Accidents

**Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the figures for the estimated cost to the NHS of treatment to those injured or killed in road traffic accidents in each year since 1979; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** This information is not available centrally.

### Nurse Regradings

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will detail by region the amount of moneys given over to help complete the regrading process of nurses; and if she will detail the funds separately for each trust hospital.

**Mr. Sackville:** This information is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Nursing and Midwifery Staff

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by clinical grade and specialty for each district health authority and regional health authority the number of nursing and midwifery staff employed as at 1 April.

**Dr. Mawhinney** *[holding answer 11 June 1993]:* The information available will be placed in the Library.

### Nursing Education

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the numbers of entrants to initial pre-registration nursing education by course of study and by the academic qualifications possessed by entrants in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990, *(c)* 1991 and *(d)* 1992.

**Mr. Sackville** *[holding answer 23 June 1993]:* Data are only available for the year ending 31 March 1993 and are shown in the table.

*Entrants to initial pre-registration nurse training by course of study and academic qualifications England 1992-93*

| Course of study | Number | Academic qualifications of entrants | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Less than 5 grade C GCSEs or equivalent | 5 grade C and above GCSEs or equivalent | 6 or more grade C and above GCSEs or equivalent | 'A' levels or higher qualifications |
| *Registered nurse training* | | | | | |
| Traditional training | | | | | |
| Total | 3,890 | 700 | 610 | 1,150 | 1,439 |
| General | 3,350 | 540 | 550 | 1,050 | 1,210 |
| Mental illness | 420 | 120 | 50 | 70 | 180 |
| Mental handicap | 120 | 40 | 10 | 30 | 40 |
| Project 2000 | | | | | |
| Total | 12,040 | 2,080 | 1,910 | 3,820 | 4,230 |
| Adult | 8,190 | 1,380 | 1,400 | 2,770 | 2,640 |
| Mental health | 1,670 | 350 | 210 | 350 | 750 |
| Mental handicap | 650 | 160 | 90 | 160 | 240 |
| Child | 820 | 60 | 100 | 350 | 310 |
| Common foundation | 710 | 120 | 100 | 190 | 300 |
| *Registered midwifery training* | | | | | |
| Direct entrants | 520 | 70 | 40 | 120 | 290 |

*Note:* Figures rounded to the nearest 10.
*Source:* English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

### Relocation

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of her Department's civil servants have been transferred from London to the NHS executive headquarters at Leeds.

**Mr. Sackville** *[holding answer 28 June 1993]:* A total of 530 staff have been transferred from London to the National Health Service Management Executive and NHS Estates Agency in Leeds, 75 on a temporary basis.

### Water Fluoridation

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what indemnities have been given by Yorkshire regional health authority to Yorkshire Water plc against all claims arising from fluoridation of water supplies; if she will place a copy of the indemnity in the Library; and if she will make a statement.

**Dr. Mawhinney** *[pursuant to his reply, 17 June 1993, c. 697]:* I regret that the previous reply was incorrect. On 22 December 1989 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave Yorkshire Water Services Ltd an indemnity against liabilities arising from the supply of fluoridated water provided by Anglian water authority without adjustment of the fluoride levels. A copy of the indemnity will be deposited in the Library.

## WALES

### Rural Prosperity Programme

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the schemes currently funded in Wales under the rural prosperity programme indicating *(a)* the amount allocated to each scheme in total, *(b)* the amount spent on each scheme to date and *(c)* the amounts due to be allocated for each scheme for financial years 1993-94 and 1994-95.

**Mr. Redwood:** The rural prosperity programme is a Welsh development agency initiative. I have arranged for the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Gentleman, and for a copy of his response to be placed in the Library of the House.

### General Practitioners

**Mr. Ieun Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioner practices comprised *(a)* five or more partners and *(b)* two or fewer partners in each district health authority area in Wales in each year since 1980.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The information available relates to partnership rather than practice size. Information for partnerships of five or more doctors is available only for 1990 onwards.

*Partnerships of five or more doctors in Wales (as at 1 October)*

| | *Clwyd* | *Dyfed* | *Gwent* | *Gwynedd* | *Mid Glamorgan* | *Powys* | *South Glamorgan* | *West Glamorgan* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990 | 18 | 12 | 11 | 5 | 16 | 9 | 13 | 16 |
| 1991 | 19 | 15 | 11 | 7 | 16 | 9 | 15 | 17 |
| 1992 | 18 | 17 | 10 | 9 | 16 | 9 | 15 | 18 |

*Partnerships of two or fewer doctors in Wales (as at 1 October)*[1]

| | *Clwyd* | *Dyfed* | *Gwent* | *Gwynedd* | *Mid Glamorgan* | *Powys* | *South Glamorgan* | *West Glamorgan* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1980 | 34 | 39 | 55 | 21 | 40 | 9 | 36 | 22 |
| 1981 | 34 | 39 | 50 | 26 | 41 | 7 | 33 | 20 |
| 1982 | 31 | 37 | 51 | 26 | 43 | 4 | 34 | 23 |
| 1983 | 30 | 40 | 49 | 22 | 43 | 4 | 35 | 22 |
| 1984 | 33 | 40 | 50 | 22 | 48 | 4 | 33 | 25 |
| 1985 | 30 | 40 | 52 | 22 | 50 | 4 | 36 | 24 |
| 1986 | 29 | 39 | 53 | 21 | 50 | 4 | 31 | 23 |
| 1987 | 31 | 35 | 48 | 22 | 57 | 4 | 30 | 24 |
| 1988 | 34 | 37 | 49 | 21 | 55 | 3 | 27 | 27 |
| 1989 | 35 | 36 | 49 | 20 | 57 | 3 | 28 | 26 |
| 1990 | 38 | 37 | 57 | 24 | 55 | 3 | 28 | 25 |
| 1991 | 37 | 30 | 50 | 21 | 60 | 3 | 26 | 27 |
| 1992 | 39 | 28 | 47 | 19 | 56 | 3 | 25 | 26 |

[1]Includes doctors practising single handed.

### Drug Stocks

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance he has issued to hospitals as to the use of drugs after their use-by date.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** In 1988 the Department of Health and Welsh Office jointly issued guidelines to health authorities in England and Wales on the safe and secure handling of medicines which contain guidance requiring hospital staff to return all out of date drugs or medicines to the pharmacy for disposal.

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what evidence he has of hospitals using drugs which are past their use-by date; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** I have no such evidence.

### Flood Damage

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial assistance is available for farmers whose land has been adversely affected by the recent flooding.

**Mr. Redwood:** My Department is assessing the extent of flood damage to agricultural land. Farmers can, if eligible, receive assistance under existing grant schemes for some of the work that may be necessary following the flooding.

### Sports Council for Wales

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library full details of the funds spent by the Sports Council for Wales in the period 1990 to 1992 on drug tests for athletes, disaggregating the amount spent on individual sports and indicating the number of tests which proved positive for banned substances.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** I have placed the information requested in the Library of the House.

### Mental Handicap

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many mentally handicapped adults are currently living in long-stay hospitals outside the county in which they were residents.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** A total of 368.

### Integrated Administration and Control Systems

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many fully completed IACS forms have now been received by the Welsh Office; what percentage of Welsh farmers this represents; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** We have received 18,537 forms. The proportion of fully completed forms will not be known until detailed checks have been completed.

### Ministerial Visit, Tywyn

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to visit the Tywyn area of the constituency of Meirionnydd Nant Conwy; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** I have no immediate plans to visit the Tywyn area, although I have a very extensive programme of visits to every county in Wales.

### Forestry Commission

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by county, hectarage and location, the Forestry Commission land in Wales sold since October 1991 where *(a)* access agreements have been concluded and *(b)* access agreements have not been concluded.

**Sir Wyn Roberts** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* Arrangements aimed at securing continued public access to woodlands sold by the Forestry Commission were introduced in october 1991. Excluding those sales which were too far advanced at that time to be included for consideration under the new arrangements, the commission has sold the following 28 areas of forest land in Wales since then. No access agreements have been concluded in respect of any of these areas.

| | *Area (ha)* |
|---|---|
| *Clwyd* | |
| Coed Cochion | 87·0 |
| Newbridge and Chirk By-pass | 1·0 |
| *Dyfed* | |
| Allt Fawr | 4·0 |
| Allt Tir Isaf | 5·0 |
| Erryd Wood | 5·0 |
| Garreg Llywd Ffyrdd | 6·0 |
| Llwyn Neuadd | 6·0 |
| Llys Y Fran-Velindre | 2·6 |
| Penywaun | 11·9 |
| Pen Yr Allt | 4·7 |
| Pryce Moor Wood | 5·0 |
| Rosebush (Land at) | 27·0 |
| Sunny Hill Wood | 9·0 |
| The Coombes | 6·0 |
| Trawscoed Woods | 88·0 |
| Wenallt Fawr | 12·0 |
| Wern Talhardd | 8·0 |
| *Gwent* | |
| Goytre Hall Wood | 4·0 |
| Ifton Quarry | 14·0 |
| Newport-Worcester Trunk Road | 1·7 |
| *Gwynedd* | |
| Bodfeddau | 9·6 |
| Gwenfro Uchaf | 7·3 |
| *Mid Glamorgan* | |
| Blaengarw (Old Industrial Tip) | 67·8 |
| *South Glamorgan* | |
| Coed Hills | 27·5 |
| Coed Y Colwn | 15·0 |
| *West Glamorgan* | |
| Dyffryn Woods | 116·0 |
| Penyrallt (Land at) | 0·5 |
| Valley Woods | 75·0 |

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Child Benefit

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing income distribution of child benefit recipients broken down into equivalised income bands.

**Mr. Burt:** The information is in the tables.

*Distribution of child benefit recipients by equivalised[1] income bands, 1990-91[2]*

| *Equivalised income of benefit unit[3]* | *Number of benefit units in receipt of child benefit* | *Percentage of all benefit units in receipt of child benefit* |
|---|---|---|
| | *thousands* | *Per cent.* |
| *Before housing costs* | | |
| less than £50 | 170 | 2·5 |
| £50-£100 | 883 | 12·8 |
| £100-£200 | 2,967 | 42·9 |
| £200-£300 | 1,732 | 25·1 |
| £300-£400 | 661 | 9·6 |
| £400-£500 | 235 | 3·4 |
| £500 or more | 265 | 3·8 |
| *After housing costs* | | |
| less than £50 | 379 | 5·5 |
| £50-£100 | 1,610 | 23·3 |
| £100-£200 | 2,913 | 42·1 |
| £200-£300 | 1,324 | 19·2 |
| £300-£400 | 374 | 5·4 |
| £400-£500 | 146 | 2·1 |
| £500 or more | 169 | 2·4 |

*Source:*
Family Expenditure Survey
*Notes:*
[1] Income has been equivalised within benefit units using the McClements scales.
[2] This represents the latest information available and combines the data for the years 1990 and 1991
[3] Income is in £s per week expressed in January 1991 prices.

### Loans and Compensation (Floods)

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will use his discretion under the crisis fund to convert all loans made necessary because of the recent flooding disaster into direct grants; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** Help from the social fund may be available to people affected by the recent flooding principally in the form of discretionary crisis loans. Social fund community care grants are primarily intended to help promote care in the community and are not designed to be used for general disaster relief, although each application is considered on its merits.

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to secure that invalidity benefit recipients affected by the recent flooding will be eligible for social fund loans.

**Mr. Scott:** Discretionary crisis loans are already available to invalidity benefit recipients where there is a serious risk to the health and safety of the applicant or their family and where such a loan is the only means of dealing with the crisis.

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will bring forward proposals to pay compensation for damage in the flooding incident at Aberconwy and Meirionnydd to individuals who do not qualify for benefits or social funding.

**Mr. Scott:** No. Local authorities have primary responsibility for disaster relief.

### Invalidity Benefit

**Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each month since January 1990 the number of people in receipt of invalidity and sickness benefit *(a)* in England and *(b)* in Scotland.

**Mr. Scott:** The available information is in the table.

| | *Sickness benefit recipients* | | *Invalidity benefit recipients* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *England* | *Scotland* | *England* | *Scotland* |
| 31 January 1990 | 91,000 | 14,000 | 887,000 | 167,000 |
| 28 February 1990 | 88,000 | 13,000 | 889,000 | 168,000 |
| 31 March 1990 | 80,000 | 13,000 | 895,000 | 169,000 |
| 30 April 1990 | 86,000 | 15,000 | 909,000 | 170,000 |
| 31 May 1990 | 84,000 | 15,000 | 916,000 | 172,000 |
| 30 June 1990 | 86,000 | 15,000 | 922,000 | 173,000 |
| 31 July 1990 | 87,000 | 16,000 | 925,000 | 173,000 |
| 31 August 1990 | 83,000 | 15,000 | 935,000 | 175,000 |
| 29 September 1990 | 85,000 | 14,000 | 940,000 | 177,000 |
| 31 October 1990 | 89,000 | 13,000 | 943,000 | 178,000 |
| 30 November 1990 | 88,000 | 13,000 | 948,000 | 180,000 |
| 31 December 1990 | 91,000 | 14,000 | 959,000 | 181,000 |
| 31 January 1991 | 90,000 | 13,000 | 959,000 | 180,000 |
| 28 February 1991 | 90,000 | 13,000 | 963,000 | 181,000 |
| 30 March 1991 | 83,000 | 15,000 | 971,000 | 181,000 |
| 1991-92 | 120,000 | | 1,365,000 | |
| 1992-93 | 135,000 | | 1,490,000 | |

*Notes:*

1. Figures based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants are at a point in time, not for the month as a whole, rounded to the nearest thousand.
2. Information in the form requested is not available for later than 30 March 1991. Figures for 1991-92 and 1992-93 come from the Departmental Report 1993.

### Income Support

**Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the annual income support payable to an unemployed person aged 20 years in each year since 1990.

**Mr. Burt:** The information is in the table. The amount shown assume only income support personal allowance is payable. Any income from another source would also be taken into account.

*Income support payable to a single unemployed 20 year old*

| *Date of benefit uprating* | *Weekly personal rate (£)* | *Annual total (£) (Financial year)* |
|---|---|---|
| April 1990 | 28·80 | 1,497·60 (1990-91) |
| April 1991 | 31·15 | 1,626·30 (1991-92) |
| October 1991 | 31·40 | |
| April 1992 | 33·60 | 1,747·20 (1992-93) |
| April 1993 | 34·80 | 1,809·60 (1993-94) |

**Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the levels of income support for each year since 1987.

**Mr. Burt:** The information is in the Library.

**Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people living within the catchment area of the York Benefits Agency office were in receipt of invalidity benefit on the most recent date for which figures are available.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of invalidity benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 30 June 1993:*

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many people living within the catchment area of the York Benefits Agency Office were in receipt of Invalidity Benefit on the most recent date for which figures are available.

The information is not available in the format requested. This is because statistics are not maintained by District/ Benefit Offices for recipients of Invalidity Benefit.

However, it is possible to state the number of claimants to Invalidity Benefit at York District Office. These include a small number of people who have claimed but are not receiving Invalidity Benefit, eg. because there is underlying entitlement which has been extinguished by the payment of a higher overlapping benefit or where termination action has not been completed.

There were in fact 5,094 people claiming Invalidity Benefit at York District Office at the last working day of May 1993. These figures were obtained from a 100 per cent. clerical count of cases in the Office.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the Library.

### Council Tax

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what considerations underlie the different treatment of an employer's payment of an employee's council tax liability, paid under a contract of employment, for national insurance contributions and income tax; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Burt:** Generally the position is that such an employee would normally be liable to both national insurance contributions and income tax. However, certain employees who are living in accommodation provided by the employer are not charged income tax on the benefit of that accommodation under the provisions of section 145(4) of the Taxes Act 1988. Broadly, this is where the accommodation is necessary for their job. The payment of the council tax on such accommodation by the employers will not give rise to an income tax charge on these employees.

There are no parallel provisions in social security legislation and consequently national insurance contributions may be due. However, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State is currently considering whether this difference is suitable for alignment under the current deregulation initiative.

### Maternity Payments

**Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women aged *(a)* 16 or 17 years, *(b)* 18 to 24 years and *(c)* 25 years and over received maternity payment from the social fund in each year from 1988; and how many of the maternity payments were made to single women.

**Mr. Scott:** The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Road Traffic Accidents

**Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the figures for the estimated cost to the Department of Social Security for those injured in road traffic accidents for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** The information is not available.

### Flood Victims

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps are being taken to provide an immediate response to applications for help from the social fund by victims of the recent flooding in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, dated 30 June 1993.*

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what steps are being taken to provide an immediate response to applications for help from the Social Fund by victims of the recent flooding in Wales.

I would first of all like to explain that the primary responsibility for disaster relief lies with the Local Authority and I understand that the Government has already made available extra money for the emergency work.

However, help may be available from the Social Fund. In the main, this will be in the form of Crisis Loans (CLs) which are available to anyone who needs financial help to meet expenses in an emergency or a disaster, whether or not they are receiving any benefit. They must however, be facing serious risk or serious damage to their health or safety, and the CL must be the only means of dealing with the crisis.

In order to ensure that applications from flood victims are processed more promptly, the Colwyn Bay office has set up a dedicated section. All applications for assistance are being considered sensitively, in light of the individual circumstances of the applicant.

Expenditure from District Social Fund budgets is monitored closely. Arrangements are in place to record expenditure incurred as a result of flooding or other natural disasters.

If the situation arises, the Department will review the local budgets of Districts which have incurred additional Social Fund expenditure as a result of flooding.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

## DEFENCE

### Fleet Maintenance and Repair

**Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what year testing of the Fleet Maintenance and Repair Organisation in Her Majesty's naval base, Portsmouth is likely to start.

**Mr. Aitken:** Preparatory work has already started.

### Low Flying

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the ability of the ALFENS low-flying safety system to prevent crashes and near misses; and if he will speed up the introduction of the system.

**Mr. Hanley:** The automated low flying enquiry and notification system—ALFENS—will enhance safety by improving the availability and exchange of accurate information to military aircrew at all times. The system will also provide more flexible deconfliction arrangements at night but is not designed to provide deconfliction for daytime flying. ALFENS will be introduced into service as quickly as possible.

### HMS Repulse

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Clyde public safety scheme was activated as a consequence of the release of coolant from HMS Repulse on 20 June.

**Mr. Hanley:** The activation of the alarm was immediately discovered to have been an over-reaction to what was a minor incident that posed no risk to the public. Because of this, the public emergency authorities were not alerted and the public safety scheme was not activated.

### Chemical Weapons

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the United Kingdom's contribution to the costs of the preparatory commission for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, established under the chemical weapons convention, expressing the figures *(a)* for each relevant Government financial year and *(b)* for each financial year of the commission; and from which subheads of which votes of which classes United Kingdom contributions funds are taken.

**Mr. Hanley:** The United Kingdom made an initial contribution to the 1993 preparatory commission budget of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons of £130,000 in the Government's financial year 1992-93; this was paid from class 1 vote 1 subhead J2. A further contribution of £136,667 was made to the 1993 preparatory commission's budget in the Government's financial year 1993-94 from class 1 vote 1 subhead M3. The commission's financial year coincides with the calendar year.

### Nuclear Weapons (Transport)

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the fire-resistant qualities of the truck cargo heavy duty II vehicles used by his Department for the transportation of nuclear weapons.

**Mr. Hanley:** I have nothing to add to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement gave the hon. Member on 9 June, *Official Report*, column *288*.

### Aircraft Carriers (Refitting)

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money will have to be spent at Rosyth dockyard to enable the refitting of aircraft carriers; and how much would need to be spent at Devonport dockyard to enable it to perform the same operation.

**Mr. Aitken:** A continuing programme of capital expenditure on various items is envisaged at both Rosyth and Devonport which is not specifically related to refitting aircraft carriers. The existing facilities at Rosyth are suitable for refitting aircraft carriers, as are those at Devonport, without significant additional expenditure, but further discussions about precise requirements will take place with the dockyard operator well in advance of the first refit.

### Anti-armour Ammunition

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the programme of research and development into anti-armour ammunition with depleted uranium penetrators.

**Mr. Aitken:** My Department has undertaken two development programmes for anti-armour tank ammunition with depleted uranium penetrators. The CHARM 1 programme to develop a 120 mm tank round with a depleted uranium penetrator is now almost complete. A programme to develop an enhanced performance 120 mm tank round with a depleted uranium penetrator—CHARM 3—began in 1991.

My Department has also undertaken a research programme to examine the feasibility of developing a 140mm tank round with a depleted uranium penetrator. This programme, too, is now almost complete.

### Radiation Monitoring

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *474*, to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger), if he will place in the Library copies of reports on radiation monitoring carried out since 1980 by *(a)* the Atomic Energy Authority at and around the Eskmeals test firing range, *(b)* BNFL at and around the Kirkcudbright test firing range and *(c)* Atomic Weapons Establishment at the west Freugh test firing range.

**Mr. Aitken:** Subject to deletion of some classified details, I will arrange for copies of the reports to be placed in the House of Commons Library in due course.

### Depleted Uranium Shells

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what detailed records are kept of the dates and locations of each of the tests involving depleted uranium shells; and to whom this information is made available.

**Mr. Aitken:** Full records of all DU firings are kept as part of standard trials documentation. These records are available on request to regulatory authorities, such as Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution or Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what future steps he proposes to take to assess and keep under review the possible effects on the local population and environment arising from the testing of depleted uranium shells at *(a)* Kirkcudbright test firing range, *(b)* West Freugh test firing range and *(c)* Eskmeals test firing range; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the appropriate health and safety measures deemed necessary as part of the United Kingdom development firing programme using depleted uranium; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Aitken:** The measures currently taken are set out in my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces' reply to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on 14 June, *Official Report*, columns *473-74*. We propose to continue these. In addition, in the spirit of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 we propose to undertake a full environmental impact assessment at Eskmeals and Kirkcudbright.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many periodic inspections have been carried out by *(a)* the Health and Safety Executive and *(b)* the Department of the Environment's radiochemical inspectorate in each year since 1980 into the United Kingdom development firing programme using depleted uranium; and if he will provide a breakdown by firing range.

**Mr. Aitken:** The Health and Safety Executive visited Kirkcudbright in 1986 to inspect the handling and firing of DU rounds. Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate was fully consulted in 1980-81 while preparations for DU firing at Kirkcudbright were being made. It visited the range in April this year at our invitation. Her Majesty's

inspectorate of pollution visited Eskmeals once in 1989 and twice in 1993. A number of visits to Eskmeals took place between 1981 and 1989, but a record of the exact dates is not available.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will establish a public inquiry into depleted uranium testing; what representations he has received calling on him to set up such an inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Aitken:** I have no plans to establish such an inquiry. I have received no other such representations.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has passed to *(a)* Dumfries and Galloway regional council, *(b)* Wigton district council and *(c)* Stewartry district council on the safety, health and environmental precautions to be taken in order to ensure the protection of the local population from the effects arising from the testing of depleted uranium shells at Kirkcudbright test firing range; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Aitken:** The results of the monitoring summarised by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces in his replies to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on 14 June, *Official Report*, columns *473-74*, demonstrate that there is no risk either to those who work on the range or to those who live near it. There is, therefore, no need for precautions such as the hon. Member describes.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research his Department has carried out or commissioned on the use of tungsten-tipped shells as an alternative to the use of depleted uranium.

**Mr. Aitken:** My Department is not carrying out any research into the development of a tungsten-tipped tank round for service with the British Army beyond those already in service; nor has it commissioned any.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the dates and locations of each of the tests involving depleted uranium shells at Kircudbright firing range.

**Mr. Aitken:** The information is not readily available in the form requested by the hon. Member. Since firing started in March 1982, firing has taken placed on 535 days, with annual totals as follows:

| | *Days* |
|---|---|
| 1982 | 3 |
| 1983 | 20 |
| 1984 | 55 |
| 1985 | 24 |
| 1986 | 26 |
| 1987 | 26 |
| 1988 | 32 |
| 1989 | 59 |
| 1990 | 88 |
| 1991 | 59 |
| 1992 | 87 |
| 1993 | [1]56 |

[1] To date.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many existing or past military or civilian personnel from his Department have contacted his Department regarding possible uranium contamination as a result of being involved in depleted uranium testing; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Aitken:** No military or civilian personnel have contacted my Department regarding possible uranium contamination as a result of being involved in the proof-firing of depleted uranium ammunition in the United Kingdom. Three personnel who expressed concern that they may have inhaled depleted uranium dust during training for Operation Desert Storm in Kuwait were subject to monitoring which showed no detectable depleted uranium contamination.

### Radioactive Waste

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the current stocks and future arisings of radioactive waste at the west Freugh and Kirkcudbright test firing ranges.

**Mr. Aitken:** There are no such stocks; nor are any future arisings expected.

### Defence Estimates

**Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to publish the "Statement on the Defence Estimates"; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993" will be published on Monday 5 July.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Friday 2 July 1993*

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Mr. Asil Nadir

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what discussions he has had with the Government of Cyprus regarding the Asil Nadir case; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** None.

### Legal Aid

**Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what action his Department intends to take in the light of the judgment of Lord Justice Neill and Mr. Justice Mantell in relation to legal aid.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The judgment sustained, on all points at issue, the measures taken by the Lord Chancellor earlier this year to restrain the rate of growth in legal aid expenditure. No further action is therefore necessary in respect of the regulations which were the subject of the judgment.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Drugs (Use-by Dates)

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what guidance he has issued to hospitals as to the use of drugs after their use-by date.

**Mr. Ancram:** Extant guidance on the use and control of medicines issued by the Department of Health and Social Services requires hospital staff administering a drug or medicine to check that it is not out of date. Guidance has also been issued by the directors of pharmaceutical services of the health and social services boards requiring hospital pharmacists to operate stock control arrangements which ensure detection and recorded disposal of outdated medicinal products.

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what evidence he has of hospitals using drugs which are past their use-by date; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ancram:** I have no such evidence.

## EDUCATION

### A-Levels

**Dr. Hampson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of A-level candidates in 1970, 1980, 1990 and in the latest statistics passed in mathematics and physics.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** In England, the proportion of A-level candidates who achieved a pass in mathematics and physics in 1992 was 16 and 10·4 per cent. respectively. Information on a similar basis for earlier years is not available centrally.

### Grant-maintained Status

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many proposals from schools for grant-maintained status were published before 1 January 1993 but remain undetermined; when he expects such proposals to be determined; and if he will make a statement listing the schools concerned and the reasons for the delays.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Three proposals for grant-maintained status published before 1 January 1993 remain undetermined. My right hon. Friend will decide each proposal as soon as possible, consistent with a full consideration of the issues involved and of any objections to the proposals. The schools concerned and the reasons the proposals have not yet been determined are given in the table.

| *School* | *Proposals published* | *Reason not yet determined* |
|---|---|---|
| Bilston High School, Wolverhampton | 21 September 1992 | The proposal is being considered alongside a proposal from the LEA to close the school. |
| St. Thomas CE Primary School, Hackney | 11 December 1992 | The proposal is being considered alongside a proposal from the LEA to close the school. |
| The Leventhorpe School, Hertfordshire | 11 December 1992 | Elections have only recently been held to fill vacancies on the proposed initial Governing Body of the school. |

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Radio Scanners

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proposals he intends to bring forward to amend section 5 of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 to take account of changes in sale, supply, possession and use of radio scanners;

(2) what proposals he has to amend the Wireless Telegraphy Apparatus (Receivers) (Exemption) Regulations 1989 to regulate radio scanners by licence.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The Government are currently reviewing the relevant legislation covering the use of radio equipment which might be used to intercept telecommunications. There are, however, no plans to place further restrictions on the manufacture, sale or ownership of scanning receivers under section 5 of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949.

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much the market-testing programme has cost his Department since November 1992.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The direct costs of the Home Office market-testing programme, including consultancies, since November 1992 has been £1,361,885.

### Channel Islands and Isle of Man

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contribution was received in the latest available year from the Governments of the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man towards the cost of his Department, and British embassies and consular services.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are not part of the United Kingdom but are internally self-governing dependencies of the Crown. The United Kingdom Government are responsible for the islands' defence and their international relations, and the Crown is ultimately responsible for the islands' good government. These responsibilities are constitutional, not a matter of financial contract. None the less, in recognition of the fact that expenditure on defence and international representation is incurred by the United Kingdom, Jersey maintains a local Territorial Army unit, at a cost in 1992 of £1·7 million, and Guernsey makes payments to, or in lieu of, the United Kingdom Exchequer, which in 1992 totalled £541,000. And, as a contribution to defence and other common services, the Isle of Man annually forgoes a proportion of the revenue due to it under Customs and Excise agreement; the value of this contribution to the United Kingdom in 1991-92 was £1·9 million.

### Sam Kulasingham and Prem Sivalingham

**Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to complete the review of the cases of Sam Kulasingham and Prem Sivalingham; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** The review of these cases is almost complete, and I expect to make a decision very soon.

### Birmingham Pub Bombings

**Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands police as to the cost, including salaries, of the inquiry into the Birmingham pub bombings since March 1990;

(2) if he will call for a report from the West Midlands chief constable as to whether the inquiry into the Birmingham pub bombings is continuing; how many officers are involved; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** All that I can add to the answer which was given to the hon. Member on 16 January 1992, at columns *634-35*, is that an analysis of the cost of the inquiry, which started in April 1991, will be prepared at its conclusion.

### Animal Imports

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the average fine per offence for those found guilty of illegal importation of animals into the United Kingdom in each year since 1978;

(2) how many convictions there have been for the illegal importation of animals into the United Kingdom in each year since 1978.

**Mr. Soames:** I have been asked to reply.

The information readily available for the United Kingdom, excluding Northern Ireland, is given in the table. The figures reflect all prosecutions taken under the Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats and Other Mammals) Order 1974, the Importation of Equine Animals Order 1979, and the Importation of Animals Order 1977 which have been notified to this Department.

| *Year* | *Number of prosecutions* | *Maximum fine (£)* |
|---|---|---|
| 1978 | 80 | 1,000 |
| 1979 | 74 | 1,000 |
| 1980 | 63 | 1,000 |
| 1981 | 74 | 700 |
| 1982 | 50 | 1,000 |
| 1983 | 71 | 1,000 |
| 1984 | 27 | 1,000 |
| 1985 | 77 | 1,500 |
| 1986 | 75 | 1,200 |
| 1987 | 43 | 1,000 |
| 1988 | 57 | 1,500 |
| 1989 | 31 | 1,600 |
| 1990 | 45 | 1,000 |
| 1991 | 66 | 2,000 |
| 1992 | 47 | 1,250 |

More detailed information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

## TRANSPORT

### BR Privilege Ticket facilities

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people are currently in receipt of British Railways privilege ticket facilities.

**Mr. Freeman:** I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave her on 12 March 1993, *Official Report*, column *769*.

### BR Staff (Timetables)

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of British Railways Board and subsidiary personnel currently employed on time-tabling duties and the publication of the Great Britain timetable.

**Mr. Freeman:** This is a matter for the BR board. From next year, responsibility for planning and producing the working timetable for the railway will pass to Railtrack. We expect that the private sector will see opportunities to publish a national passenger timetable commercially, but Railtrack will be placed under an obligation to secure its publication if others do not.

### BR Pensioners

**Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what actuarial basis funds will be allocated to existing British Rail pensioners on the establishment of the proposed joint industry fund.

**Mr. Freeman:** The allocation of assets will take full account of the future liabilities to pensioners and will be subject to independent actuarial advice in the light of the results of the latest actuarial valuation of the schemes.

### West Coast Main Line

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of passenger trains using the core west coast main line are arriving within five minutes of their scheduled times for the latest available period.

**Mr. Freeman:** British Rail measures the punctuality of InterCity services by the number of trains arriving at their destinations within 10 minutes of the advertised time. On this basis, 88 per cent. of trains on the west coast main line arrived punctually in the four-week period ending 19 June 1993.

### Railways Directorate

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff are currently employed in the railways directorate (railways 1 and railways 2), and in the offices of the shadow regulator and shadow franchising director including seconded and part-time staff; and how many will be employed in these areas, including the offices of the regulator and the franchising director, in each of the next two years, identifying the number of staff in grades 1 to 7 as well as the total number of staff.

**Mr. Freeman:** At present there are 124 staff in these areas, including special advisers on regulation and franchising and supporting staff. Of these, 45 staff are in grade 7 or above; five are seconded; and five are part time. Budgets and staff for the next two years have not been decided. Estimates of the running costs and manpower of the franchising director and the regulator, and their staff, were contained in the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Railways Bill.

### Southend Transport Ltd.

**Mr. Channon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the ownership of Southend Transport Ltd.

**Mr. Freeman:** Approval under the Transport Act 1985 has been given to the sale of Southend Transport Ltd, the bus company owned by Southend-on-Sea borough council. The company has been sold by competitive tender to Branksome 169 Ltd. A company formed by the four main shareholders of British Bus plc.

Change of ownership takes place under the terms of the Transport Act 1985, which allows authorities to sell their public transport companies with the consent of the Secretary of State.

I believe that this sale will help continue the successful and efficient operation of bus services in Southend-on-Sea. I am also pleased that the sale was successfully conducted by competitive tender, thus ensuring a good price for the local taxpayers of Southend-on-Sea. I wish everyone in the company all success in the private sector.

This sale also sets a good example for other local authorities which own their bus companies. Proceeds from sales of bus companies realized before the end of 1993 will all be usable for local capital projects. Thereafter, 50 per cent. will have to be set aside for debt reduction in the traditional way. Although time is now short, I hope that the remaining local authorities in this position will make the most of this opportunity and sell their bus companies.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Women (Full-time Employment)

**Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to encourage the participation of women in full-time employment.

**Miss Widdecombe:** We are determined that women should be allowed every opportunity to participate as fully as possible in the labour market. The number of women working full-time has risen by 9 per cent. since 1983 and women are projected to account for just over 80 per cent. of labour force growth by 2006. The Government welcome this trend and will continue to encourage women to make the most of the opportunities available.

Our "New Horizons for Women" initiative promotes the whole range of opportunities open to women, including those in employment and training. The flexibility built in to many employment service and training and enterprise council programmes are ideally suited to the needs of many women and our out-of-school child care grant will benefit women who wish to return to work after their children start school.

The ministerial sub-committee on women's issues accords a high priority to action throughout government, which will extend choice and opportunity for women in general, including in employment.

## DEFENCE

### Flight Recorders

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the fitting of flight recorders to aircraft operated by his Department.

**Mr. Aitken:** It is my Department's policy that all new aircraft shall be fitted with accident data recorders—ADRs. However, in most circumstances, the technical difficulties and costs involved in retro-fitting ADRs to older aircraft types would not be justified.

### Nuclear Tests

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information his Department is required to give United States authorities, and on what timescale, to enable the United States to carry out its obligations to inform Russia under the threshold test ban verification protocol provisions for notification of forthcoming nuclear tests.

**Mr. Aitken:** All our nuclear tests at the Nevada test site are jointly planned with the United States authorities. Section IV of the protocol to the treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the limitation of underground weapon tests

specifies the information which the United States must pass to the Russian Government 200 days prior to the planned date of any relevant test.

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library copies of data sent in the last 12 months to United States authorities for transmission to Russian authorities under the threshold test ban treaty verification protocol provisions for notification of forthcoming nuclear tests.

**Mr. Aitken:** For security reasons, this information is confidential to the Governments concerned.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *650*, when the tests of depleted uranium armour-piercing shells at the White Sands and Aberdeen proving grounds in the United States and La Gramat in France were conducted; and what post test-firing of depleted uranium shells health checks were conducted on (i) local populations and (ii) service men involved in the tests at the West Freugh, Eskmeals and Kirkcudbright ranges.

**Mr. Aitken:** Some early trials were carried out at White Sands missile range and Aberdeen proving ground in the laste 1970s. More recently trials have taken place at La Gramat in 1990 and at Aberdeen in 1990, 1991 and 1992. The health checks on those involved in the depleted uranium firing trials and the environmental monitoring carried out at or near the three United Kingdom ranges are set out in my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces' replies to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on 14 June, *Official Report*, columns *473-74*. On the basis of these checks, we have concluded that there is no danger to the health of the local population and no requirement to monitor it.

### Tactical Air-to-Surface Missile

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the current status of the future theatre nuclear weapon project;

(2) what is his latest estimate of the cost of TASM.

**Mr. Aitken:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) on 20 May 1993, *Official Report*, column *263*.

### Royal Navy (Nuclear Weapons)

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration his Department has given to equipping Royal Navy vessels with a conventional stand-off weapon system.

**Mr. Aitken:** Many Royal Navy ships are already equipped with anti-ship stand off missiles systems such as Harpoon and Exocet. We are currently studying the United Kingdom requirement for land attack cruise missiles. Studies are at a very early stage and a decision is not expected for some time.

### NATO (Peacekeeping)

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many allied tactical papers and standard NATO agreements on peacekeeping have been adopted by NATO.

**Mr. Hanley:** The development of NATO support to United Nations and CSCE peacekeeping has been fully documented in:

NATO Defence Planning Committee and Nuclear Planning Group Final Communiqué (27 May 1992)
Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council Final Communiqué (4 June 1992)
NATO Nuclear Planning Group Final Communiqué (21 October 1992)
NATO Defence Planning Committee Final Communiqué (11 December 1992)
Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council Press Communiqué (17 December 1992)
NATO Defence Planning Committee and Nuclear Planning Group Final Communiqué (26 May 1993)
Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council Final Communiqué (10 June 1993)

In addition, the North Atlantic Co-operation Council adopted a report by its ad hoc group on co-operation in peacekeeping at its meeting in Athens on 11 June. All of these are available in the Library of the House.

### Rapid Reaction Corps

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the training in the military requirements of peacekeeping undertaken by the allied Rapid Reaction Corps.

**Mr. Hanley:** I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 10 June, *Official Report* column *369*.

### Aldermaston

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) of 18 June, *Official Report*, column *763*, what factors led him to believe that the Panorama programme on Aldermaston to which he refers would not be even-handed or objective.

**Mr. Aitken:** The judgment was largely based on experience of co-operation with Panorama and some other investigative programmes. It was fully justified.

### Indonesia

**Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last visited Indonesia; what matters were discussed and with whom; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Aitken:** My right hon. and learned Friend visited on 18 May 1993. He met the Indonesian Defence Minister and other Ministers and officials. A range of security and defence matters of mutual interest were discussed in what was a short but very valuable visit.

### Goose Bay

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level sorties were flown by each type of aircraft at Canadian forces base Goose Bay *(a)* in 1992 and *(b)* up to the latest available date in 1993.

**Mr. Hanley:** During their period of deployment to Goose Bay in 1992, Royal Air Force Tornado GR1 and F3 aircraft flew 936 and 92 low-level sorties respectively. No sorties have yet been flown this year, although Tornado GR1s are expected to fly approximately 700 sorties at low level during the period of their deployment in 1993.

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the accomplished and scheduled Royal Air

Force training deployments to Canadian forces base Goose Bay during 1993; and if he will specify the number and type of aircraft involved in each deployment;

(2) if he will list the dates of deployment for each type of aircraft undertaking training at Canadian forces base Goose Bay in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993; and how many aircraft were involved in each such deployment.

**Mr. Hanley:** Nine Tornado GR1 aircraft were based at Goose Bay between 29 May and 25 September 1992, during which time there were seven deployments of crews to conduct low flying training. The precise dates of each such deployment were:

29 May—12 June
12 June—3 July
3 July—24 July
24 July—7 August
7 August—21 August
21 August—4 September
4 September—25 September

Eight Tornado F3 aircraft were also deployed between 26 May and 1 July 1992, during which time there were three deployments of crews:

26 May—9 June
9 June—23 June
25 June—1 July

For 1993, nine Tornado GR1s will be based at Goose Bay between 1 July and 23 September, during which time there are planned to be five separate crew deployments, each for a period of two to three weeks.

### Service Men (Gulf)

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British service men serving in the Gulf were *(a)* hospitalised and *(b)* received prolonged medical treatment and for what reason in each case; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

### Depleted Uranium Ammunition

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether depleted uranium ammunition continues to be test fired at Eskmeals and Kirkcudbright ranges.

**Mr. Aitken:** Yes.

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *474*, for what reason air samples are not taken at Kirkcudbright range to check for depleted uranium radioactivity; if he will consider the taking of such samples; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Aitken:** Air samples are not necessary at Kirkcudbright because the depleted uranium penetrators are not fired against a hard target. There is, therefore, no significant dispersion of radioactive material into the air.

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what tests were carried out for radioactivity in areas where depleted uranium shells were used during the Gulf war; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hanley:** Depleted uranium has a low level of radioactivity; furthermore in the circumstances of the Gulf conflict such tests were not practicable. Those United Kingdom service personnel who assisted with ordnance clearance in Kuwait after the conflict were issued with instructions and personal equipment to minimise any health hazard.

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *474*, what are the highest levels of radioactivity from depleted uranium ammunition detected at Eskmeals and Kirkcudbright ranges; and what is the exact level determined to be a health hazard.

**Mr. Aitken:** I will write to the hon. Member.

### Swan Hunter

**Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current state of the negotiations between his Department and the receivers of Swan Hunter as to the completion of the three frigates being built at the yard.

**Mr. Aitken:** I am pleased to announce that we have concluded an agreement with the receiver which, subject to the maintenance of satisfactory levels of productivity, will allow the three type 23 frigates to be completed on Tyneside. This agreement gives the receiver time to continue his efforts to find a buyer for Swan Hunter. I hope that the management and work force at Swan Hunter will deliver the three ships to the Royal Navy within cost and to time and to the standards of quality which we have come to expect from Swan Hunter.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Benefits Caller Office, Darwen

**Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) when he expects a benefits caller office to be established in Darwen, Lancashire;

(2) what representations he has received about the establishment of a benefits caller office in Darwen, Lancashire.

**Mr. Burt:** The administration of the benefits system is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Michael Bichard to Ms Janet Anderson, dated 1 July 1993:*

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security, asking when he expects a benefits caller office to be established in Darwen, Lancashire, and what representations he has received on this matter.

In line with the Benefits Agency's core value of customer service great importance is placed on the Agency being accessible to all its customers. The manager of the Agency's Blackburn and Accrington District, which covers the area of Darwen, has decided, following a number of representations from customers and welfare organisations, that a caller office in Darwen would improve the service to his customers.

You will be aware from my earlier correspondence to you about this matter (*Official Report*, Vol. 214, columns *253-54*, dated 18 November 1992) that there was a favourable indication earlier this year that space for a caller outlet could be made available by the Employment Service Agency (ESA) in their premises in Darwen. Unfortunately this provisional offer has been withdrawn because the ESA are considering

using the space for their own needs. The District are now experiencing considerable difficulty in identifying other suitable premises in the area.

Although it is far from an ideal solution, the District Manager has put in place three benefit advice surgeries in the Darwen area, to ensure benefits information is available in the area while the search for suitable accommodation continues.

I hope you find this answer helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

## Child Support Agency, Bradford

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what basis the acting area manager of the Child Support Agency in Bradford warned Bradford resource centre that the use of the name Child Support Agency in training programme information material could constitute a breach of the copyright laws; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Burt:** The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Mrs. Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Mrs. Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Max Madden, dated 30 June 1993:*

As Chief Executive of the Child Support Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking on what basis the acting area manager of the Child Support Agency in Bradford warned Bradford Resource Centre that the use of the name Child Support Agency in training programme information material could constitute a breach of the copyright laws.

I have now investigated the circumstances surrounding the exchange of correspondence between the Agency's acting Area Manager in Bradford and the Bradford Resource Centre and it is clear that the member of staff concerned acted under a misapprehension and in error. The Agency's Divisional Manager responsible for the Yorkshire and Humberside region contacted Bradford Resource Centre on 14 June to apologise for the misunderstanding and I understand that matters have now been resolved to the Resource Centre's satisfaction.

The Agency in fact welcomes the interest of groups such as the Bradford Resource Centre in its work and its policy is to foster close working relationships at all levels. As part of that process Agency staff recently met staff from Bradford Resource Centre and other local groups to discuss the operation of the new child maintenance scheme; and a further meeting with Resource Centre staff is due to take place.

I am grateful for the opportunity to explain the position. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

## Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much the market-testing programme has cost his Department since November 1992.

**Mr. Hague:** The costs since November 1992 are broadly estimated at £3·2 million.

These costs when set against the Department's programme of market testing £127 million of business this year and the scale of savings which have previously been derived from market testing—some 25 per cent.—do not seem disproportionately high.

## Benefits, Ayr

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what was the number of sickness benefit claims at Ayr benefit office for each month from April 1992 to date;

(2) how many claimants there were at the Ayr benefit office for *(a)* unemployment benefit and *(b)* sickness benefit on 1 April 1991, 1992 and 1993.

**Mr. Burt:** The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

*Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. George Foulkes, dated 1 July 1993:*

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking about the number of sickness benefit and unemployment benefit claims at the Ayr Benefit Office.

I have provided information which represents the Ayr District Office (DO) as a whole. The District includes branch offices at Ayr, Cumnock, Dumfries and Stranraer but it is not possible to break the figures down into the separate branches within the district.

Table A. shows the monthly live load for sickness benefit for the Ayr District Office as at May 1991, the first date for which figures are available, and the first of each month from April 1992.

I am unable to provide you with figures for unemployment benefit and would refer you to the Secretary of State for Employment whose responsibility these are. I can however, supply you with the number of customers registered as unemployed and claiming income support at the Ayr DO. These figures are collated on a quarterly basis and I have therefore supplied you with figures for the relevant quarters. These are shown at Table B. I would like to explain that the figures quoted for sickness benefit are obtained from a 100 per cent. clerical count in the office. The income support figures are a 100 per cent. count combined from those actioned through the computer system and any remaining clerical casework.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

*Table A.*

*Sickness Benefit Claims*[1]

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| May 1991 | 961 |
| April 1992 | 1,099 |
| May 1992 | 1,245 |
| June 1992 | 1,194 |
| July 1992 | 1,220 |
| August 1992 | 1,206 |
| September 1992 | 1,268 |
| October 1992 | 1,259 |
| November 1992 | 1,314 |
| December 1992 | 1,289 |
| January 1993 | 1,291 |
| February 1993 | 1,312 |
| March 1993 | 1,356 |
| April 1993 | 1,378 |
| May 1993 | 1,380 |

[1] Figures refer to the last working day of the previous month

*Table B.*

*Income Support claims from unemployed persons*[1]

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| May 1991 | 5,456 |
| May 1992 | 5,645 |
| May 1993 | 6,121 |

[1]Figures are as at the quarter ending 31 May.

### Invalidity Benefit

**Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance has been issued during the past three months to general practitioners and benefits offices on the subject of eligibility for and renewal of invalidity benefit.

**Mr. Scott:** No such guidance has been issued.

### Mortgage Interest Payments

**Ms Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will change the procedures of his Department in respect of mortgage interest payments so that mortgage lenders inform his Department as soon as interest rates have dropped or increased to prevent mortgagors overpaying or falling behind with their payments.

**Mr. Burt:** The amount allowed in income support for mortgage interest is calculated according to the interest rate being charged to the individual claimants' mortgage account. It is therefore necessary for the appropriate rate to be notified individually. We believe that the person best placed to do this is the claimant, who is responsible for informing the Department of any changes in circumstances that may affect entitlement to benefit.

**Ms Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will change the procedures of his Department in respect of mortgage interest payments so that mortgage lenders receive payments by the due date, instead of one month in arrears, to prevent mortgagors being threatened with repossession.

**Mr. Burt:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 17 June 1992 at column *598*.

## HEALTH

### Health Centres

**Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *483*, if she will now announce the results of the working group on the financing of health centres, and her proposals based on those results.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The working group of National Health Service Management Executive/national health service officials recommended that the main proposals of the Hambros bank review on the financing of accommodation for general practitioners in health centres should be accepted. These proposals were:

(i) The relationship between the GP tenant and the trust/district health authority owner should be put onto a more commercial footing, in which the GP would pay a full commercial rent in return for a formal lease;

(ii) GPs in health centres should be eligible for General Medical Services improvement grants;

(iii) Guidance should be issued on the costs and benefits of various alternative patterns of funding and ownership of GP accommodation;

We have accepted the recommendations of the working group and work will be taken forward with a view to implementing the Hambros bank proposals with effect from 1 April 1994. Representatives of general medical practitioners will be consulted about the implementation.

### Pregnancy (Dietary Supplements)

**Mr. Peter Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated cost of making dietary supplements of 4 mg of folic acid per day available free of cost through fertility and ante-natal clinics to women anticipating a pregnancy and during the first 12 weeks of the pregnancy.

**Mr. Sackville:** A dietary supplement of 4 mg folic acid per day is recommended to prevent recurrence of neural tube defects in the offspring of women or men with spina bifida or with a history of a previous child with neural tube defect. It is not possible to estimate the cost of making these supplements available through clinics to women in this group. However, they are available on prescription, free of charge to exempt groups prior to pregnancy and to all women during pregnancy.

### Specialties

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost to date of the specialty reviews.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The cost is estimated at £450,000. This includes the staff and related costs incurred by the six independent review groups and the London implementation group as well as the cost of printing the reports.

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what estimate she has made of the capital and revenue costs of implementing the specialty reviews;

(2) if she will make a statement of the impact of the specialty reviews at hospitals where a specialty is removed on the remaining services in those hospitals;

(3) what steps she is taking to test purchaser support and the feasibility and affordability of appropriate specialist service configurations resulting from the London specialty reviews.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The recommendations of the specialty reviews are independent advice to Ministers and the national health service. They are not policy and no decision to change services will be taken on the basis of their conclusions alone. The London implemenation group, the Thames regional health authorities, purchasers and the hospitals themselves will now make full assessments of the implications of the reviews' recommendations, prior to bringing forward proposals for change in the autumn. The London implementation group will ensure that any proposals to relocate or close a specialist service are informed by, amongst other factors, the views of purchasers, analysis of the cost implications and feasibility in terms of sites. There will, of course, be full public consultation on any major proposals to relocate services or to close sites.

**Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what effect she expects the specialty reviews of the London hospitals to have on the South-East Thames region outside London.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The specialty reviews make a number of recommendations about specialist services provided in South East Thames regional health authority that are outside London. These recommendations are independent advice to Ministers and the national health service, not policy, and they alone will not determine the future configuration of services in London or elsewhere. It will be the responsibility of the regional health authority, local purchasers and the hospitals themselves to make a full assessment of the reviews' advice and, if appropriate, to develop proposals for change.

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the impact of the review of London specialist services on maintaining morale and retention of the staff needed for teaching if the hospitals provide a smaller range of technical specialities.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The independent advice contained within the speciality review reports forms one ingredient in the local process of developing proposals for improving health services in London. As part of this process, the London implementation group is working closely with the University of London and the Higher Education Funding Council for England, to ensure that the implications of the reviews' recommendation for teaching and research are fully assessed.

### Drinking Water

**Mr. Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information and advice his Department has received concerning the effect upon human health of low level cryptosporidium oocyst contamination in drinking water; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** I have been asked to reply.

The Department of Health and the Department of the Environment received, in July 1990, the report of the group of experts convened to examine cryptosporidium in water supplies chaired by Sir John Badenoch. Following its recommendations, research is under way which may establish the infective dose of cryptosporidium.

### AZT

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the use of AZT with HIV-positive patients of different age groups in the national health service.

**Mr. Sackville:** Zidovudine—AZT—is currently licensed in the United Kingdom and the European Community for use in the following circumstances:

—asymptomatic disease in adult patients showing signs of immune suppression ie. CD4 count repeatedly below 200 per cubic millimetre (cumm) or between 500 and 200 and falling rapidly;
—early symptomatic HIV disease in adults with CD4 counts below 500 per cubic millimetre:
—advanced disease ie. AIDS and AIDS related complex, in adults and children;
—HIV related symptoms or asymptomatic disease with markers indicating significant HIV-related immune suppression in children over the age of three months.

### Prescriptions

**Ms Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated percentage of prescribed items dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors which cost less than *(a)* 40p, *(b)* 60p, *(c)* 80p and *d)* £1.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information is shown in the table.

*Prescribed items with a net ingredient cost of less than (a) 40 pence, (b) 60 pence, (c) 80 pence and (d) £1.00 dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors in England in 1992.*

| | | | | *Pence* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Net Ingredient Cost less than (pence) | 40 | 60 | 80 | 100 |
| Number of items dispensed | 32,690 | 49,753 | 61,449 | 73,937 |
| Percentage of all prescribed items | 8·5 | 12·9 | 15·9 | 19·1 |

### Quarry House

**Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the insurance value of her Department's art works in Quarry house.

**Mr. Sackville:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security gave her on 30 June at column *515*.

### Children's Health Records

**Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that all purchasing authorities contract for parent-held records.

**Mr. Bowis:** We plan to write to health authorities shortly, commending the use of personal child health records and informing them of the publication of the second edition of a model record produced by a working party led by the British Paediatric Association.

### Container Allowance

**Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what container allowance is paid by the NHS for calendar packs of drugs per container and in total; and how many drugs with two or three formulations or more come in one calendar package;

(2) how much is paid by the NHS as a container allowance for drugs per prescription and in total; what percentage of drugs are not dispensed prepacked; and what percentage of packaged products are repackaged by pharmacists.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The container allowance is an average figure calculated on the basis of an annual inquiry. The inquiry takes account of the fact that not every prescription item needs a container. The resulting allowance—currently 6·5p—is then paid out for every prescription item, including where more than one formulation is contained in a calendar pack. The British National Formulary for March 1993 lists 19 calendar

packs containing more than one formulation. In 1992-93, the cost of the container allowance in England was £18·8 million. Information about the percentage of drugs not dispensed in pre-packaged form or about packaged products that are then re-packaged by pharmacists is not available.

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the market-testing programme has cost her Department since November 1992.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department's market testing programme cost just over £870,000 up to the end of March 1993, the latest date for which figures are available. This includes consultancy costs, staff costs and associated overheads. Separate costs for the period from November 1992 are not available.

### Eye Tests

**Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the estimated savings made in 1992-93 as a result of the introduction of a charge for sight tests.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** We estimate that the savings made in 1992-93 as a result of restricting the categories of people eligible for a national health service sight test were £100 million.

### Hospital Waiting Times

**Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for health what guidelines exist for calculating the waiting times for patients who have been given an opportunity to transfer to an other hospital for treatment.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Guidance on the calculation of the waiting times is given in "The Data Manual—Module 1 Hospital Services"—a copy of which is available in the Library.

### Yorkshire Regional Health Authority

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out, in 1992 prices, the total amount spent by the Yorkshire regional health authority on press and public relations in *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91, *(c)* 1991-92 and *(d)* 1992-93.

**Mr. Sackville** *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* The information available for health authorities within the Yorkshire region is shown in the table. The figures for 1991-92 are not fully comparable with those for earlier years. The 1991-92 figure for district health authorities includes substantial publicity expenses on health promotion. Equivalent figures for 1992-93 will be available late this year.

*Expenditure on public relations (at 1992-93 prices)*

| Year | Yorkshire regional health authority £ | Yorkshire district health authorities £ | Yorkshire region total £ |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1989-90 | 113,907 | 73,794 | 187,701 |
| 1990-91 | 112,147 | 75,692 | 187,839 |
| 1991-92 | 187,985 | 297,808 | 485,793 |

*Source:* Annual accounts (1989-90/1990-91) and annual financial returns (1991-92) of the Yorkshire Regional Health Authority (RHA) and District Health Authorities (DHAs) comprising the Yorkshire Region.

*Notes:*

1. The figures represent the pay and other costs of public relations departments and have been expressed at 1992-93 prices by the use of gross domestic product deflators.
2. The increased expenditure by the RHA is in part due to a change in accounting policy. The aggregate expenditure by DHAs excludes costs incurred by first wave NHS trusts from which equivalent information was not collected.

## WALES

### Sheltered Housing

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many units of sheltered housing have been provided for the elderly in Wales for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The number of new sheltered dwellings completed in each year for which information is available is given in the table.

*Sheltered housing for the elderly*

| | Total dwellings completed |
|---|---|
| 1984 | 193 |
| 1985 | 136 |
| 1986 | 417 |
| 1987 | 577 |
| 1988 | 266 |
| 1989 | 226 |
| 1990 | 467 |
| 1991 | 439 |
| 1992 | 260 |

*Source:* Local authority returns.

In addition, local authority conversions to sheltered dwellings were as follows:

*Local authority sheltered housing for the elderly*

| | Dwellings resulting from conversion or improvement |
|---|---|
| 1984 | 19 |
| 1985 | 0 |
| 1986 | 23 |
| 1987 | 44 |
| 1988 | 31 |
| 1989 | 16 |
| 1990 | 4 |
| 1991 | 55 |
| 1992 | 37 |

*Source:* Local authority returns.

Information on conversions for the private sector and for housing associations are not available centrally.

### NHS Trusts

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ensure in considering the application for the setting up of the Derwen NHS trust that there will be a facility for the treatment of the in-patient adolescent mentally ill in a unit other than that occupied by adults.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Patient care services provided by NHS trusts must respond directly to the priorities set by

commissioners of health care who remain responsible for identifying local health needs and then arranging for those needs to be met.

The sponsors of the trust application have initiated discussions on how best to deliver in-patient services for the adolescent mentally ill separate from that for adults.

The decision whether to establish the Derwen NHS trust will take account of the representations received during the public consultation period, alongside the individual merits of the application.

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the rationale underlying the decisions in respect of whether to guarantee Whitley Council terms and conditions to *(a)* the Derwen NHS Trust staff or *(b)* the west Wales ambulance service NHS Trust staff.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The NHS and Community Care Act 1990 provides that staff transferring from health authority to trust employment retain all their contractual and related rights on transfer. Such staff will continue to be subject to nationally negotiated agreements unless they negotiate contracts which exclude them.

### Storm Damage

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the operation of the Bellwin formula in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** None.

### Adders

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to warn tourists visiting beaches and sand dunes in West Wales to be aware of the possibility of adders.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** None.

### Integrated Administration and Control System

**Mr. Llywd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he made available the integrated administration control system forms to Welsh farmers.

**Mr. Redwood:** The forms were issued to all farmers in Wales by first-class post on 2 April 1993

### Household Waste

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Clywd, North-West (Mr. Richards), of 15 June, *Official Report*, column *523*, if he wil make it his policy to establish arrangements to allow his Department to gather data on the collection of household waste that is recycled in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The Government have been working with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy to devise arrangements for the collection of recycling data. Local authorities in England and Wales have been asked to provide information about recycling rates as part of the institute's 1991-92 waste collection and disposal surveys. I understand that the results of these surveys will be published shortly.

### Local Government Reforms

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he will take against those local authorities in Wales that boycott the local government reforms to take place in 1995; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** I regret that some authorities have apparently decided not to participate in discussions about the reorganisation. I hope that they will come to see that the best interests of their staff and the public they serve lie in some co-operation.

### Health Screening

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken in Wales to encourage men to take advantage of health screening facilities; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Arrangements for health-screening measures for men are incorporated in the GP contract. This provides for both opportunistic and systematic screening with the arrangements focusing particularly on coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes and asthma.

Each participating general practice is required to submit an annual programme of health promotion activities to its family health services authority. These activities must be designed to meet the individual needs of the practice population. The level of payment for the programmes varies according to the extent of activity provided.

There are separate fixed payments per GP for organising a programme of chronic disease management for diabetes or for asthma.

All patients also have a right to a health check by their GP in circumstances where they have not had a consultation with their doctor within the last three years.

In addition, many employers offer regular health screening through their private occupational health schemes.

## SCOTLAND

### Ferries

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what amount originally allocated in the 1992-93 expenditure plans for the tariff rebate subsidy for ferries to the Scottish islands was subsequently reallocated to support other public services; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 30 June 1993]:* Provision was made, through the tariff rebate subsidy scheme, for a total of £7·607 million in 1992-93 to support shipping services to the Scottish islands. The total amount actually paid to meet claims was £6·578 million. The remaining £1·029 million was redistributed to meet other priority needs within Scottish Office programmes. The Scottish Office fulfilled its contractual obligations to meet claims up to the level of each shipping operator's capping level in 1992-93.

### Mussels

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the weight in tonnes and the value of mussel landings annually at Scottish ports from 1968; and if he will provide information on the mussel fishing effort by port over the same period.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 1 July 1993]:* The weight and value of mussel landings into Scottish ports for the years 1968 to 1992 are set out in the table. Effort data are not available.

*Mussels*

| *Year* | *Weight* | *Value £* |
|---|---|---|
| 1968 | 415 | 8,100 |
| 1969 | 292 | 6,400 |
| 1970 | 211 | 3,600 |
| 1971 | 293 | 8,600 |
| 1972 | 515 | 10,800 |
| 1973 | 567 | 13,400 |
| 1974 | 569 | 17,300 |
| 1975 | 704 | 19,800 |
| 1976 | 750 | 23,600 |
| 1977 | 889 | 26,400 |
| 1978 | 922 | 36,200 |
| 1979 | 819 | 33,700 |
| 1980 | 526 | 31,600 |
| 1981 | 146 | 18,000 |
| 1982 | 50 | 7,900 |
| 1983 | 33 | 6,500 |
| 1984 | 23 | 4,700 |
| 1985 | 312 | 25,300 |
| 1986 | 1,333 | 147,500 |
| 1987 | 384 | 54,100 |
| 1988 | 1,224 | 119,000 |
| 1989 | 1,063 | 138,300 |
| 1990 | 1,468 | 193,400 |
| 1991 | 2,794 | 417,900 |
| 1992 | 3,067 | 640,400 |

Weight = Standard landed weight tonnes (metric).

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Guildford and Woolwich Bombings

**Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Attorney-General what was the cost of the prosecution of the three Surrey police officers recently tried for their role in the Guildford and Woolwich case.

**The Attorney-General:** The total cost of the prosecution of the three Surrey police officers cannot yet be ascertained. Payments made by the Crown prosecution service so far in relation to this case amount to £263,440·80 including VAT. This covers counsel fees, copying costs and obtaining transcripts. The full cost to the prosecution is still being assessed.

The above figure does not include related costs incurred by other agencies, such as the police and the Lord Chancellor's Department.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Days at Sea

**Mr. Harris:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fishing vessels have been given provisional days at sea allocations in *(a)* England, *(b)* Cornwall and *(c)* Devon; and how many owners in each category have lodged claims.

**Mr. Jack:** Provisional days at sea allocations were issued in respect of 1,582 fishing vessels administered by Fisheries Offices in England. Of these, 305—including 64 Channel Islands vessels—are administered by the South Western fisheries district (Devon, Somerset and Avon), and 224 by the Western fisheries district (Cornwall).

By 25 June 1993, applications for additional days at sea had been received in respect of 1,323 fishing vessels administered in England. Of these 255—including 44 Channel Islands vessels—are administered by the South Western fisheries district and 209 by the Western district.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Yugoslavia

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what confirmed information UNMO or AWACS has provided of the origin, route, destinations, manoeuvring, speed or height of three aircraft alleged to have dropped bombs on the village of Gladovici on 13 March; and whether the aircraft were tracked.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** On 13 March at 1615 hours, GMT United Nations personnel observed one biplane and two monoplanes flying over the two villages of Gladovici and Osatica, 8 km south-east of Srebrenica. The biplanes and one monoplane circled Gladovici, dropped three bombs each, then flew over the Drina river towards Serbia. The other monoplane circled Osatica and dropped three bombs before flying towards Serbia. The aircraft were not tracked by AWACS.

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the serial numbers of three aircraft alleged to have bombed Gladovici in Bosnia-Herzegovina on 13 March.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We have no information on the serial numbers of the aircraft observed bombing Gladovici on 13 March.

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether United Kingdom personnel in the village of Gladovici in Bosnia-Herzegovina on 13 March were able to indicate the colours of three propeller-driven aircraft flying overhead at 1615 hours.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** There were no United Kingdom personnel in Gladovici on 13 March. United Nations reports give no information on the origins of the aircraft observed bombing Gladovici.

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether AWACS aircraft were operational and monitoring the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1600 hours and 1630 hours on 13 March.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Yes.

### East Timor

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to urge the Indonesian Government to allow international observers access to Xanana Gusmao and all East Timorese political prisoners.

**Mr. Goodlad:** We take every opportunity, with our Community partners, to urge the Indonesian authorities to allow regular access to Gusmao and other prisoners by representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

### El Salvador

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the incident on 20 May involving El Salvadorean police during a demonstration calling for implementation of aspects of the peace accord; and what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** We understand that investigations are continuing into the circumstances that led to the tragic death of a demonstrator in San Salvador on 20 May. We and the other EC member states have repeatedly urged the Salvadorean Government to complete implementation of the peace agreements, including the full deployment of the new national civilian police, as soon as possible.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Manufacturing

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing the level of real value added in manufacturing per person employed, according to annual percentage growth for the periods *(a)* 1979 to 1983 and *(b)* 1983 to 1989 for (i) the United Kingdom, (ii) France, (iii) West Germany, (iv) Japan, (v) the United States of America and (vi) the average of all OECD countries.

**Mr. Nelson:** The information requested for OECD countries is contained in "Industrial Structure Statistics" published by OECD, Paris, copies of which are available from the Library of the House for the period up to 1990. Except for France, the published figures are available at current prices only. For other countries they could be provided at constant prices only at disproportionate cost. The published statistics on value added and employment can be used to produce value added figures per person employed, expressed at current prices only. These are set out in the table.

*Value added per head in manufacturing industry*

*Current Prices*

| *Year* | *£ United Kingdom* | *Per cent.* | *FF France* | *Per cent.* | *DM Germany* | *Per cent.* | *Y Thous. Japan* | *Per cent.* | *$ USA* | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 9,689 | — | — | — | — | — | 6,383 | — | — | — |
| 1980 | 10,800 | 11·5 | — | — | — | — | 7,196 | 12·7 | 40,077 | — |
| 1981 | 12,471 | 15·5 | 142,505 | — | 78,870 | — | 7,472 | 3·8 | 44,296 | 10·5 |
| 1982 | 14,167 | 13·6 | 161,774 | 13·5 | 83,512 | 5·9 | 7,850 | 5·1 | 46,320 | 4·6 |
| 1983 | 16,157 | 14·0 | 181,056 | 11·9 | 89,120 | 6·7 | 7,694 | −2·0 | 50,549 | 9·1 |
| 1983 | 16,157 | — | 181,056 | — | 89,120 | — | 7,694 | — | 50,549 | — |
| 1984 | 17,570 | 8·7 | 198,167 | 9·5 | 94,841 | 6·4 | 8,680 | 12·8 | 55,134 | 9·1 |
| 1985 | 19,228 | 9·4 | 220,492 | 11·3 | 99,341 | 4·7 | 9,036 | 4·1 | 57,191 | 3·7 |
| 1986 | 20,853 | 8·5 | 243,760 | 10·6 | 101,153 | 1·8 | 8,944 | −1·0 | 60,715 | 6·2 |
| 1987 | 23,148 | 11·0 | 255,332 | 4·7 | 104,547 | 3·4 | 9,428 | 5·4 | 65,888 | 8·5 |
| 1988 | 25,483 | 10·1 | 280,548 | 9·9 | 111,290 | 6·4 | 10,216 | 8·4 | 70,006 | 6·2 |
| 1989 | 27,769 | 9·0 | 296,656 | 5·7 | 116,447 | 4·6 | 10,971 | 7·4 | 73,591 | 5·1 |

It has not been possible in the time available to obtain figures for all of the time series back to 1979. The published statistics do not include an average for all OECD countries.

### Import Penetration

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 27 May, *Official Report*, column *663*, what information he has as to the level of import penetration for manufacturers in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Germany and *(c)* France, in (i) 1973, (ii) 1979 and (iii) June 1989.

**Mr. Nelson:** Figures for United Kingdom manufactured import penetration in 1979 and 1989 have been published in table 15.10 of the "Monthly Digest of Statistics". Figures for 1973 were published in an article in the August 1977 edition of "Economic Trends", which also described the basis of the estimates. Corresponding figures for other countries can be approximated using data published in "OECD Statistics of Foreign Trade" and "OECD National Accounts Volume 2". These publications are all available from the Library of the House.

### Mr. Michael Allcock

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when Mr. Allcock, head of Inland Revenue special office 2 was suspended; what were the reasons for this action; when he expects a conclusion to inquiries regarding Mr. Allcock to be reached; and what is the role of Inland Revenue special office 2.

**Mr. Dorrell:** I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave on these matters to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on 30 June, at column 505. Mr. Allcock was suspended from duty pending the inquiries being carried out by the Metropolitan police. I am not able to say when a conclusion to these inquiries is expected to be reached.

### Public Bodies

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments; and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992".

**Mr. Portillo** *[holding answer 25 June 1993]:* Candidates for appointments to bodies for which the Chancellor is responsible are nominated from a number of sources including the public appointments unit, professional institutes and other Government Departments. Appointments are made on the basis of relevant experience and qualifications. No details are kept of board members' current occupations and employers.

The posts and salaries/allowances which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992" are listed in the table. Those marked with an asterisk denote salary/allowance changes only.

| *Appointment* | | *Remuneration* £ |
|---|---|---|
| Building Societies Commission | Mr. N. Fox Bassett | 17,000 |
| Central Statistical Office Management Board | Mrs. M. Berg | 3,000* |
| | Mr. P. Thornton | 3,000* |
| Retail Price Advisory Committee | Mr. L. D. Price | Nil |
| Royal Mint Advisory Committee | Dr. C. Swan | Nil |
| Royal Mint Management Board | Mr. J. Burnett-Stuart | 3,120 |
| | Mr. S. Cameron | 3,120 |
| Securities and Investment Board | Mr. J. Young | Salary is a matter for the SIB |
| Treasury Academic Panel | Professor H. Peseran | 110 per diem |
| VAT Tribunals | Mr. M. M. Hossain | 138 per diem |
| | Mr. R. S. Suri | 138 per diem |

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

### Croatia

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and EC Governments to increase and guarantee funds from which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Croatia pay monthly sums to Croatian families who agree to accommodate refugees and displaced persons; what is the total of such monthly payments; what guarantees have been given to UNHCR about how long such funds will be available; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd** *[holding answer 1 July 1993]:* The UNHCR has provided grants to Croatian families who accommodate refugees and displaced people to match those paid by the Croatian Government. The UNHCR has allocated some £18 million for this year of which some £3·3 million has been spent. The continuing needs of this programme, together with other needs in the former Yugoslavia, will be considered in detail at an UNHCR meeting of all donors, including EC Governments, in Geneva on 16 July.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Nuclear Safety

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the amounts of low and intermediate level nuclear wastes that would be stored in the United Kingdom if the British Nuclear Fuels plc proposal for nuclear waste substitution is accepted.

**Mr. Eggar:** The amounts of such wastes that would be retained in the United Kingdom depend on the extent to which customers accept any substitution proposals BNFL may be authorised to make.

### Internal Market Council

**Mr. Milligan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the outcome of the meeting of the Internal Market Council on 14 June in Luxembourg.

**Mr. Needham:** I attended the final Internal Market Council of the Danish presidency in Luxembourg on 14 June.

I succeeded in securing a five-year derogation from the 74 kW power limit for motor cycles sold within the European Community. The derogation will allow the continued sale and registration in the United Kingdom of machines up to 92 kW until the beginning of the next century. Owners of these motor cycles will be able to ride them beyond the year 2000 for the lifetime of the machines, and will be able to do so when visiting other member states. Separately, three and a half years after the directive's adoption, the Commission will report to the Council on the latest accident data, and, if appropriate, propose amendments to the directive to reflect motor cycle safety records.

The United Kingdom secured its objectives in a common position which was reached on copyright duration. This will remove market distortions arising from disparities between the periods for which copyright and related rights are protected in member states. A common position was also reached on the second amendment to the machinery directive. Construction site hoists will be excluded from its scope, but should be included in proposals for the separate lifts directive.

Measures on setting up future systems for the free movement of medicinal products were finally adopted, subject only to a temporary German scrutiny reserve.

Other measures agreed included adoption of a programme for small and medium sized enterprises; adoption of an amendment to measures covering medical devices and cosmetic products; and a common position on CE marking. Political agreement was obtained on the regulation for Community co-ordination in drawing up business registers for statistical purposes.

The presidency reported progress on a regulation on mutual assistance for customs and agriculture which aims to prevent fraud in the operation of legislation covering these two areas. There was also discussion on a Commission communication on the operation of the internal market; trans-European networks; a proposed pension fund directive; amendments to directive 83/189 on notification on new technical regulations by member states; footwear labelling; dual use goods; and EC accession to the European Pharmacopoeia. The Commission also noted that it intended to produce a proposal on hallmarking in the Community before August.

The next formal meeting of the Internal Market Council is scheduled for Monday 27 September, and will be the first under the Belgian presidency.

### United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

**Mr. Milligan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority has produced a second response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the service provided by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Eggar:** I have today placed in the Library of the House the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's —AEA—second response to the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission—MMC—which was published in May 1992.

I am pleased that the AEA has now implemented the great majority of the MMC's recommendations. This should lead to sustained improvements in efficiency.

Of the recommendations the MMC made to the Government, recommendation 3—board bonus scheme —was taken into account when the scheme for 1993-94 was drawn up; recommendation 9—return on capital employed—and 33—restructuring—will be taken into account at the appropriate time. I also announced on 1 April, *Official Report*, column *407*, in line with the MMC's recommendation (1) that there should be a further review of strategic options for the AEA, that independent consultants were being appointed to consider the practicality of privatisation and the main options. We will continue to monitor the AEA's progress in implementing the recommendations and I will report further progress to the House in due course.

### Market Testing

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much the market-testing programme has cost his Department since November 1992.

**Mr. Eggar:** Since November 1992, the cost of market testing in my Department is some £1,133,000. This covers direct staff costs and consultants brought in to add private sector skills.

### Collieries

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he intends to appoint an independent assessor, who is not employed by British Coal, to license British Coal collieries.

**Mr. Eggar:** The licensing of collieries is a matter for British Coal.

### Pakistan

**Mr Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has received from companies in the textile machinery sector about Export Credits Guarantee Department provisions for trade with Pakistan.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 1 July 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has received no such representations recently.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement outlining the steps which he is currently taking to assist British companies to win contracts for exports to Pakistan.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding awswer 1 July 1993]:* Exporters to Pakistan have access to the full range of Government trade promotion services. My Department, in recognition of the importance of the Pakistan market, has designated it as a particular target for our trade promotion efforts. We are arranging a series of seminars and workshops to advise companies on areas of opportunity, on how to win business and on available sources of finance. Recruitment for three DTI-sponsored missions to Pakistan later this year is currently taking place. Finally, we are aiming to appoint in the near future an export promoter specifically to cover Pakistan.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has any plans to increase the availability of ECGD cover for trade with Pakistan.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 1 July 1993]:* A review of ECGD policy towards cover for Pakistan is scheduled for the autumn.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has concerning comparisons between the United Kingdom's provisions of ECGD cover for trade with Pakistan, and the provisions made by other countries within the European Economic Community.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 1 July 1993]:* Recent exchanges with European export credit agencies suggest that, in common with ECGD, they generally adopt a relatively cautious attitude to support for medium and long-term business.

### RECHAR

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate his Department has made of the effect of the depreciation of sterling against the ecu since September 1992 on the level of sterling receipts for the RECHAR programme in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 30 June 1993]:* RECHAR is part of European regional development fund and European social fund expenditure under the European structural funds. Any estimate of the level of sterling receipts in 1993-94 would be subject to the uncertainties referred to in the replies given by my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General on 16 June, *Official Report*, column *613* and 21 June, *Official Report*, column *15*.

## Consultancy Contracts

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, columns *605-6*, what is the total cost of all the consultancy contracts listed.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 30 June 1993]:* The total cost of all consultancy contracts listed is £3,300,635. This figure includes extensions and amendments to the contracts where applicable.

## British Nuclear Fuels plc

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total cost of considering, assessing and approving corporate plans put forward by BNFL.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 22 June 1993]:* The information is not available in the form requested.

# INDEX TO THE

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

## OFFICIAL REPORT

**SIXTH SERIES** — **VOLUME 227**

SESSION 1992–93

*21st June, 1993—2nd July, 1993*

## SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

### *Scope and arrangement of the Index*

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

### *Abbreviations*

*Bills* 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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